

Degree awarding powers assessment report for the Academy of Live Technology Ltd

New degree awarding powers assessment

Provider legal name: Academy of Live Technology Ltd

Provider trading name: Academy of Live Technology

UKPRN: 10036456

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Contents

Executive summary	2
Introduction and background	8
Context	8
Assessment process	11
Information gathering	11
Assessment of DAPs criterion A: Academic governance	12
Criterion A1: Academic governance	12
Assessment of DAPs criterion B: Academic standards and quality assurance	41
Criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks	41
Criterion B2: Academic standards	52
Criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience	68
Assessment of DAPs criterion C: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff	84
Criterion C1: The role of academic and professional staff	84
Assessment of DAPs criterion D: Environment for supporting students	99
Criterion D1: Enabling student development and achievement	99
Assessment of DAPs criterion E: Evaluation of performance	112
Criterion E1: Evaluation of performance	112
Assessment of overarching criterion for the authorisation of New DAPs	122
New DAPs test conclusions	124
Annex A: Abbreviations used	127

Executive summary

Type of assessment:	Quality and standards assessment for new degree awarding powers
For:	Academy of Live Technology Ltd

1. This report represents the conclusions of an assessment for new degree awarding powers (New DAPs) at the Academy of Live Technology (the 'Academy').
2. The Academy is seeking authorisation for New DAPs for all taught awards up to and including Level 7.
3. To carry out the assessment, the Office for Students (OfS) appointed an assessment team, which included three academic experts and one member of OfS staff. The assessment included a site visit to the Academy. This report contains the advice and judgement of the team following its assessment.
4. The team concluded that the Academy is ready to operate with New DAPs (see Table 1). The team also concluded that specified changes are required to the Academy's New DAPs plan, to ensure this will provide a suitable basis for monitoring and further assessment (see Table 2). This report does not, however, represent any decision of the OfS to authorise these powers.

Table 1: Summary of advice against the DAPs criteria

Criteria	The provider has a credible New DAPs plan	The provider has demonstrated a full understanding of the DAPs criteria
Criterion A1: Academic governance	Met	Met
Criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks	Met	Met
Criterion B2: Academic standards	Met	Met
Criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience	Met	Met
Criterion C1: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff	Met	Met
Criterion D1: Environment for supporting students	Met	Met
Criterion E1: Evaluation of performance	Met	Met
The standards set for the proposed courses are at an appropriate level		
Met		
Overarching New DAPs criterion		
The Academy is an emerging self-critical, cohesive academic community with a clear commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective (in prospect) quality systems.		Met

Table 2: Summary of specified changes to the New DAPs plan

Criteria	Specified changes
<p>Criterion A1: Academic governance</p>	<p>Subcriterion A1.1</p> <p>The New DAPs plan should be updated, to include timelines and milestones for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring the Academy’s strategic plan is published and widely understood by stakeholders • Addressing inconsistencies and inaccuracies in its strategic documents and supporting policies and regulations (current and draft) • Expanding Council membership and updating its Articles of Association to support this change • Updating and approving the Committee Handbook for use – including updated terms of reference for the Academic Board and the inclusion of the new Learning, Quality and Standards Committee • Monitoring the effectiveness of the Learning, Quality and Standards Committee • Undertaking and assessing outcomes from the new annual Academic Board Effectiveness Review. <p>Subcriterion A1.2</p> <p>The New DAPs plan should be updated, to include timelines and milestones on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the Academy will monitor the effectiveness of its student engagement arrangements. <p>Subcriterion A1.3</p> <p>The New DAPs plan should be updated, to include timelines and milestones on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The development and implementation of the strategic partnerships document, to demonstrate that the Academy takes a strategic approach to working with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities • The development and implementation of policies and procedures to support the strategic partnerships document and arrangements for working with other organisations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the Academy’s processes to assess risk, including the carrying out of due diligence, when working with or proposing to work with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities – details of how the Academy intends to ensure that learning opportunities delivered with other organisations are subject to the same robust oversight and governance as the rest of the

Criteria	Specified changes
	<p>Academy's provision – to include the setting and maintaining of academic standards and monitoring of quality, and the persons or committees responsible for this monitoring and oversight</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – details of how any new strategies, policies and processes relating to subcriterion A1.3 will be implemented and their effectiveness evaluated.
<p>Criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks</p>	<p>The New DAPs plan should be updated, to include timelines and milestones for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out the Academy's planned review of documentation to resolve inconsistencies and ensure that the documentation correctly reflects its institutional intentions. • Identifying and stating where responsibility for managing and securing the holding of approved programme documentation (including modification) lies: state how communication of any changes is effected and explain how the use of only current approved versions in delivery is assured. • Providing details of how the Academy ensures that students are proactively provided with accurate records of study and the functions of the Assessment and Awards Boards, student records system and academic registry in the process.
<p>Criterion B2: Academic standards</p>	<p>The New DAPs plan should be updated, to include timelines and milestones on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The further development and implementation of annual programme monitoring and review arrangements.
<p>Criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience</p>	<p>No specified changes identified.</p>
<p>Criterion C1: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff</p>	<p>No specified changes identified.</p>
<p>Criterion D1: Environment for supporting students</p>	<p>No specified changes identified.</p>
<p>Criterion E1: Evaluation of performance</p>	<p>The New DAPs plan should be updated, to include timelines and milestones on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How the Academy will integrate postgraduate programmes to its processes for Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Reviews.

What are new degree awarding powers?

The OfS may authorise a registered higher education provider to grant taught awards, or research awards, or both, under section 42 of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 (HERA).¹

A provider that has been delivering higher education for less than three years does not have a sufficient track record to apply for a full degree awarding powers (Full DAPs) authorisation. It can instead apply for a new degree awarding powers (New DAPs) authorisation.²

New DAPs authorisations are granted on a probationary time-limited basis. A provider that has held New DAPs for a period of four years will normally be eligible to seek time-limited Full DAPs at the end of the probationary period.

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

- foundation degrees only
- awards up to, and including, bachelors' degrees
- all taught awards.

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

Assessment and decision-making process

Before deciding whether to authorise a provider with New DAPs, the OfS will undertake a New DAPs test. The purpose of a New DAPs test is to gather evidence to inform a judgement on the extent to which a provider:

- has a credible New DAPs plan which demonstrates how it will be able to meet the DAPs criteria, including the overarching criterion for New DAPs, by the end of the probationary period
- demonstrates a full understanding of the DAPs criteria
- has or will set academic standards for the proposed courses at an appropriate level / has arrangements that can take effect from the date of the New DAPs authorisation, to make awards at the level for which it has applied.

The full requirements of the criteria are detailed in Annex C of the OfS's regulatory framework.³

A provider that is granted New DAPs will be required to implement its agreed New DAPs plan and to engage in monitoring and scrutiny activities during the probationary period.

¹ See [Higher Education and Research Act 2017, section 42](#).

² For a summary of different types of degree awarding powers, see [Degree awarding powers - Office for Students](#).

³ See the OfS's regulatory framework at [Annex C – Guidance on the criteria for the authorisation for DAPs - Office for Students](#).

OfS officers first undertake an eligibility and suitability assessment of the provider. This initial assessment determines whether the provider is eligible and suitable for the New DAPs test, including the scope of the assessment.

Assessments for degree awarding powers are conducted by teams which include academic experts that the OfS has appointed. The outcome of the assessment is typically a report, produced by the assessment team, summarising its findings.

The report is then considered by the OfS's Quality Assessment Committee (QAC). The QAC is responsible for providing advice to the OfS under section 46 of 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.⁴

After considering the assessment report, the QAC provides advice to the OfS regarding quality and standards.

In making its decision about whether to authorise New DAPs the OfS will have regard to any assessment report and the QAC's advice. The OfS will also consider its own risk assessment of the provider and will have regard to advice received from others where this has been sought. It will also take into account other relevant considerations, such as the OfS's general duties under section 2 of HERA.⁵

Further information

We have published further information about authorising New DAPs in Regulatory advice 12.⁶

5. The Academy of Live Technology Limited (the 'Academy') is a specialist higher education provider, focusing on the live events and creative industries. It offers undergraduate degrees, postgraduate degrees, short courses and bespoke training programmes, and was established in 2011 as Backstage Academy. The Academy operates from its campus in South Kirkby, West Yorkshire.
6. On 9 November 2023, the Academy submitted an application for New DAPs at taught level, up to and including Level 7.
7. In accordance with the OfS's regulatory framework and the guidance on how to apply for DAPs, the Academy is eligible to be considered for New DAPs for all taught awards (up to and including Level 7) because it meets the eligibility criteria set out in paragraph 221 of the OfS's regulatory framework.
8. The OfS appointed an assessment team on 5 December 2024 which consisted of three academic expert assessors and a member of OfS staff.

⁴ See [Higher Education and Research Act 2017, section 46](#).

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

⁶ See [Regulatory advice 12: How to apply for degree awarding powers - Office for Students](#).

9. The team was asked to give its advice and judgements about whether:
 - the Academy has a credible New DAPs plan
 - the Academy has demonstrated a full understanding of the DAPs criteria
 - the standards set for the proposed courses are at an appropriate level.
10. This report does not represent any decision of the OfS in respect of whether the New DAPs authorisation the Academy is seeking should be granted.
11. This report will be considered by the QAC at its meeting of 12 November 2025. The QAC will formulate its advice to the OfS regarding quality and standards at the Academy of Live Technology, having considered this report.
12. The OfS will consider the assessment report, and the QAC's advice in deciding whether to grant the Academy's New DAPs authorisation on the basis requested. The OfS will also consider its own risk assessment for the Academy and have regard to the advice received from others where this has been sought, as well as other relevant considerations such as the OfS's general duties under section 2 of HERA.

Introduction and background

13. This report represents the conclusions of an assessment for new degree awarding powers (New DAPs) at the Academy of Live Technology Limited ('the Academy').
14. The Academy is seeking authorisation for New DAPs for all taught awards up to and including Level 7.
15. The OfS's QAC will consider the report and formulate its advice to the OfS regarding the quality and standards at the Academy of Live Technology.
16. The OfS will consider this assessment report, and the QAC's advice in deciding whether to grant the Academy's New DAPs authorisation on the basis requested. The OfS will also consider its own risk assessment of the Academy 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.

Context

17. The Academy of Live Technology Limited (the 'Academy') is a specialist higher education provider, focusing on the live events and creative industries. It offers undergraduate degrees, postgraduate degrees, short courses and bespoke training programmes.
18. The Academy was established in 2011 as Backstage Academy, and in 2023 changed its name to the Academy of Live Technology.
19. The Academy operates from its campus in South Kirkby, West Yorkshire. All courses are delivered through in-person learning at this campus. It also has a sister organisation in the United States, the Academy of Live Technology at Rock Lititz LLC, which is based in Pennsylvania.
20. The Academy's mission is 'to be a Centre of Excellence for live and creative industry education and training in the UK and globally'.
21. Since 2011, the Academy has delivered undergraduate and postgraduate courses awarded by the University of Greater Manchester (UoGM), previously known as the University of Bolton. The Academy currently offers the following courses, validated by UoGM:
 - FDA Live Event Production
 - BA (Hons) Live Event Production
 - BA (Hons) Live Event Production Top Up
 - BA (Hons) Live Visual Design and Production
 - BA (Hons) Stage and Production Management
 - MA Live Event Design
 - MA Visual Effects for Live Events

- MA Immersive and Interactive Media Design
 - MSc Creative Technologies for Live Events
 - MSc Virtual Production.
22. The Academy is currently developing courses in the areas of design, engineering and production. [course titles redacted]
23. Based on the latest available OfS 'Size and shape of provision data dashboard',⁷ the provider had a student population in 2022-23 of approximately 170 students across all its higher education provision, with the majority of these (150) studying full-time on first degree programmes.
24. Data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency shows the institute employed 15 academic staff in the academic year 2023-24, all of whom were full-time.⁸
25. In accordance with the OfS's regulatory framework and operational guidance on how to apply for DAPs, the OfS undertook an initial eligibility and suitability assessment of the Academy and decided that a New DAPs test, including a site visit to the Academy, should be undertaken. The purpose of the New DAPs test is to gather evidence to inform a judgement on the extent to which a provider:
- has a credible New DAPs plan which demonstrates how it will be able to meet the DAPs criteria, including the overarching criterion for New DAPs, by the end of the probationary period
 - demonstrates a full understanding of the DAPs criteria
 - has or will set academic standards for the proposed courses at an appropriate level / has arrangements that can take effect from the date of the New DAPs authorisation, to make awards at the level for which it has applied.
26. The OfS appointed an assessment team on 5 December 2024 which consisted of three academic expert assessors and a member of OfS staff in the following roles:
- Christopher Emmett – committee chair and lead assessor
 - Laura Peebles Brown – deputy committee chair and assessor
 - Professor Mark O'Thomas – deputy committee chair and assessor
 - [name redacted] – committee member and assessment manager (until 28 February 2025)
 - Catriona Shatford – committee member and assessment manager (from 1 March 2025).
27. The OfS asked the team to give its advice about the quality of and standards applied to higher education courses at the Academy and whether the Academy has a credible New DAPs plan and has demonstrated a full understanding of the DAPs criteria.

⁷ Available at [Size and shape of provision data dashboard: Data dashboard - Office for Students](#).

⁸ See [Who's working in HE? | HESA](#).

28. The assessment team considered a range of information submitted by the Academy in support of its application for New DAPs.

Assessment process

Information gathering

29. In accordance with the operational guidance on assessment for degree awarding powers, the Academy of Live Technology submitted a detailed New DAPs plan and self-assessment document in December 2024, setting out how it will meet the DAPs criteria in full, before the end of the probationary period. The self-assessment also set out its arrangements to make awards up to and including Level 7 from the intended start date of the probationary period.
30. To support the statements made in the New DAPs plan and self-assessment document, the Academy submitted a range of documentary evidence. This included programme documentation and information relating to academic policies, processes and governance structures. The team was also granted access to the provider's virtual learning environment (VLE).
31. Following the assessment team's initial analysis of the Academy's New DAPs plan and evidence submission, the assessment team requested further information from the Academy. The Academy submitted a response to this request in March 2025.
32. Following a review of the additional information submitted by the Academy, the assessment team undertook a desk-based assessment of all the available evidence.
33. The assessment team observed live or recorded committee meetings that took place at the Academy:
 - Council (April 2025)
 - Undergraduate Assessment Board (April 2025)
 - Academic Board (July 2025).
34. The team undertook a two-day visit to the Academy on 3-4 June 2025. During the visit the team met with a range of the Academy's staff and students, observed teaching sessions and received a demonstration of the provider's online systems and VLE.
35. Following the visit, the team requested additional information and evidence from the Academy on two further occasions. The Academy submitted responses to these requests with further evidence provided in June and July 2025.

Assessment of DAPs criterion A: Academic governance

Criterion A1: Academic governance

Advice to the OfS

36. The assessment team's view is that the Academy of Live Technology has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion A1: Academic governance.
37. The assessment team's view is that the Academy's New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion A1: Academic governance.
38. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that the Academy has developed, and is further developing, structures to support effective academic governance with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities. It has established a clear framework for working in partnership with its students across all aspects of academic governance and management of the organisation. The Academy also has plans to formalise arrangements that will enable effective governance of its approach to working with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities.
39. However, the assessment team has identified that specified changes are required to the New DAPs plan and that these changes should be made before the probationary period commences. These specified changes are set out in the following sections.
40. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the Academy's New DAPs plan and evidence which shows that, should the Academy make the specified changes set out, it can be reasonably expected to meet the evidence requirements for criterion A1 in full by the end of the probationary period.

Subcriterion 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

41. The assessment team's view is that the Academy's New DAPs plan is credible in relation to subcriterion A1.1 because it has developed, and is further developing, structures to support effective academic governance with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities. The New DAPs plan sets out how the effectiveness of these arrangements will be monitored and reviewed during the probationary period.
42. However, the assessment team has identified that the following specified changes are required to the New DAPs plan and that these changes should be made before the probationary period commences. The New DAPs plan should be expanded, to include timelines and milestones for:

- ensuring its strategic plan is published and widely understood by stakeholders
 - addressing inconsistencies and inaccuracies in its strategic documents and supporting policies and regulations (current and draft)
 - expanding Council membership and updating its Articles of Association to support this change
 - updating and approving the Committee Handbook for use – including updated terms of reference for the Academic Board and the inclusion of the new Learning, Quality and Standards Committee (LQSC)
 - monitoring the effectiveness of the LQSC
 - undertaking and assessing outcomes from the new annual Academic Board Effectiveness Review.
43. The assessment team's view is that the Academy has demonstrated a full understanding of subcriterion A1.1 because it is developing effective academic governance, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities.
44. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the Academy's New DAPs plan and evidence which shows that, should the Academy make the specified changes set out, it can be reasonably expected to meet the evidence requirements for A1.1 in full by the end of the probationary period.

Background

45. To inform the assessment team's consideration of its academic governance arrangements, the Academy provided contextual information regarding its management and governance structures.
46. The Academy of Live Technology Ltd is a wholly owned subsidiary of Production Park Ltd, a live events production company. The ultimate parent company is Production Park Holdings Ltd. The Academy was established in 2011 (as Backstage Academy) and its principal governing documents are its Articles of Association (amended 2 May 2023) and its Committee Handbook 2024-25.
47. The Council is the Academy of Live Technology's governing body. According to the Committee Handbook, it is primarily responsible for overseeing the Academy's activities, determining its future direction and promoting an environment in which its mission is achieved, and the potential of all students is maximised. The Council approves: the vision, mission and strategic plans of the institution; the appointment of senior post holders; the composition and terms of reference of the Senior Leadership Team and Academic Board; overall staffing and facilities plans; overall financial objectives and plans; and the annual operating budgets.
48. As of June 2025, the Council membership consists of one ex-officio member (the Head of Institution), three Production Park members and three independent members (one specialist, one industry, one academic). It also has two attending members – one staff member and one student representative – who do not hold voting rights. The Chair of Council is an

independent member. In general, Council members take decisions collectively; however, the chair holds a casting vote.

49. According to the Academy's draft committee structure, there are two Council subcommittees: the Academic Board and the Senior Leadership Team. The Committee Handbook also states that there is a Finance, Estate and Audit Committee, which is a subcommittee of the Council, but this does not appear on the committee structure diagram. The Academic Board has delegated authority from the Council to act as Academy of Live Technology's senior academic body. It is responsible for oversight of all matters relating to academic regulations, academic standards, quality assurance, enhancement and the student experience and for overseeing general issues relating to the teaching, scholarship, research and academic portfolio of the Academy.
50. Academic Board membership consists of several ex-officio members, as follows: the Head of Institution (chair), the Director of Learning, Quality and Standards, the Director of Student Support and Experience, the Registry Director, the Head of Postgraduate Studies and the Head of Training. Additionally, the Academic Board has four elected members: two staff representatives, one student representative, and one external member with experience of the UK higher education sector. The following subcommittees report to the Academic Board:
 - Course committees
 - Awards and Progression Boards
 - Assessment Boards
 - Review Board.
51. The following subcommittees report to the other subcommittee of the Council, the Senior Leadership Team:
 - Student Experience Committee
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee
 - Bursaries and Hardship Committee
 - Research and Innovation Committee.

Reasoning

52. To determine the extent to which the Academy has a credible plan to ensure its higher education mission and strategic direction and associated policies are coherent, published, understood and consistently applied, the assessment team met with senior leaders at the Academy and reviewed a range of evidence, including:
 - the Academy's strategic plan 2022-2027
 - the Academy's New DAPs plan and supporting documents
 - papers from the April 2025 Council meeting
 - Undergraduate Students Handbook 2024-25
 - Postgraduate Students Handbook 2024-25.

53. The strategic plan articulates the Academy's mission, values and overarching goals, as follows:

'Our Mission – to be a centre of excellence for live and creative industry education and training in the UK and globally.

Our Values – to provide the best possible specialist training and higher education experience for industry professionals at all stages of their careers. To facilitate the cultivation of new ideas and innovation by bringing all aspects of the industry together in one place.

Our Goal – to promote, prepare and progress our students' careers in the creative industries working with a diverse community of professionals, collaborating with the industry, building a world leading campus for the training new talent and skills, and enabling advancement through research and innovation.'

54. The strategic plan is structured around three key strategic objectives:

'1. To make Academy of Live Technology the leading centre of excellence for study and education in the Live event and Creative Industries, both in the UK and globally.

2. To become a fully independent and autonomous institution; allowing us to grow student numbers, diversify the portfolio and respond swiftly to developments in the industry.

3. To collaborate with external educational and industry partners to advance our reputation and influence locally, nationally and internationally.'

55. The Academy defines 'centre of excellence' as 'an institution that demonstrates leadership, innovation and best practices in live and creative industry education and training, both in the UK and globally. This involves delivering high quality, industry-immersed teaching and learning, fostering cutting-edge research, and developing strong collaborations with industry partners.'

56. In its written response to the assessment team's request for further information about its strategic objectives, the Academy stated that this is a strategic aspiration and that it would measure success by considering the Academy's performance in relation to national benchmarks, such as the Teaching Excellence Framework, the Research Excellence Framework, National Student Survey (NSS) results, alongside demand for academic partnerships and the level of engagement with industrial partners and professional bodies.

57. The assessment team notes that these measurement tools may help the Academy to monitor performance in certain areas, for example teaching quality and student satisfaction, but without pre-specified targets it will be difficult for the Academy to measure success against this objective – i.e. how will the Academy know it has achieved its ambition of becoming a centre of excellence? In the view of the assessment team, the lack of a clear mechanism to measure success may impact stakeholders' understanding of this strategic objective, which could also affect how associated policies are interpreted and applied. Therefore, the assessment team recommends that the Academy updates its New DAPs plan to include detail on how it plans to ensure that this strategic objective is understood and supporting policies are applied consistently.

58. The assessment team also noted that the Academy's mission refers to becoming 'a centre of excellence...in the UK and globally' while the strategic objective describes the Academy

becoming ‘the centre of excellence...in the UK and globally’. There is significant difference in meaning, which could affect stakeholders’ understanding of the Academy’s strategic ambitions; therefore, the team recommends that the Academy reviews its documents and addresses any inconsistencies during the New DAPs probationary period.

59. With regards to the second strategic objective, the Academy’s strategic plan states that in order to submit a successful New DAPs application and become a fully independent and autonomous institution, the Academy would need to produce a growth strategy. In March 2025, the assessment team asked for further information about the status of this growth strategy. A direct response was not provided, but the Academy advised that the strategic plan was midway through its cycle and a progress update would be provided at the April 2025 Council meeting.
60. The assessment team observed the Council meeting in April 2025 and reviewed the associated papers, including the Head of Institution report. The papers make no reference to a specific growth strategy, but the Council discussed the potential strategic expansion of industrial partnerships to enhance the student experience and increase employability.
61. At the New DAPs test visit in June 2025, the Senior Leadership Team told the assessment team that it aims to increase student numbers to 600 by 2030 (current student numbers are around 170), and plans to primarily achieve this through portfolio diversification, an increase in academic partnerships, and the introduction of short courses.
62. In a post-visit written submission to the OfS, the Academy explained that the reason it had applied for New DAPs in all subject areas (rather than subject-specific) was to grow its student numbers, as follows:
 - ‘New DAPs in all subjects would enable the Academy to expand into high-demand subject specialisms not currently covered under our remit—including mechanical engineering, computing, software engineering, business and finance, psychology, and the built environment. These fields are all relevant to the live event/creative industries and are critical to the continued growth of the live technology sector and directly support our mission to provide industry-relevant, interdisciplinary education.
 - New DAPs in all subjects would significantly enhance the Academy’s capacity to broaden and diversify its academic portfolio through meaningful, collaborative partnerships with other small, specialist institutions. These powers would provide the necessary autonomy and academic flexibility to co-develop and co-deliver programmes and modules that draw on the unique strengths of partner institutions, particularly in subject areas beyond our current scope.’
63. The Academy’s post-visit written submission also stated that it would make some organisational changes to support the intended increase in student numbers and broadening of academic portfolio, including adding more external members to its Council and the establishment of a Learning, Quality and Standards Committee; these changes are discussed further at paragraphs 102-104 and 110-112.
64. The assessment team considers that the Academy’s plans to grow student numbers and expand provision out from its subject specialisms to be fairly underdeveloped at this point, which is perhaps surprising given their strategic importance. The lack of clarity in this area

may also suggest that this strategic objective is not well understood by staff, students and other stakeholders.

65. The assessment team also requested more information about the Academy's third strategic objective, in terms of the Academy's approach to collaborating with external educational and industry partners. Working with partners features prominently in the Academy's strategic plan, and the team's review of Council papers and minutes from 2022-2025 suggests that it regularly discusses partnership opportunities. However, as discussed under subcriterion A1.3, the assessment team found limited evidence that the Academy takes a strategic approach to partnership development. The Academy intends to address this issue by producing a strategic partnerships document during the probationary period; according to the New DAPs plan, this will be available for review by the end of year 1 of the probationary period.
66. In terms of additional documents underpinning the Academy's overall strategic plan, the assessment team reviewed a draft staffing and development strategy 2026-29. This document states 'the success and the quality of our academic, professional and support staff is critical to achieve our future goal of becoming a centre of excellence' and sets out the strategic aims and targets associated with achieving this goal, such as providing support to staff who are new to education and increasing diversity in the workforce. The assessment team considers the content of the draft staffing and development strategy 2026-29 to be coherent with the Academy's overall strategic plan. However, the team notes that it is not aligned with the Academy's current strategy cycle, which is 2022-27, and it is not clear how the Academy intends to ensure strategic alignment after 2027.
67. As part of its New DAPs plan, the Academy has committed to developing the following strategic documents:
 - Strategic partnerships document
 - Learning and teaching strategy
 - Scholarship and research strategy
 - Student support strategy.
68. The assessment team considers the Academy's plans to introduce such strategic documents to be appropriate. Once in use, they are likely to assist the Academy in demonstrating that its higher education mission, strategic direction and supporting policies are coherent, understood and applied consistently. However, there is limited evidence within the New DAPs plan on how these documents will be developed, approved, operationalised and their effectiveness monitored and evaluated. The plan is also lacking in detail on how the Academy will ensure that strategies and policies are widely understood by key stakeholders, including students and staff. These limitations do not raise immediate concerns about credibility of the plans, but the assessment team recommends that this information is added to the Academy's New DAPs plan – so that the OfS can monitor how the Academy is progressing against its plans and ultimately assess whether the Academy meets the DAPs criteria in full by the end of the probationary period.
69. The assessment team considered the Academy's plans for publishing its higher education mission, strategic direction and associated policies. The strategic plan appears in both the

undergraduate and postgraduate student handbooks, which are shared with students and staff via the Academy's VLE. However, the strategic plan does not appear publicly, on the Academy's website or elsewhere. There is no information in the New DAPs plan on how the Academy's higher education mission, strategic direction and associated policies (such as those listed in paragraph 74) will be published.

70. The assessment team recommends that the Academy updates its New DAPs plan to make it clear how its higher education mission, strategic direction and associated policies will be published by the end of the probationary period.
71. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has an emerging understanding of the evidence requirement, which it has demonstrated by updating its New DAPs plan to include the development of several strategic documents which aim to provide stakeholders with additional clarity on areas of strategic importance. In the view of the assessment team, these changes are likely to support the Academy in demonstrating that its higher education mission, strategic direction and associated policies are coherent, widely understood by stakeholders and ultimately can be applied consistently in practice. To improve the credibility of its plans, the team recommends that the Academy updates its New DAPs plan to make clear how it considers the introduction of the strategic documents will help it to demonstrate the evidence requirement is met.
72. The assessment team examined the Academy's plans for ensuring its academic policies support its higher education mission, aims and objectives. In terms of existing arrangements, the Academy operates primarily in accordance with the academic frameworks of its validating partner, but it also holds increased responsibility in several areas of policymaking, including student admissions and enrolment, student complaints, and managing mitigating circumstances and extensions requests.
73. In preparation for awarding its own degrees, the Academy is developing its own policies and frameworks to govern the delivery of its higher education provision. Draft undergraduate and postgraduate regulations set out principles and procedures on a range of academic matters, such as admissions, assessments, awards, and course approval, modification and withdrawal. These regulations are due to be approved by the Academic Board during the first year of the Academy's New DAPs probationary period.
74. The Academy is developing a suite of academic policies to underpin its academic regulations, including the following new or updated draft policies:
 - Academic Conduct Policy
 - Academic Review Policy
 - Attendance and Engagement Policy
 - Course and Module Modification Policy
 - Fitness to Study Policy
 - Group and Collaborative Projects Policy
 - Mitigating Circumstances Policy
 - New Course Approval Policy

- Non-Standard Admissions (prior learning) Policy
 - Student Complaints Policy
 - Student Non-Academic Disciplinary Procedure.
75. Additionally, the Academy intends to review and revise the following existing policies during the first year of the New DAPs probationary period, to ensure they accurately reflect any changes made to processes subsequent to the Academy being able to award its own degrees:
- Admissions Policy
 - Applicant Appeals and Complaints Procedure
 - External Examiners Policy
 - Principles of Assessment.
76. The assessment team reviewed the Academy's draft academic policies, and found that they broadly aligned with what the assessment team considers are the Academy's key strategic themes of quality, innovation and industrial collaboration. For example, the New Course Approval Policy states that all courses must 'provide a high-quality educational experience, with support and appropriate resources to enable students to achieve or exceed the threshold academic standard set for the course of study', they should be 'informed by current practice and emerging developments in the discipline', and they need to align with a range of internal and external requirements, including the Academy's own mission and values.
77. To support the effective and consistent implementation of the New Course Approval Policy, the Academy has drafted a new course proposal form and a guide to course design. In the new course proposal form, staff must provide a written statement on both the strategic and academic rationale for the new course, and this proposal is then reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team, who decide whether to approve the course in principle.
78. The draft guide to course design also provides staff with recommendations and strategies for creating higher education provision that meets the needs of students and industry, with a particular focus on developing modular degree programmes, in preparation for the introduction of the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE), which the Academy is exploring as an option for expanding and diversifying its higher education provision. The guide discusses the importance of engaging with a range of stakeholders throughout the process and 'developing degree programmes through backwards design' to ensure intended learning outcomes align with industry requirements.
79. In the view of the assessment team, the Academy has created an academic policy which requires staff and others to demonstrate how any new courses will align with the Academy's higher education mission and strategic aims, particularly as they relate to quality of the learning experience, the broadening of its higher education provision (via LLE), and connection with industry.
80. On reviewing the remaining draft academic policies, as listed at paragraph 74, the assessment team found similar levels of policy alignment with the Academy's higher education mission and strategic aims. Policies have clearly been designed to support the

development and delivery of high quality academic provision at the Academy, including the Academic Review Policy, the Academic Conduct Policy and the Admissions Policy. Policies such as the Group and Collaborative Work Policy explain to students how group work contributes to a high quality academic experience and develops their employability skills.

81. However, the assessment team found that the Academy does not have any draft or existing policies or regulations governing how it works with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities to its students. This is surprising given that industrial collaboration features prominently in the Academy's strategic plans, and the Academy's commitment to offering students 'industry-immersed teaching and learning', including the regular use of Production Park specialist facilities and equipment on their shared campus.
82. As mentioned at paragraph 65, in its updated New DAPs plan (June 2025) the Academy has committed to producing a strategic partnerships document, which it plans to approve by the end of the first year of the probationary period. According to the plan, this document will 'provide evidence of an appropriately robust and effective decision-making process in relation to strategic partnerships'. It is not clear whether this document will include, or be underpinned by, any academic policies. This suggests to the assessment team that the Academy's plans are less developed, and therefore less credible, in this policy area than in other areas. This matter is discussed further under subcriterion A1.3.
83. In terms of policy implementation, the Academy plans to approve the undergraduate and postgraduate regulations, along with their supporting policies, for use during the first year of the probationary period. The New DAPs plan states that the Academic Board is responsible for approving these regulations and policies, and that the Academy will monitor their effectiveness throughout the probationary period. The assessment team considers that these plans are credible because the majority of the Academy's academic regulations and policies are at an advanced stage of drafting, and are broadly aligned with its organisational strategy.
84. Although the Academy's policymaking plans are less developed in the area of working with industry to deliver learning opportunities to its students, the Academy has already demonstrated it is capable of producing academic policies that align with its higher education mission and strategy. Therefore, the assessment team is satisfied that the Academy has credible plans in place to demonstrate how its academic policies support its higher education mission, aims and objectives.
85. To explore whether the Academy has a credible plan to ensure there is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in the Academy in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its higher education provision, the assessment team met with senior managers and reviewed the following documents:
 - Committee Handbook (draft)
 - Committee member profiles and CVs
 - Post-visit submission
 - Articles of Association (as amended on 2 May 2023)
 - Directors' delegation resolution

- Shareholders' delegation resolution.
86. There is emerging clarity and differentiation within the governance structure at the Academy. The draft Committee Handbook details diagrammatically the hierarchical structure and terms of reference for each of its committees. While the overall structure and scope of committees is generally clear, the assessment team found several inconsistencies throughout the handbook, including:
- The Senior Leadership Team is sometimes referred to as the Senior Management Committee
 - The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Committee is sometimes referred to as the Equality and Diversity Committee
 - The Assessment Boards are sometimes referred to as the Module Boards or the Module Assessment Boards
 - The Finance, Estates and Audit Committee is missing from the committee structure diagram.
87. These inconsistencies, while minor, may indicate that there are issues regarding clarity of function and responsibility. Therefore, the assessment team recommends that the Academy addresses these inconsistencies during the probationary period and prior to approving the handbook for use.
88. Several committees have nominated or elected students and academic staff representing a predefined group (e.g., academic staff or a cluster of courses). These include the planned Research and Innovation Committee; EDI Committee; Student Experience Committee; course committees; Academic Board; and Council. Nominated staff members serve for two years and student members for one. Staff, namely course and module leaders, are also ex-officio members of the Awards and Progression Committee and Assessment Boards.
89. As set out in its terms of reference, one of the Council's purposes is to ensure the Academy suitably involves a range of identified stakeholders (principally staff, students and shareholders) in the operations and decision-making processes, and to ensure that students have access to relevant information that allows them to make informed decisions about their studies during their time at the Academy. As such, various internal and external stakeholder groups are represented on the Council, as set out in the Background section of this report.
90. According to the Academy's Articles of Association, Production Park (the Academy's parent company) may nominate up to four Council members from time to time; current Production Park members are its chair, its CEO and its Finance Director, the latter of whom oversees the Academy's financial arrangements.
91. At the site visit, the assessment team sought to understand more about the differentiation of function and responsibility between Production Park and the Academy, and how potential conflicts of interest were managed. The Academy's Senior Leadership Team confirmed that, in 2020, two written resolutions were passed:
- In the first resolution, Production Park shareholders delegated authority for all management and governance of the Academy to Production Park directors, along with the

authority to appoint or remove members of the Academy's governing body or alter its constitution.

- In the second – and subsequent – resolution, Production Park directors delegated authority for all management and governance of the Academy to the Academy's governing body, along with the authority to appoint or remove members of the Academy's governing body or alter its constitution.

92. These arrangements provide the Academy with a high degree of autonomy over its day-to-day functions and the majority of strategic decision-making. There are limits to the Academy's authority though, namely any changes to the Academy's Articles of Association and any changes to control or ownership of the Academy. In the view of the assessment team, these documents, and the Academy's responses to the assessment team, provide clarity on the separation of function and responsibility between the Academy and its parent company.
93. The assessment team looked at how these arrangements work in practice, and the level of control that individuals from Production Park may have in decision-making at the Academy as members of its Council. The team found that the Academy's Articles of Association stipulate that Council should take decisions unanimously or by majority, but in case of a split decision the chair (an independent member) holds the casting vote. The quorum for decision-making at a Council meeting is 50 per cent of the total voting members of Council. The Academy's current Council membership consists of seven voting members, three of whom are Production Park directors, so although unlikely, it is possible that Production Park directors could control decision-making at the Council. The Academy reported that decisions have been made by majority vote to date, and that the owners of Production Park 'remain fully committed to their founding goal of delivering high quality, industry-embedded education to the next generation of live events professionals'. This suggests to the assessment team that there is strong strategic alignment between the two organisations, thereby reducing the risk of Council making unclear or divisive decisions about the future of the Academy.
94. In readiness for its New DAPs application, the Academy explained to the assessment team that it revised its Articles of Association (in 2023) to support the inclusion of greater externality and independent expertise; as such the Articles now state that there can be up to three independent members of Council, and the intention is that these members provide expertise in governance, the live events industry, and the higher education sector. The assessment team reviewed the profiles of current Council members, and found that there are now three external members, in line with the provisions of the 2023 Articles of Association.
95. To add further external input and objectivity to senior decision-making, the Academy plans to gradually increase the number of independent members of its Council over the duration of the New DAPs probationary period. The Academy plans to recruit three additional independent members from across industry and higher education, with a range of skills and a commitment to the Academy's mission and values. In the view of the assessment team, these plans are credible, and the proposed changes are likely to support the Academy in demonstrating that the evidence requirement has been met by the end of the probationary period. The assessment team recommends that the Academy updates its New DAPs plan to include milestones and timelines relating to the recruitment of additional independent members of Council.

96. However, the assessment team also noted an inconsistency in the Academy's governing documents – the Council's terms of reference, as included in the draft Committee Handbook, state that there can be up to four independent members, while the Articles of Association say there can be up to three independent members. Furthermore, the Academy's intention to recruit a further three independent members to Council is inconsistent with the provisions of its Articles. Therefore, the assessment team recommends that the Academy updates its New DAPs plan to make clear how it will ensure the accuracy of its governing documents.
97. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has a good understanding of how it can demonstrate that there is clarity of function and responsibility at the most senior level of decision-making (i.e. at Council-level), although inaccuracies were identified in its supporting documentation. The Academy's plans to further increase clarity on the objectivity and independence of Council are credible, provided it makes the recommended updates to its New DAPs plan.
98. With regards to senior decision-making as it relates to the management of the Academy's higher education provision, the Academic Board is the senior academic authority and is responsible for all matters relating to academic regulations, standards, quality assurance, enhancement and the student experience, and for overseeing general issues relating to the teaching, scholarship, research and academic portfolio of the Academy. The Academic Board operates under delegated authority from Council, and reports directly into Council. The assessment team considers that these arrangements are clear and appropriate for the Academy's size and context.
99. According to the committee structure diagram in the Academy's draft Committee Handbook, there are eight subcommittees and panels that report directly to the Academic Board, and three that report indirectly via the Awards and Progression Board. However, there are some discrepancies between this diagram and the information contained in the various committees' terms of reference, which appear later in the handbook, such as:
- The committee structure diagram shows that the Awards and Progression Board, the course committees and the International Students Committee all report directly to the Academic Board. However, the terms of reference for the Academic Board state that it 'receives minutes' from the Awards and Progression Board, it 'receives reports' from the course committees, and no mention is made of the International Students Committee.
 - The terms of reference for the EDI Committee state that it reports to the Academic Board and the Senior Leadership Team, whereas the structure diagram indicates that it only reports to the Senior Leadership Team.
100. The assessment team recognises that these documents are still in draft form, but in their current form they do not provide complete clarity on the Academy's academic governance structures and how higher education provision is managed. There is no information in the New DAPs plan on when or how the Academy plans to finalise and approve this handbook and the committee terms of reference contained therein. Therefore, the assessment team requires the Academy to update its New DAPs plan to show how it will ensure that the Committee Handbook, when approved for use, will set out clearly and accurately the differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in relation to its academic governance arrangements.

101. As set out in paragraph 98, the Academic Board is responsible for almost all strategic and operational academic matters. In the view of the assessment team, this large remit could affect the Academic Board's ability to give proper scrutiny to all relevant matters, thereby representing a risk to effective academic governance.
102. At the site visit, the assessment team sought to understand more about how these arrangements might change as the Academy grows and diversifies its higher education portfolio, in line with its strategic ambitions. The Senior Leadership Team explained that it had assured itself that the Academic Board operates effectively through a review of its operations in 2022-23, and that it had considered introducing a Learning, Quality and Standards Committee (LQSC) in preparation for the anticipated increase in workload and responsibilities brought about by the Academy awarding its own degrees and growing its provision. Ultimately, the Academy concluded that it would be unnecessary to set up a LQSC at that time, as it was confident that its current arrangements were effective, but recognised that, as the Academy grows, it would likely need make changes to academic governance arrangements to ensure they remain effective.
103. Following the site visit, the Academy reconsidered its plans with regards to the introduction of a LQSC, and decided it would be beneficial to introduce this committee during the New DAPs probationary period, to allow enough time to test the effectiveness of its operations before the Academy grows its student numbers and diversifies its higher education portfolio. The draft terms of reference for this committee state that it will be responsible for assuring quality and standards and enhancing learning and teaching at the Academy, and it will report to the Academic Board.
104. The Academy plans to introduce the LQSC during the 2025-26 academic year, although it is not clear from the New DAPs plan how the effectiveness of this committee will be measured during the probationary period; this information should be added to the plan. However, based on the intended scope and membership of the committee, which appear to be appropriate in the Academy's context, the assessment team considers that the Academy has demonstrated an understanding of how there will be differentiation of function and responsibility between the Academic Board and the new LQSC.
105. To understand more about how its academic governance structures operate in practice, the assessment team reviewed agendas, papers and minutes from Council, Academic Board and Senior Leadership Team meetings that took place from 2023 to 2025. In summary, these documents showed that each committee operated in accordance with its terms of reference, as the matters discussed aligned with those set out in the terms of reference and members were aware of the limits to their areas of responsibility.
106. The assessment team also observed a Council meeting, an Academic Board meeting and an undergraduate Assessment Board meeting, all of which took place in spring 2025. The team found that these meetings were well-chaired and discussions remained relevant to the agenda and order of business for that particular committee, indicating that members clearly understood their areas of responsibility within the academic governance structure. These observations provided the assessment team with additional assurance that the Academy has a growing understanding of how to ensure there is differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels of its academic governance structures.

107. During the New DAPs probationary period, the Academy plans to provide further minutes and papers from Council, Academic Board and Assessment Board meetings to evidence how function and responsibility between the three is clear, and annual committee reviews are planned for each December (discussed further under criterion E1). With the introduction of the LQSC to the academic governance structure in the first year of the probationary period, the assessment team considers it will be important for the Academy to clearly demonstrate how there is separation of function and responsibility between the LQSC and the Academic Board; therefore, details on how this will be achieved need adding to the Academy's New DAPs plan.
108. Overall, the assessment team considers that the Academy has demonstrated an evolving understanding of the evidence requirement, and its plans to develop academic governance arrangements during the New DAPs probationary period are credible, though lacking in detail.
109. To determine whether the provider has a credible plan to ensure the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority is clearly articulated and consistently applied, the assessment team met with senior leaders at the Academy during the site visit and reviewed the Academy's New DAPs plan, along with the following documents:
- Committee Handbook (draft)
 - Draft terms of reference for the LQSC
 - CVs of Academic Board members
 - CVs of Senior Leadership Team members
 - Committee action development trackers
 - Annual effectiveness report.
110. The Academic Board holds delegated authority from the Council to act as the Academy's senior academic authority. As set out in paragraph 98, it is responsible for the operation and oversight of a wide range of academic matters, and these are clearly articulated in the committee's terms of reference. As discussed, the Academy plans to introduce a new subcommittee of the Academic Board, namely the Learning, Quality and Standards Committee (LQSC), which will assume responsibility for overseeing, maintaining and enhancing the quality of learning, teaching, and academic standards within the institution.
111. In the view of the assessment team, this planned change to the academic governance structure and the rationale for doing so reflect the Academy's commitment to enhancing the effectiveness of its academic governance arrangements. The draft terms of reference for the LQSC are appropriate and clear, and likely to support the consistent application of the committee's functions. The Academy has not yet updated its terms of reference for the Academic Board to reflect the new arrangements, and there is no information in the New DAPs plan to indicate when these will become available during the probationary period. Therefore, the assessment team recommends that the Academy adds this information to the New DAPs plan so it can be reviewed at the Year 1 Monitoring Assessment.
112. In terms of how the Academy will demonstrate that the revised functions and responsibilities of the Academic Board are consistently applied, the New DAPs plan states that an annual committee review (for all committees) will be conducted each December. Following the site

visit, the Academy informed the assessment team that it was developing a process to review the effectiveness of the Academic Board on an annual basis. Drawing on the governance expertise of an external Academic Board member, the Academy is proposing a process to evaluate the Academic Board's performance against key terms of reference and examine its operation in a broader context. The Academy reports that this will be a reflective process, offering members the opportunity to identify key achievements and areas for development.

113. The assessment team considers this to be a sound proposal, and demonstrates the Academy's growing understanding of the need to monitor and evaluate the work of its senior academic authority to ensure its functions and responsibilities are consistently applied. To demonstrate how this evidence requirement will be met in full by the end of the probationary period, the Academy is required to add more detail to its New DAPs plan regarding the implementation of the annual Academic Board review process and when further evidence will become available for review.
114. Additionally, the Academy introduced a committee actions tracker in 2023-24. This spreadsheet captures all committee actions and details specific outcomes of how and who will complete actions, a timeframe for completion, and records when actions have been completed. The assessment team reviewed the committee actions tracker for 2023-24 and 2024-25 and found that actions assigned to the Academic Board and those assigned by the Academic Board to other committees align with the responsibilities set out in its terms of reference, therefore demonstrating the consistent application of its terms of reference. The use of the committee actions tracker also assures the assessment team that the Academy understands the need to monitor the work of its committees to ensure functions and responsibilities are clear and applied consistently.
115. To determine whether the Academy has a credible plan to have appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership, the assessment team reviewed the New DAPs plan and the following documents:
 - Committee action development trackers
 - Minutes, agendas and papers for five Academic Board meetings that took place from January 2024 to January 2025, which include unconfirmed minutes from the Council meetings preceding each one
 - Minutes from all course committee meetings (Live Events Production, Live Visual Design and Production, Stage Production Management and Postgraduate Studies) that took place during the 2023-24 academic year (three meetings per committee, 12 meetings in total)
 - Agendas and papers for six Council meetings from October 2023 to January 2025, which include unconfirmed minutes from the Council meetings preceding each one
 - Council agenda and papers, July 2024
 - Academic Board agenda and papers, January 2024.
116. The assessment team also reviewed the CVs of current Council members, which showed a diverse range of knowledge, skills and expertise from the public and private sector that will assist in clear and consistent governing of the Academy. The CVs of Board members and senior academic staff show a range of experiences relating to governance knowledge,

academic seniority and industry-related expertise. Reviewing job descriptions and the CVs of those in academic, operational and senior leadership roles demonstrates to the assessment team that the Academy has an appropriate mix of skills and attributes to provide the Academy with strong academic leadership.

117. The assessment team reviewed papers that were received by Council at its meetings over the past three years, and found evidence of strong academic knowledge and leadership at the Academy. A good example is found in the Head of Institution's report at the July 2024 Council meeting, which reports in depth on all areas of the academic cycle including student recruitment, regulation and reporting, access and participation, student support and quality standards. The report is factual, details all the work taking place in the Academy and offers considerations and opportunities for development, therefore showing that the academic leadership team can govern the Academy with depth and attention to detail.
118. The Academic Board also demonstrates depth and strength in academic leadership. Minutes from the January 2024 meeting show detailed discussion relating to drafting and approving the undergraduate academic regulations to ensure their clarity and suitability, including a written commentary on and evaluation of the draft regulations from an external member of the Academic Board who was invited to evaluate and review the regulations. This example shows how the Academy engages with its committee members to ensure they are continually working with their stakeholders to develop and draw on the strength of their academic leadership.
119. As discussed in paragraphs 94-95, the Academy plans to strengthen academic leadership at the most senior levels by recruiting three additional independent members to its Council, one of whom will be an academic expert. There is also the recent addition of an external member to the Academic Board, who is an academic expert, and minutes from Academic Board meetings demonstrate this individual regularly makes valuable contributions to discussions about academic regulations and governance, including supporting the Academy with its New DAPs application and advising senior leaders on making improvements to their academic governance arrangements – such as the development of a more suitable way to evaluate the effectiveness of the Academic Board.
120. In the view of the assessment team, the Academy has demonstrated that there is appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership, and it has credible plans to further strengthen academic leadership by recruiting more academic experts.
121. To assess whether the Academy has a credible plan to develop, implement and communicate its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff and students and external stakeholders, the assessment team met with academic staff and reviewed:
 - Draft Committee Handbook (containing terms of reference for all committees)
 - Draft Standards, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework
 - Minutes from Academic Board meetings, 2023 to 2025
 - Draft Course Approval Procedures and documentation
 - Draft External Examiner Policy.

122. In its application for New DAPs, the Academy reported that the development or introduction of new policy or procedural documentation is driven by several factors, including external developments in higher education policy at government level, changes to industry expectations, and other regulatory factors that impact both the Academy and, where appropriate, the wider Production Park group. Proposals for policy development or review typically occur as part of the routine work of the deliberative committees with delegated responsibility. Depending on the nature of the policy, final endorsement is made by the Academic Board or Senior Leadership Team.
123. The assessment team examined the terms of reference for the Academic Board and found several examples of where the committee is responsible for policy development and approval, including:
- The procedures for assessment and examination of the academic performance of students in accordance with the academic regulations
 - The procedures for the expulsion of students for academic reasons in accordance with the academic regulations
 - The criteria and processes for the admission of students.
124. As outlined in paragraph 50, staff, students and an external stakeholder are members of the Academic Board, and minutes from committee meetings over the past three years demonstrate these stakeholders' involvement in policy development. For instance, minutes include members' feedback on the drafting of the undergraduate academic regulations, and record where advice – particularly from the external member of the committee – has been considered and addressed accordingly.
125. In terms of how processes at the Academy are operated in collaboration with staff, students and external stakeholders, the draft New Course Approval Procedure and draft Standards, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework both give clear guidance on stakeholder involvement in the course approval process. During stage 2 of the process (course development), it is specified that the course development team should engage with one or more appropriate external academics, an industry representative/practitioner, employers, students, graduates and alumni. During stage 3 (course approval), the validation panel must consist of at least one external academic member, at least one industry specialist/employer and a student representative (not directly related to the course area).
126. In its procedure for making effective use of external peers in its validation procedures, the Academy has developed an external examiner appointment policy that ensures that such judgements cannot be prejudiced by any prior association with the programme team. Course teams are invited to nominate external members, but the process of appointment is carried out by the institution and approved by Academic Board.
127. Information on policies and procedures, and any changes to them, are communicated to staff and students through internal networks, such as the Academy's intranet, VLE, and twice-termly newsletters, and via events such as student inductions and staff development

sessions. All policies and procedures are available to external stakeholders via the Academy's website.⁹

128. The Academy plans to approve and start using the suite of academic policies it has been drafting in preparation for awarding its own degrees during the first year of its probationary period, including those described in paragraph 123. The Academy intends to demonstrate how these procedures are implemented in collaboration with stakeholders throughout the probationary period, and particularly at key milestones, such as the development of new degree programmes in years 1 and 2 of the probationary period, and the validation of the courses in years 2 and 3 of the probationary period.
129. The assessment team considers that the Academy has demonstrated how it will develop, implement and communicate its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff, students and external stakeholders. This is because the Academy has already designed suitable processes to include this collaboration, and minutes from committee meetings provide examples of this collaboration in practice. Additionally, the Academy has identified milestones in the probationary period, relating to the implementation of the new course development procedure, where it will be able to further evidence working collaboratively with its staff, students and external stakeholders.
130. To establish the extent to which the Academy has a credible plan to successfully manage the responsibilities that would be vested in it were it to be granted degree awarding powers, the assessment team met with the senior leadership team and reviewed a range of documents, including:
 - Draft Committee Handbook
 - Application for New Degree Awarding Powers
 - Post-visit submission
 - Annual effectiveness review of Academic Board update
 - Draft Standards, Quality and Enhancement Framework.
131. The team considered that the academic governance and management structures in place, and planned for development during the probationary period, provide credible assurance that the Academy will successfully manage the responsibilities vested in it were it to be granted degree awarding powers.
132. The Academy is confident in its ability to manage its degree awarding responsibilities as it has an established track record of working in partnership to deliver and manage degrees over the last 14 years, and expects to demonstrate this further through the probationary period.
133. The assessment team considered the Academy's current arrangements for delivering degrees in partnership with its lead validating partner. In its application for New DAPs, the Academy reported that it has a significant degree of autonomy under its arrangements with its validating partner. The assessment team found the Academy makes full decisions on students' mitigating circumstances, admissions and enrolment processes and has operated a local student complaints procedure for several years. The Academy also holds responsibility

⁹ See [Governance | Academy of Live Technology](#).

for managing minor cases of academic misconduct, and it chairs and operates Assessment Boards and Progression and Awards Boards on behalf of the partner institution.

134. Evidence suggests that the Academy successfully manages its responsibilities under this validation partnership. From the observation of an Assessment Board meeting, the assessment team saw that the relevant regulations and frameworks pertaining in this instance to the confirmation of marks, referrals, deferrals, outcome of claims for mitigating circumstances on assessment outcomes, consequences of academic misconduct case findings are appropriate, known to the relevant responsible members of staff attached to the Assessment Board, and implemented correctly. The observation supported the assessment team's view that regulations (for example, in this case how the Academy applies the outcomes of mitigating circumstances cases to student assessment outcomes) are appropriate for the provider's academic subjects. The observation supported the view that the Academy maintains, records and makes available accurate records of study to academic staff, external examiners, administrative staff, management and the validating partner.
135. In 2021, the Academy moved from a subcontractual arrangement to a validation arrangement with its partner following a successful review by the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) in January 2020. This demonstrates that the validating partner had confidence in the developing quality and governance frameworks in operation at the Academy and in its capabilities as a leadership team to maintain standards. In the team's view, this evidence shows that the Academy has experience of successfully managing responsibilities at a senior level, which has been recognised by other external third parties.
136. The Academy demonstrates through its committee structure and the terms of reference for the Council and Academic Board its structural capabilities to successfully and responsibly manage degree awarding powers. The key committees and their membership include staff and students which ensures transparency, and their remits confirm that the Academy has the structures to govern with appropriate oversight.
137. The Academic Board has approved an updated iteration of the annual committee effectiveness process which includes more narrative and reflective reporting. This will look more broadly across all areas of interest for the Academic Board, assessing its achievements and identifying any areas to improve. As such, it is a more effective style of report and gives the Academy far more direction identifying and deciding developments that need to take place in order to successfully manage its responsibilities.
138. As discussed at paragraphs 102-104 and 110-112, the Academy plans to add a Learning, Quality and Standards Committee to its existing committee structure to further support and manage the additional responsibilities associated with New DAPs authorisation (such as processing academic appeals, setting and maintaining academic standards) and to support growth in higher education provision and student numbers.
139. The draft Standards, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework comprehensively details the operationalisation of quality, standards and enhancement activities, including setting academic standards, course design and approval, and managing academic governance. Developed in partnership with academic staff, external stakeholders and drawing on the Academy's experience of delivering degrees in partnership with its validator, the framework refers to a range of external reference points such as subject benchmark

statements, the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) and the masters' qualification characteristics statement. In the view of the assessment team, this framework provides a clear overview of the additional responsibilities associated with New DAPs authorisation and the likely processes the Academy intends to use to manage these responsibilities.

140. The Academy plans to finalise and approve the Standards, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework and the terms of reference for the LQSC early in the New DAPs probationary period. It plans to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these arrangements throughout the probationary period – primarily through using them regularly to reach sound academic decisions and at annual committee review points. The assessment team considers that the plan is credible because it is specific and details incremental developments each year of the probationary period.
141. The assessment team's view is that the Academy has demonstrated it understands how to successfully manage its academic responsibilities, and during the probationary period the Academy's plans show how it will develop and progress effective governance strategies to successfully manage the responsibilities vested in it were it to be awarded degree awarding powers.
142. In conclusion, the assessment team reached the view that the Academy demonstrated a full understanding of subcriterion A1.1 as the evidence demonstrates that it is developing structures to support effective governance with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities. The New DAPs plan sets out how the effectiveness of these arrangements will be monitored and reviewed during the probationary period.
143. The New DAPs plan should be expanded, however, to include timelines and milestones for:
 - ensuring its strategic plan is published and widely understood by stakeholders
 - addressing inconsistencies and inaccuracies in its strategic documents and supporting policies and regulations (current and draft)
 - expanding Council membership and updating its Articles of Association to support this change
 - updating and approving the Committee Handbook for use – including updated terms of reference for the Academic Board and the inclusion of the new LQSC
 - monitoring the effectiveness of the LQSC
 - undertaking and assessing outcomes from the new annual Academic Board Effectiveness Review.

Subcriterion 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

144. The assessment team's view is that the New DAPs plan is credible in relation to subcriterion A1.2 because it demonstrates that the Academy of Live Technology's academic governance, including all aspects of the control and oversight of its higher education provision, is conducted in partnership with its students.
145. The assessment team's view is that the Academy has demonstrated a full understanding of subcriterion A1.2. It has established a clear framework for working in partnership with students across all aspects of academic governance and management of the organisation.
146. However, the assessment team has identified that the following specified change is required to the New DAPs plan and that this change should be made before the probationary period commences:
- The New DAPs plan should include timelines and details of how the Academy will monitor the effectiveness of its student engagement arrangements.
147. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the Academy's New DAPs plan and evidence which shows that, should the Academy make the specified change set out, it can be reasonably expected to meet the evidence requirements for A1.2 in full by the end of the probationary period.

Reasoning

148. To explore whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure students individually and collectively are engaged in the governance and management of the organisation and its higher education provision, with students supported to engage effectively, the assessment team met with students and staff at the Academy and reviewed:
- Draft Committee Handbook
 - Freshers Survey report 2024
 - Slides from training for student representatives
 - Agendas and papers for six Council meetings
 - Academic Board minutes, agendas and papers, 8 January 2025, which include unconfirmed minutes from the Council meetings preceding each one
 - Agenda and papers from Academic Board, 3 July 2024.
149. The Academy's Committee Handbook, which contains terms of reference for the Council and all its subcommittees, identifies staff and students as integral members of its committees. According to the terms of reference, the Academic Board, the four course committees, the Student Experience Committee, the EDI Committee and the (proposed) Research and

Innovation Committee has staff and student representative members. A students' union representative also attends Council. The terms of reference for each of these committees provides assurances that the Academy has sound frameworks to facilitate student engagement in the management and governance of the organisation. For example, meetings of Programme Committees and the Student Experience Committee cannot proceed unless students comprise at least 25 per cent of those present.

150. Student representatives are nominated members of Council and the Academic Board, meaning that they do not hold voting rights. Minutes from both committee meetings show that student representatives contribute to discussions and their feedback is recorded. There is also evidence that their feedback is acted upon; for example, the minutes of the October 2024 Academic Board meeting show the Student Union President voiced concerns about the marking of group work and how the experience may affect students, so an action point was recorded for the Director of Learning, Quality and Standards to organise a staff development session to discuss various scenarios with regards to group work and include student feedback.
151. The Academic Board receives reports from course committee. Student representatives from each year group of the programme attend each course committee which meets biannually or more frequently as required. Minutes show students actively engaging in discussion topics and sharing feedback. For example, students raised concerns about booking rooms and equipment, and minutes show that this matter was brought to the attention of the Academic Board during its subsequent meeting.
152. The Academic Board also considers feedback from the wider student body. For example, at the start of the academic year, the Academy surveys the views of all new students regarding their enrolment, registration, freshers' events and course induction. Collated survey responses are reported to Academic Board, along with recommendations for improvements in following years. The survey provides new students with an effective opportunity to share their experiences and voice any early concerns relating to their higher education provision.
153. Students are active members of the Student Experience Committee and the EDI Committee. During the site visit, the assessment team met with Level 6 students, some of whom talked about being members of the EDI Committee and contributing to the writing of the Academy's EDI strategy, which they found to be an interesting and rewarding experience.
154. Based on these examples of student engagement on the various committees, the assessment team formed the view that the Academy has developed processes to enable student engagement, and is likely to be able to provide further evidence of the effectiveness of these arrangements during the probationary period. The assessment team recommends that the Academy updates its New DAPs plan to include key milestones during the probationary period where it can demonstrate how it intends to review and monitor the effectiveness of its student engagement arrangements.
155. To facilitate meaningful student engagement at committee level, student representatives receive comprehensive training for their role, both as new committee members and returning members. This includes information about roles and responsibilities of each committee and its members, why student representation is important, and a discussion on what good communication and feedback looks like. The Academy also encourages student

representatives to meet with the clerk/secretary or the committee chair before meetings to discuss any complex issues and identify where the student perspective might be particularly valuable. The assessment team considers that these arrangements support student representatives to engage effectively with the management and governance of the Academy.

156. In terms of the wider student body, a mixed group of students met with the assessment team, and articulated that students were familiar with the Academy's committee structure and could broadly describe the arrangements for managing its higher education provision. The group knew how to become student representatives and how to use student representatives to raise issues and give feedback. Students also told the assessment team about the students' union and how its president attended wider committees at the Academy. This supports the assessment team's view that the Academy seeks to inform the wider student body about engaging effectively in matters relating to academic governance.
157. In conclusion, the assessment team formed the view that the Academy has clear arrangements in place for students to individually and collectively engage in the governance and management of the organisation and its higher education provision, with students supported to engage effectively.
158. The assessment team considers that the Academy can reasonably be expected to meet subcriterion A1.2 by the end of the probationary period, provided that it:
- updates its New DAPs plan to include detail on how it will demonstrate that its student engagement arrangements are effective.

Subcriterion 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

159. The assessment team's view is that the New DAPs plan is credible in relation to subcriterion A1.3 because it plans to formalise arrangements that will enable effective governance of its approach to working with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities.
160. The assessment team's view is that the Academy has demonstrated an overall understanding of subcriterion A1.3 because it plans to formalise arrangements that will enable effective governance of its approach to working with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities.
161. However, the team identified weaknesses in the Academy's initial understanding of certain aspects of subcriterion A1.3, namely the importance of ensuring formal arrangements are in place for managing risk when working with other organisations and the Academy's narrow interpretation of the scope of subcriterion A1.3. Despite these issues, the team was assured

that the Academy has recognised these areas for improvement and has demonstrated a willingness to review its arrangements and further develop its policies and processes.

162. While the Academy plans to introduce a strategic partnerships document during the probationary period to demonstrate how it will ensure that its management and governance of working with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities is robust and effective, there is a lack of detail in its New DAPs plan on this. The assessment team therefore identified this as a required specified change to the New DAPs plan:

- The plan should be amended to include timelines and milestones for the development and implementation of the strategic partnership document together with supporting policies, processes and arrangements. This change to the plan should be in place before any New DAPs probationary period commences.

163. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the Academy's New DAPs plan and evidence which shows that, should the Academy make the specified changes set out, it can be reasonably expected to meet the evidence requirements for A1.3 in full by the end of the probationary period.

Reasoning

164. The assessment team considered the extent to which the Academy has credible plans in cases where it works with, or proposes to work with, other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, and whether decisions to work with other organisations are based on a strategic approach, informed by the effective assessment of risk including the carrying out of due diligence.

165. The Academy currently works in partnership with the University of Greater Manchester (UoGM) to deliver learning opportunities to its students. As discussed in paragraphs 134-137, UoGM validates the higher education provision that the Academy delivers, and the terms of this arrangement are governed by a validation agreement between the two parties. The Academy has worked with its validating partner for 14 years and reports the relationship has been a positive and productive one.

166. The validation agreement is comprehensive, and clearly sets out the areas of responsibility and function for each party, such as admissions, assessments and awards. Schedule 3 of the agreement clearly assigns responsible person(s), in the form of job roles, for each area of responsibility. The agreement also states that there will be partnership management meetings between the two parties and annual reviews of due diligence and business planning.

167. A partnership oversight and development handbook, issued by the validating partner, provides the Academy with detailed guidance on quality and standards assurance; this includes details of the processes it should follow to facilitate effective monitoring of quality using student data, the meetings it should hold to ensure suitable oversight of the provision it is delivering on the partner's behalf, and a selection of templates that the Academy can use for recording actions and reporting performance issues to the validator. The assessment team considers the partnership handbook to be a helpful tool to support how the Academy manages its partnership with its validator.

168. The assessment team is satisfied that the Academy has robust and effective governance arrangements in place to operate in accordance with the terms of the partnership agreement with its validator, including the assessment of risk.
169. In its application for New DAPs, the Academy reported a partnership it has with Rock Lititz and the Pennsylvania College of Art and Design (PCA&D) in the USA. At the site visit, the Senior Leadership Team explained that Rock Lititz is an American company similar to Production Park in the UK, in that it serves as a hub for live events businesses. In 2023, the Academy set up its own educational institution at Rock Lititz, namely the Academy of Live Technology at Rock Lititz LLC, and designed and now delivers Academy of Live Technology branded higher education courses on-site. Currently, these courses are for US-based students and are accredited by PCA&D; however, the Academy is considering exploring future opportunities to offer a joint UK/US award with study abroad options. If any such opportunities were developed, the Academy would need to ensure it has robust oversight of these arrangements and that risk is properly assessed.
170. The assessment team found a lack of clarity in the information on the relationship between the Academy and its American counterpart. After speaking with the Senior Leadership Team, reviewing the Academy's organisational structure diagram and examining the information available to students on the Academy's website¹⁰ and in student handbooks, the assessment team reached the understanding that the Academy of Live Technology at Rock Lititz LLC is a subsidiary of the Academy of Live Technology in the UK and is marketed as its American campus. As such, it is not a partnership with an external organisation to deliver learning opportunities, but an independent entity that sits within the Academy's wider organisational structures.
171. The relationship that the Academy of Live Technology at Rock Lititz has with PCA&D is similar to that the Academy of Live Technology in the UK has with the UoGM, in the sense that PCA&D is the degree awarding body for its US courses. It is not clear from the documentary evidence submitted to the OfS how this partnership with PCA&D was established and how it is managed on an ongoing basis. The absence of an academy-wide policy or regulations relating to working with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities makes it hard for the assessment team to evaluate whether the Academy took a strategic approach to establishing the partnership and how it assessed risk, including the carrying out of due diligence.
172. The assessment team also enquired about other partners that the Academy works with, or intends to work with, to deliver learning opportunities. In its review of minutes and papers from Council and Academic Board meetings, the assessment team found evidence of regular discussions about plans or opportunities to establish partnerships with other organisations, nationally and internationally, to design and deliver learning, with a particular focus on short courses. However, the Academy explained to the assessment team that these were exploratory discussions and it has no plans to set up new educational partnerships during the New DAPs probationary period. Instead, the Academy plans to begin designing and developing collaborative curriculum frameworks during the probationary period, with a view to working with others in future years.

¹⁰ See [Courses | Academy of Live Technology](#).

173. The Academy does not currently offer formal, embedded, credit-bearing work placements or internships on its degree courses, and there is not enough information available yet on the proposed new courses the Academy intends to design and approve during the New DAPs probationary period to understand if work placements and internships will be included. At the site visit, the assessment team met with groups of students, who spoke positively of the opportunities to engage with industry while studying at the Academy, including the use of specialist equipment and facilities and opportunities to observe or take part in live events productions.
174. The Senior Leadership Team provided the assessment team with further examples of students being presented with opportunities to work with other organisations to gain knowledge and experience of producing live events. For instance, the organisers of the Rugby League World Cup approached the Academy to ask if its Level 6 students would be interested in gaining some practical experience of events management, in roles such as associate producer, floor manager, video assistant and audio assistant, which the Academy and its students eagerly accepted. In terms of how this placement opportunity was managed, the Senior Leadership Team reported that it considered which groups of students it would be most relevant to (in terms of subject specialisms) and then met with course leaders to discuss the content of the placement, logistical arrangements and the academic and non-academic support that would be available to students during the placement. Based on its discussions with the Senior Leadership Team, the assessment team considered that the Academy's arrangements for managing learning opportunities with other organisations tend to be fairly ad hoc and informal.
175. It is clear to the assessment team that students at the Academy have access to a variety of relevant and valuable learning opportunities with external organisations, which are likely to be beneficial to their current studies and future careers. However, without formal policies and procedures in place to govern the terms of these placements and collaborations, the Academy is vulnerable to risks, particularly those relating to the assurance of quality and standards and the safeguarding of its students.
176. After reflecting on on-site discussions with the assessment team about working with others to deliver learning opportunities, the Academy took steps to update its New DAPs plan, to include the creation of a strategic partnerships document, which will 'provide evidence of an appropriately robust and effective decision-making process in relation to strategic partnerships'. No further detail is available yet on what will be included in this document, but the assessment team considers the commitment to develop such a document is a positive step and demonstrates the Academy's growing understanding of the requirements of DAPs subcriterion A1.3.
177. Overall, the assessment team has formed the view that the Academy has a broad understanding of subcriterion A1.3, but there are weaknesses in its understanding of specific areas of the subcriterion, as follows:
- The scope of 'working with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities' is not restricted to formal validation or subcontractual agreements that allow other higher education providers to deliver degrees on the Academy's behalf. As such, collaborating with other organisations – including production companies for example – to deliver

planned or unplanned placements or learning experiences to students would be considered in scope.

- The importance of having effective strategies and processes in place to manage the risks associated with working with a third party, especially where students are involved.

178. The assessment team has also formed the view that the Academy's plan to develop policies and processes that will enable it to demonstrate how it meets subcriterion A1.3 is credible. However, the assessment team has identified that the following specified changes are required to the New DAPs plan and that these changes should be made before the probationary period commences. These specified changes are to include timelines and milestones for:

- The development and implementation of the strategic partnerships document, to demonstrate that the Academy takes a strategic approach to working with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities
- The development and implementation of policies and procedures to support the strategic partnerships document and arrangements for working with other organisations including:
 - the Academy's processes to assess risk, including the carrying out of due diligence, when working with or proposing to work with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities
 - details of how the Academy intends to ensure that learning opportunities delivered with other organisations are subject to the same robust oversight and governance as the rest of the Academy's provision – to include the setting and maintaining of academic standards and monitoring of quality, and the persons or committees responsible for this monitoring and oversight
 - details of how any new strategies, policies and processes relating to subcriterion A1.3 will be implemented and their effectiveness evaluated.

Conclusions

179. Based on its findings, the assessment team concluded that the Academy demonstrated a full understanding of criterion A1 and has a credible New DAPs plan which can be reasonably expected to enable the Academy to meet the criterion in full by the end of the probationary period.

180. The Academy has developed, and is further developing, structures to support effective academic governance with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities. The New DAPs plan sets out how the effectiveness of these arrangements will be monitored and reviewed during the probationary period

181. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has established a clear framework for working in partnership with its students across all aspects of academic governance and management of the organisation, and it will be able to further demonstrate the effectiveness of these arrangements during the probationary period.

182. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has plans to formalise arrangements that will enable effective governance of its approach to working with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, and that will ensure that decisions to work with other organisations are the result of a strategic approach. Where weaknesses were identified in the planning and oversight of working with partners, the Academy demonstrated a willingness to review its arrangements and further develop its policies and processes.

183. However, the assessment team has identified that specified changes are required to the New DAPs plan and that these changes should be made before the probationary period commences.

184. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the Academy's New DAPs plan and evidence which shows that, should the Academy make the specified changes set out, it can be reasonably expected to meet the evidence requirements for criterion A1 in full by the end of the probationary period.

Specified changes to the New DAPs plan

185. The team's view is that the following specified changes are required to provide a suitable basis for monitoring and further assessment of criterion A1. These changes should be made to the New DAPs plan before the probationary period begins.

Subcriterion A1.1

186. The New DAPs plan should be expanded, to include timelines and milestones for:

- ensuring its strategic plan is published and widely understood by stakeholders
- addressing inconsistencies and inaccuracies in its strategic documents and supporting policies and regulations (current and draft)
- expanding Council membership and updating its Articles of Association to support this change
- updating and approving the Committee Handbook for use – including updated terms of reference for the Academic Board and the inclusion of the new LQSC
- monitoring the effectiveness of the LQSC
- undertaking and assessing outcomes from the new annual Academic Board Effectiveness Review.

Subcriterion A1.2

187. The New DAPs plan should be expanded to:

- set out milestones and details on how the Academy will monitor the effectiveness of its student engagement arrangements.

Subcriterion A1.3

188. The New DAPs plan should be expanded to include timelines and milestones for:

- the development and implementation of the strategic partnerships document, to demonstrate that the Academy takes a strategic approach to working with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities
- the development and implementation of policies and procedures to support the strategic partnerships document and arrangements for working with other organisations including:
 - the Academy’s processes to assess risk, including the carrying out of due diligence, when working with or proposing to work with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities
 - details of how the Academy intends to ensure that learning opportunities delivered with other organisations are subject to the same robust oversight and governance as the rest of the Academy’s provision – to include the setting and maintaining of academic standards and monitoring of quality, and the persons or committees responsible for this monitoring and oversight
 - details of how any new strategies, policies and processes relating to subcriterion A1.3 will be implemented and their effectiveness evaluated.

Assessment of DAPs criterion B: Academic standards and quality assurance

Criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks

Advice to the OfS

189. The assessment team's view is that the Academy's New DAPs plan for criterion B1 is credible.
190. The assessment team's view is that the Academy has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion B1.
191. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows in summary that the Academy has developed transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it will award academic credit and qualifications.
192. However, the assessment team has identified that there are specified changes required to the New DAPs plan to ensure it forms an effective plan for monitoring through the probationary period, and to demonstrate how the Academy intends to meet the criterion in full by the end of the probationary period.
193. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the Academy's New DAPs plan and evidence which shows that, should the Academy make the specified changes set out, it can be reasonably expected to meet the evidence requirements for B1 in full by the end of the probationary period.

Subcriterion 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

194. The assessment team's view is that the Academy's New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion B1.1 because it has in place transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it will award academic credit and qualifications.
195. The assessment team's view is that the Academy has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion B1.1 because it has established transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it will award academic credit and qualifications. However, the assessment team notes the Academy's intention to review its academic frameworks and regulations to resolve inconsistencies and ensure that the documentation correctly reflects its institutional intentions. The assessment team therefore identified this as a required specified change to the Academy's New DAPs plan:

- The plan should be amended to include details of milestones for the review of academic frameworks and regulations.

196. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the Academy's New DAPs plan and evidence which shows that the Academy can be reasonably expected to meet the evidence requirements for B1.1 in full by the end of the probationary period.

Reasoning

197. To determine whether the Academy has in place credible plans for developing transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it plans to award academic credit and qualifications, the assessment team observed an Assessment Board meeting and reviewed the following documents:

- Undergraduate academic regulations (including assessment regulations) (draft)
- Postgraduate academic regulations (including assessment regulations) (draft)
- Committee Handbook
- Admissions Policy
- Mitigating Circumstances and Extensions Policy
- University of Bolton Academic Appeals Regulations and Academy of Live Technology (ALT) variation
- Academic Review Procedure
- Student Complaints Procedure
- Applicant Appeals and Complaints Policy
- Academic Conduct Procedure
- Student Non-Academic Disciplinary Procedure
- Attendance and Engagement Policy
- Fitness to Study Policy
- Non-Standard Admissions Policy.

198. The assessment team considered evidence to determine whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure that the academic frameworks and regulations that govern its higher education provision are appropriate to its current status and are implemented fully and consistently.

199. The provider's stated approach is to adopt practice from its validating institution and others, and to develop variation where appropriate. It intends that these regulations, as adopted with the currently agreed variations, will become the provider's established regulatory framework, and will remain substantially unchanged. The provider has agreed a 'migration strategy' for the implementation of its own regulations with its validating institution, and it explained to the assessment team that this is necessarily flexible due to the uncertainty of the timescale for achievement of New DAPs.

200. The team's view is that, overall, the frameworks, draft regulations and variations developed are and will be appropriate and effective if implemented as intended. The documents setting

out the regulations are thorough, clear and as concise as reasonably possible. However, there are some errors, omissions and inconsistencies in the documents – which the Academy acknowledges. If it is granted New DAPs authorisation, the Academy intends to conduct a final review of all frameworks and regulations during the first quarter of the first year of the probation period to resolve inconsistencies and ensure that documentation correctly reflects its institutional intentions. The assessment team's view is that this plan to further improve the draft regulations and frameworks is credible because the scale and difficulty of the task, in relation to the expertise and resource available within the permanent staff body, is manageable and staff are already alert to some of the drafting issues.

201. The assessment team has reviewed the draft undergraduate and postgraduate regulations (both from October 2024). These are concise, in part because they refer the reader to other documents for the detail of associated policies (such as course approval, periodic review, admissions, complaints). The regulations detail the credit and frameworks for awards, student registration requirements, assessment and awards board structures and overarching assessment and progression regulations. The contents of the regulations are standard and in line with current sector practice, in that the prescriptions for credit structure in relation to hours of study time, the amount of credit accumulation required for awards, the requirements for students to progress from level to level and be awarded, the mechanisms for controlling the awarding of credit and awards, the regulations controlling the approval of credit-bearing units of study and other fundamental aspects of academic control are unexceptional. These documents, as with others, remain in draft form and need final editing and reconciliation as above. The assessment team's view is that, when finalised, these documents will be appropriate and effective for the provider's provision.
202. An example of where the Academy has been developing its own regulation and procedure at variance with its validating partner is in respect of extensions to assessment deadlines for students. Whereas the validating partner's regulations (and therefore those initially adopted by the Academy) allow for students to request extensions in certain circumstances, the Academy has reviewed this and plans to change it. It intends to not allow extensions (although claims for mitigating circumstances will continue) and will replace the policy with instituting a marking penalty for late submission up to a certain point, as set out in the draft Mitigating Circumstances Policy. The assessment team's view is that this change is appropriate given the 'live' nature of many student projects submitted for assessment, the difficulty of enabling continuing access to physical resources for students who have received an approved extension to submission, and the possibility of perceived unfairness in assessment between students. Furthermore, the team considers that this example illustrates a careful, measured and detailed approach to managing the balance of adopting existing, tested regulation and policy, and developing institution-specific measures which will better serve its academic context and students.
203. The assessment team reviewed an Academic Review Procedure for student appeals that was pending internal approval. The Academy intends that the policy will replace the validating institution's Academic Appeals Regulations and Procedures and the provider's existing variation to that procedure if it secures New DAPs. In making variation, the provider sought to ensure an efficient process, with appropriate postholders making decisions in full possession of all relevant information. The variation and new policy enable internal consideration of student requests for academic review (appeals) in a timely manner. A Review Board will conduct academic reviews, as stated in the Committee Handbook, which is accountable to

both the Academic Board and the Senior Leadership Team. The Review Board is a unitary arrangement that considers all student appeals and complaints, appeals against findings of academic and non-academic misconduct, unsatisfactory attendance and student complaints. The policy sets out matters which it may consider as grounds for appeal, and those it doesn't, and these are standard and in line with sector practice. In summary, a student may make appeal on the grounds of procedural irregularity, personal circumstances affecting performance which could not have been notified prior to assessment, and regarding a penalty which the student considers disproportionate. Students may not appeal on the basis of academic judgement. The document clearly advises students how to appeal and the information to include in the appeal. It sets out what they should expect in terms of procedure and possible outcomes, and who or which body will be responsible. It informs students of their right to have another person attend a Review Board meeting with them (should they be called), and of their right to complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), if their complaint is eligible for an OIA review. The assessment team's view is that the procedure is clear, fair and suitable for the Academy's provision.

204. In addition to the main draft undergraduate and postgraduate academic regulations, which the Academy plans to adopt substantially in their present form, the assessment team has reviewed a range of associated policies. These include the Admissions Policy and Non-Standard Admissions Policy, for which the Academy assumes full responsibility, independent of its validating partner. Admissions are managed by an Admissions Team and entry requirements are established by the Academic Board. An academic member of staff reviews all applications, and the Admissions Team is responsible for training academic staff in respect of their responsibilities. Information for applicants, including programme specifications, is published on the Academy's website.¹¹ The Academy commits to informing applicants in receipt of an offer of any changes to the programme they have applied to, and to inform them of the options available. The provider also commits to providing unsuccessful applicants with feedback, upon request.
205. The Admissions Policy is thorough, clear, reasonably applicant-centred and takes appropriate account for applicants with disability or additional needs. During meetings with current students, these students told the assessment team that they had positive experiences of applying and the admissions procedures which aligned with the policy, particularly in respect of informing applicants clearly of what to expect as students (through, for example, open days and individual interviews). Students reported that their experience and curriculum had met their expectations. Furthermore, applicants can track the progress of their applications through the online student record system, 'OnTrack'. The assessment team's view is that the admissions procedures are thorough and effective, and aspects are applied in practice, although a documentary example of an application being progressed through the Academy's system has not been provided.
206. In addition to the Admissions Policy, there is an Applicant Appeals and Complaints Policy. This is clear, concise and is written in user-facing language with an appended form for making an appeal or complaint. The provider was unable to provide an example of an admissions appeal or complaint as none have been made to date. However, the assessment team considers that the procedure is fit for purpose, should it be required, being simple and

¹¹ See [Courses | Academy of Live Technology](#).

clear, allowing the appellant to state in their own words why they think the Academy's decision has been wrong or unfair.

207. The assessment team has reviewed the Academic Conduct Policy, which sets out the Academy's approach to academic misconduct. The team's view is that this policy is clear and fair, written in accessible language and well supported by course materials that alert students to conduct that both is and is not considered acceptable academic practice (for example in the student handbook, module guides and briefs). This policy, despite being a regulatory document, is written in clear and uncomplicated language, which makes the document accessible to students. The Academy gave an example of the policy applied in practice, for a case of a student's inappropriate and excessive use of artificial intelligence (AI) tools which contravened the policy. In reviewing the evidence, the assessment team found that the policy was applied suitably and consistently, and the process for handling cases in the sample seen was accessible, thorough and the outcome fair.
208. The assessment team has reviewed the Attendance and Engagement Policy. The policy is clear in its expectations of student attendance, requiring students to maintain a minimum 80 per cent attendance. Students not meeting this requirement are subject to up to three stages of intervention, intended to support students to improve their attendance, and there are additional requirements for overseas students. The policy explains to students why there are standards set for attendance, both for academic and regulatory reasons related to student loan and student visa controls. It clearly articulates how students may apply for planned absence and sets out acceptable reasons. Students subject to the unsatisfactory attendance procedure are informed of their right to request a review, and how to do so. The policy additionally sets out expectations for engagement and explains what is meant by that term. These expectations are expressed as codes of conduct for in-class, online and group learning, setting out clearly what is expected of students, and why. The view of the assessment team is that the Attendance and Engagement Policy is clear and fair, and likely to be effective if students are inducted into its requirements and purpose and its procedures followed correctly in practice.
209. The assessment team has reviewed the Fitness to Study Policy. The policy states at the outset that the provider recognises that it must operate under the provisions of the Equality Act 2010, that it is obligated to make reasonable adjustments for students with barriers to study, while protecting their rights afforded by data protection legislation. The policy is also clear that the Academy recognises a student's written consent in the event it needs to contact a student's parents or carers. The policy further states that it aims to protect and support students, while protecting the wider learning community from disruption. The policy describes the issues and circumstances that it does and does not cover, such as issues relating to attendance, academic performance or mitigating circumstances. In acknowledging the risk to vulnerable people, the policy states that staff should apply its procedures sensitively and may exceptionally vary them, to protect the subject of the procedure from undue stress, anxiety or harm. The policy includes a 'return to study' procedure with ongoing monitoring and recording; and notice of how students may exercise their right to a review of any decisions arising from the process. The Fitness to Study Policy is clear about how to raise concerns and about the three-stage procedure that staff must follow in handling cases. It states clearly at what stage staff must involve student support services, and at what level of seniority. The assessment team's view is that the policy is appropriate for the provider and is likely effective if followed as laid out.

210. The assessment team has reviewed the Student Non-Academic Disciplinary Procedure. The procedure has standard terms and is in line with similar policies at comparable higher educational institutions. It is written in clear, accessible language, avoiding unnecessary use of legal or technical terms. It states clearly its purpose and includes a list of exemplar behaviours that may invoke its application alongside the possible penalties. Therefore, the document is clear about what may constitute non-academic misconduct and the potential consequences of such misconduct. The case handling procedures for investigations and disciplinary hearings, and the responsibilities and authority of staff to conduct these procedures and apply the penalty where necessary, are clearly laid out. It clearly articulates the rights of those subject to the procedure, their right to request a review, and how to request this. The policy also informs students how to complain to the OIA. The assessment team concludes that the policy is clear and fair, appropriate for the provider and likely to be effective if applied as set out.
211. The assessment team has considered how the Academy makes its regulations, policies and procedures accessible to its staff and students and is satisfied that the practice of publishing them on its website as freely accessible documents is satisfactory. The assessment team has reviewed the documents available there and considers that it is a full set of the documents that any student or staff member may reasonably expect to find.
212. The assessment team concludes that the evidence shows that the Academy has in place a credible plan for developing transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it plans to award academic credit and qualifications. Where it has developed policies and regulations that are already in use, they are clear, focused, actionable and effective. Where there are draft policies and regulations prepared in readiness, the assessment team's view is that they are suitable for the intended purpose, likely to be similarly effective and that the Academy has the capacity to develop and implement them.
213. The assessment team considered evidence to determine whether the Academy has a credible plan to create, in readiness, one or more academic frameworks and regulations which will be appropriate for the granting of its own higher education qualifications.
214. The team has reviewed evidence related to the granting of higher education qualifications. These include the draft undergraduate and postgraduate academic regulations which contain full details of credit and award frameworks (including for conferment, classification and borderline decisions), assessment regulations (including summary details relating to reassessment, mitigating circumstances and late submission, and the main principles for external examining), regulations governing student continuation (including arrangements for students who have not achieved the normal volumes of credit), academic misconduct and student requests for academic appeals. The regulations are likely to be suitable for the Academy, and fit for purpose in being succinct, clear, fair and capable of ensuring the maintenance of sound academic standards.
215. The Academy's practice of developing relatively concise academic regulations that govern provision while leaving some procedural detail (for example, mitigating circumstances, academic misconduct cases, or external examiner procedures) to subsidiary policy documents has merit but there is a risk that any changes and modifications are not effectively carried across the whole suite of regulatory documents. At present the assessment team has seen evidence that this might be the case, as there are some errors, omissions and

inconsistencies across documents. However, it is understood that many of the documents are drafts pending approval and the Academy acknowledges the errors. If it is awarded New DAPs, the Academy intends to conduct a final review during the first quarter of the first year of the probation period to resolve inconsistencies and ensure that documentation correctly reflects its institutional intentions.

216. The draft academic regulations also set out the structure for how the Academy constitutes Boards to manage assessment, progression and awarding. There is a clear explanation of how the awarding of credit is controlled and how much credit is required for each stage of academic progress and awarding, through the academic regulations and Board structure. The provider maintains Assessment Boards for each course of study, although these are often conjoined, as is common practice, and an Awards and Progression Board determines the suitability of students for progression and awards. The regulations set out the responsibilities of these Boards and a separate Committee Handbook details their membership, terms of reference, purpose and reporting. The Committee Handbook also contains an appendix giving guidance to chairpersons, members and clerks to the Boards, which the assessment team found clear, detailed and useful. Samples of agendas for Boards and committees are suitable for ensuring the effective conduct of the meetings because they are comprehensive, logically ordered, appropriately cover the range of responsibilities that attach to the meeting, include reminders (such as to the confidentiality of the proceedings), and allow for members to raise additional matters to the attention of the committee. The assessment team's observation of an undergraduate Assessment Board showed that it was effective in ensuring that the Board properly conducted its business, in line with its terms of reference.
217. The Academy has also supplied as evidence a sample Assessment Board marks spreadsheet, sample Assessment Board minutes, and a sample Assessment Board outcomes letter to a student. The Assessment Board marks spreadsheet is a clear and effective proforma document suitable for preventing errors of recording or omission. The Assessment Board minutes are detailed, including recorded consideration of individual student matters and external examiner comments, which accords with the assessment team's observations of a separate Assessment Board meeting. The sample letter confirming outcomes to students is clear. These documents, taken together with the evidence referred to above, indicate that the Academy has a well-developed set of procedures and instruments for academic management, for applying its academic regulations and framework, and that many regulations and procedures are already applied in practice. The Academy has stated that it has no plans to vary these procedures if it is authorised to award its own degrees.
218. In conclusion, the assessment team formed the view that the evidence shows that the Academy has in place a credible plan to create, in readiness, one of more academic frameworks and regulations which will be appropriate for the granting of its own higher education qualifications. The assessment team considers the frameworks and regulations to be transparent because the overall structure of the framework, enabling clear understanding of the purpose of the constituent parts, is clear. The policies and regulations are all written in clear and accessible language and are readily accessible to any who might need to read them. The assessment team considers the frameworks and regulations to be comprehensive because they cover all aspects of the student academic and experience cycle, from application to graduation, with as many eventualities as can reasonably be expected to be covered in place.

219. The assessment team notes the Academy's intention to review its academic frameworks and regulations to resolve inconsistencies and ensure that the documentation correctly reflects its institutional intentions. The assessment team therefore identified this as a required specified change to the Academy's New DAPs plan:

- The plan should be amended to include details of milestones for the review of academic frameworks and regulations.

Subcriterion 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

220. The assessment team's view is that the New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion B1.2 because the Academy has in place appropriate plans for maintaining a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves, and of approving and recording subsequent changes to it. These records will constitute a reference point for the delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

221. The assessment team's view is that the Academy has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion B1.2 because it has established processes for maintaining 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.

222. However, the assessment team identified required specified changes to the New DAPs plan:

- to identify and state where responsibility for managing and securing the holding of approved programme documentation (including modification) lies
- to state how communication of any changes is effected
- to explain how the use of only current approved versions in delivery is assured
- to provide details of how the Academy ensures that students are proactively provided with accurate records of study and the functions of the Assessment and Awards Boards, student records system and academic registry in the process.

223. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the Academy's New DAPs plan and evidence which shows that the Academy can be reasonably expected to meet the evidence requirements for B1.2 in full by the end of the probationary period.

Reasoning

224. To determine whether the Academy has a credible plan to maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves (and of subsequent change to it) which constitute the reference point for the delivery and assessment of each programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni, the assessment team reviewed the following evidence:

- Programme specifications
- Module specifications
- Sample module handbooks
- Level outcome mapping table
- Sample student outcome letter
- Screenshot of OnTrack
- Validating partner's programme and module databases
- The Academy's website.

225. The assessment team considered evidence to determine whether the Academy has a credible plan to have and maintain definitive and up-to-date records of each qualification to be awarded and each programme being offered by the organisation. The team further considered whether the Academy has a credible plan to ensure that these records will be used as the basis for the delivery and assessment of each programme and if there is evidence that students and alumni are provided with records of study.

226. Currently, definitive records of programme and module specifications are held and managed by the Academy's validating institution and the team verified that the Academy has access to local copies. Sample checks confirmed that the versions of the course programme specifications held by the Academy, and published on its website, match the definitive ones held by the validating partner. If the Academy is granted New DAPs authorisation, it plans to validate and adopt current specifications as its own definitive programme documentation, subject to future periodic reviews. It plans to hold specification documents locally and share them with staff and students through an online portal, the VLE, and through links included in module handbooks.

227. The assessment team considers that the plan for adopting definitive programme records in a single location for access by whoever may need them, to note amendments to current documents on those documents and to remove superseded documents to a separate location is satisfactory and a credible plan for future practice and the establishment of definitive records of qualifications. However, the assessment team also considers that the responsibility for establishing and maintaining definitive programme records, and ensuring version control, is not clearly articulated.

228. The assessment team has considered whether the definitive records of the qualifications the Academy currently offers are securely up to date – in terms of whether it consistently records and implements course and module modifications and whether it securely marks obsolete versions of the specification as no longer current and archives them for future reference. The Academy has stated that responsibility for the maintenance of an incremental amendments

log, against which it can check versions of definitive programme records, lies with the validating partner. The assessment team saw that the validating partner's catalogue of programme specifications lists both current and superseded versions of the Academy's documents, with the superseded ones clearly struck through. Furthermore, the specifications note the current catalogue number in the document header, clearly detail a start date for the version, and note of previous versions with dates and catalogue numbers. There is in addition a note at the end of specifications summarising any modification. Module specifications are similarly headed with the date of validation and identifying code but are not struck out or marked as obsolete if no longer in use. However, this practice is normal, as the replacement of one module with another in a programme does not necessarily mean that the replaced module has been deleted from the catalogue; it may continue to be in use on another pathway or be reintroduced in the future.

229. If New DAPs are authorised, and it has validated its own programmes, the Academy plans to note programme and module modifications as in-use documents. It will remove and archive obsolete programme and module records in a discrete location in its institutional drive. (These will remain accessible in the event of, for example, a graduate enquiry.)
230. The assessment team considers that the arrangements outlined above for securing the use of up-to-date programme documents are satisfactory because the proposed practice of maintaining a single version of approved course documents, with amendments noted on that single version, and the removal to a separate site of storage of superseded documents, is a clear and straightforward control mechanism that will avoid version control errors if used as proposed.
231. The assessment team considered whether the definitive records of qualifications inform the delivery and assessment of the Academy's programmes and modules. The assessment team reviewed a sample of the programme module choices as set out in the Student Handbook and was able to confirm that the modules matched the scheme in the approved programme specification. The assessment team compared a sample of current module handbooks and their contents against the module specifications held in the validating partner's database, and found that the Academy uses the module specification as the basis for learning, teaching, credit volumes, learning outcomes, indicative content, and assessment items, credit weighting, and alignment with learning outcomes. Furthermore, level outcome mapping exercises ensure that a portfolio of modules in a programme fulfil the overarching programme learning outcomes.
232. The assessment team therefore concludes that the Academy uses definitive records of the qualifications in practice as the basis for the delivery and assessment of programmes.
233. The assessment team considered whether there is evidence that the Academy provides students and alumni with records of study. The Academy writes to students following Assessment, Progression and Awards Boards with a summary of their outcomes, and provided a sample letter to the assessment team. The transcript provided to the student includes details of the modules studied, the marks awarded and the credits accumulated. Students can also view their academic record (alongside timetable and attendance records) through the online record system 'OnTrack'. The Academy showed the assessment team a demonstration of this portal but found student assessment records unavailable.

Notwithstanding this, the assessment team considered that screenshots of the student view of the portal provided clear, user-centred and accessible information to students.

234. Alumni who wish to confirm their records of study can use an accessible contact field on the Academy's website. According to its retention schedule, the Academy keeps records of passes and awards for ten years.
235. The assessment team's view is that students and alumni can currently access records of study which are informed by definitive programme records.
236. In conclusion, the assessment team formed the view that at present the Academy, in collaboration with its validating partner, maintains definitive and up-to-date records of each qualification and programme it offers. The team also considers that the Academy uses those records as the basis for the delivery and assessment of each programme and that students and alumni can access records of study. The Academy's plans for establishing and maintaining its own programme records are credible because it has demonstrated that it understands the importance of doing so, that the plans are straightforward and achievable, and the Academy has the resources required to implement the plans. Its plans to provide students with records of study are credible because it has demonstrated that in part it already does so, and the existing process can be extended to fully meet this obligation. However, the team has identified required specified changes to the New DAPs plan. The plan should be updated to include timelines and milestones to:
- identify and state where responsibility for managing and securing the holding of approved programme documentation (including modification) lies: state how communication of any changes is effected, and explain how the use of only current approved versions in delivery is assured
 - provide details of how the Academy ensures that students are proactively provided with accurate records of study and the functions of the Assessment and Awards Boards, student records system and academic registry in the process.

Conclusions

237. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has in place transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it will award academic credit and qualifications. It further has in place credible plans for maintaining a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves (and of subsequent changes to it), which constitute 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.
238. However, the assessment team has identified that specified changes are required to the New DAPs plan and that these changes should be made before the probationary period commences.
239. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the Academy's New DAPs plan and evidence which shows that, should the Academy make the specified changes set out, it can be reasonably expected to meet the evidence requirements for criterion B1 in full by the end of the probationary period.

Specified changes to the New DAPs plan

240. The assessment team's view is that the following specified changes are required to provide a suitable basis for monitoring and further assessment of criterion B1. These changes should be made to the New DAPs plan before the probationary period commences. These specified changes are to include timelines and milestones to:

- Carry out the Academy's planned review of documentation to resolve inconsistencies and ensure that the documentation correctly reflects its institutional intentions
- Identify and state where responsibility for managing and securing the holding of approved programme documentation (including modification) lies: state how communication of any changes is effected and explain how the use of only current approved versions in delivery is assured
- Provide details of how the Academy ensures that it proactively provides students with accurate records of study and the functions of the Assessment and Awards Boards, student records system and academic registry in the process.

Criterion B2: Academic standards

Advice to the OfS

241. The assessment team's view is that the Academy's New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion B2: Academic standards.

242. The assessment team's view is that the Academy has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion B2.

243. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows in summary that the Academy has a credible plan for designing and applying clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications. The team's view is that the Academy is able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ and that it has a credible plan to ensure 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.

244. However, the assessment team's view is that the following specified change is required. This change should be made to the New DAPs plan before the probationary period commences, and should include timelines and milestones:

- Details on the further development and implementation of annual programme monitoring and review arrangements.

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

Subcriterion 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

246. The assessment team's view is that the Academy's New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion B2.1 because it has set out its plans to design and apply mechanisms for the setting and maintaining of its academic standards that in the assessment team's view will be effective.
247. The assessment team's view is that the Academy has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion B2.1 because it has developed a full set of policies and procedures which will enable it to establish clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications.
248. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the Academy's New DAPs plan and evidence which shows that the Academy can be reasonably expected to meet the evidence requirements for B2.1 in full by the end of the probationary period.

Reasoning

249. To determine whether the Academy has credible plans to have clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications, the assessment team observed an Assessment Board meeting and considered the following documentary evidence:
- Standards, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework
 - Undergraduate academic regulations (draft)
 - Postgraduate academic regulations (draft)
 - Course Approval Procedure (draft)
 - Periodic Review Procedure (draft)
 - Guide to Course Design at ALT (draft)
 - Programme specifications
 - Module specifications
 - External Examiner Policy
 - External examiner reports
 - External examiner nomination form and CV
 - External examiner email trail
 - Course committee minutes
 - Annual Quality Reviews

- Module reports
- Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review (2025)
- Access and Participation Plan (APP) 2020 to 2025
- Proposed annual monitoring process 2025-26
- Committee Action Development Tracker
- Stackable modules staff development document
- Assessment Board agenda
- Assessment Board minutes
- Awards and Progression Boards report
- Industry Partnerships Director job description
- Sample student assessed work
- EDI Committee minutes.

250. The assessment team considered evidence to determine whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure that its higher education qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ.

251. The team sampled module specifications across Levels 4-7 and found that the language of the learning outcomes closely reflects the language of the level descriptors in the FHEQ at each level. The learning outcomes of the programme specifications sampled accurately reflect the attributes that students graduating from a programme of that level are expected to achieve, in line with FHEQ descriptors. External examiners report that, in their view, the Academy maintains standards that are aligned with the FHEQ. The external examiners also believe that the expectations of relevant subject benchmark statements are met and that standards set and attained are comparable to other UK higher education institutions. This shows that the Academy can design and deliver programmes aligned with the FHEQ.

252. In addition, the assessment team sampled student work submitted in response to assessment tasks, along with the briefs set and the marks awarded. The team found the assessments require students to demonstrate achievement that corresponds to at least the threshold standards of the FHEQ. The assessment rubrics included in student module guides align with FHEQ standards for achievement at the levels of study and their use assists in the accurate maintenance of standards. As a validated provider, the validating institution is responsible for also ensuring that the Academy maintains academic standards and the assessment team notes that a representative of the validating institution attended the Assessment Board meeting that the assessment team observed and participated actively in the meeting when appropriate.

253. The assessment team concludes that the Academy's current higher education qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ. Therefore, the Academy's plans to deliver qualifications at the corresponding levels of the FHEQ – if it is awarded New DAPs – are credible because it demonstrates it already meets this evidence requirements through its existing practice.

254. The assessment team considered evidence to determine whether the Academy has credible plans for the setting and maintaining of academic standards to take appropriate account of relevant external points of reference and external and independent points of expertise, including students. The assessment team also considered evidence to determine whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure its programme approval arrangements are robust, applied consistently, and ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with the provider's own academic frameworks and regulations.
255. The Academy sets the standards of academic provision through the design of courses and their constituent modules, and subsequently through review. The Academy's draft Course Approval Procedure (draft, August 2024) and Periodic Review Procedure (draft, August 2024) require input from both academic and industrial external expertise, alongside contributions from students, in the design and review of its courses. The Academy has not as yet carried out these procedures under its own authority because it currently uses the approval and review procedures of its validating institution instead of its own.
256. According to its plans, the Academy will subject proposed new courses to a Course Approval Procedure to secure their standards, alongside other essential factors (such as assurance of adequate resources, or market viability). Staff requesting approval in principle to develop a new course (stage 1) must complete a new course proposal form in which they must identify and name two external advisers, normally one from industry and one from another higher education provider.
257. According to its plans, a new course that progresses to stage 2 of the approval procedures requires staff to consult an appropriate external academic, industry representative and/or practitioner, employers, students and graduates in designing the course.
258. In approving new courses, the Academy plans that new course proposals will proceed to validation (stage 3) and be subject to scrutiny by a validation panel which will include at least one external academic, one industry specialist or employer, a subject specialist from the professional or accrediting body (if appropriate), and a student representative or recent graduate. To secure appropriately qualified and independent external panel members, the Academy plans an appointment process concluding with the appointment of individuals approved by the Academic Board and has a full list of qualifying and excluding characteristics for external panel members set out in its draft procedure. The procedure provides criteria for course approval and asks those involved to consider whether and how programme developers have consulted employers, students and alumni and any plans to continue to engage with employers during course, if approved.
259. The draft Course Approval Procedure expects those designing courses to prepare reports from an academic adviser, an industry adviser, students and 'industry', to detail how they consulted employers and students, and to note the impact the feedback has had on the course design. It also provides proformas to guide and record consultation with employers which are thorough and useful documents. The Course Approval Procedure document's appendix 1 states that, in the setting of the levels of learning outcomes, the FHEQ, subject benchmark statements, and National Occupational Standards should be consulted as appropriate to ensure correct alignment for each level. The Guide to Course Design further explains how to understand and draft learning outcomes that demonstrate appropriate

challenge and opportunity for students, according to the level of study. The associated Principles of Assessment document gives advice regarding appropriate strategies for assessment at each level of study.

260. The draft Periodic Review Procedure expects external contribution, with Review Panels requiring membership of at least one external academic panel member, one industry specialist or employer, a subject specialist from the professional or accrediting body (if appropriate) and a student representative or a recent graduate. Panels will meet with student representatives at all levels of delivery of the course under review. As with the course approval process, the Academy provides an appointment process for external members of the panel and sets out a list of qualifying and excluding characteristics for external panel members. The Periodic Review Procedure is intended to support the maintenance of academic standards through consideration of the performance of the courses and their content, student outcomes and employment data, feedback from stakeholders, and the ongoing quality monitoring relevant to the period under review. To this end, staff will produce a critical self-reflection document. The procedure sets out the aspects of a programme that must be considered through the review process, such as student outcomes, the curriculum, delivery and assessment strategies and learning outcomes, in order to ensure that academic standards are properly determined.
261. The Guide to Course Design states in several places the importance of engaging students, industry and employers as stakeholders in the course design process, in the context of why this will add value to the process and outcome.
262. The assessment team reviewed the Academy's policy and practice in relation to external examining. The provider's External Examining Policy specifies clear criteria for the appointment of external examiners, including factors that would normally disqualify a person from becoming an external examiner for the provider. The policy also specifies a term of office of four years for external examiners. External examiners do not play any part in marking or moderation of marks, but the policy requires that they should provide commentary on the marking standards of the modules and courses – both in relation to the provider's regulations and to national standards – on the quality of the feedback offered to students and on the operation of the Boards that they attend. In addition, external examiners should have advance sight of assessment tasks, and be offered the opportunity to comment on those, and the overall quality of the provider's provision. The policy sets out how the Academy will induct a new external examiner into their role, what that role entails and what the Academy will do to enable the external examiner to carry out their role effectively. It describes how staff and committees and Boards will use and report on external examiner reports, and appends a proforma external examiner nomination form and report. All aspects of the policy and associated documentation are thorough and clear.
263. The Academy provided a sample external examiner nomination form and CV which showed the external examiner in question was appropriately qualified and appointed using the provider's stated process.
264. The assessment team has reviewed sample external examiner reports and found that these all confirmed the maintenance of standards at the appropriate UK threshold standards and comparable sector standards. The assessment team found that external examiners offer recommendations for enhancement. Observation of an Assessment Board confirmed that

external examiners contributed to the meeting and received assurance that their feedback would be acted upon.

265. The Academy provided sample course committee and Student Experience Committee minutes as evidence for review. While these meetings do not have the purpose of directly ensuring the maintenance of academic standards, the assessment team's view is that the students' opportunity to offer feedback at these meetings, and the depth and detail of feedback recorded, could alert the provider to emerging issues. In that way, the meetings may have some positive bearing on the Academy's ability to maintain standards.
266. The Academy has previously engaged an Industry Partnerships Director, whose role is to manage the provider's formal interface with industry. This post is currently vacant, but the Academy intends to reappoint to this position. The job description for the post (a 0.8 FTE post) details the responsibilities including to secure and manage relevant industry connections for input to the provider's courses and real-world experiential opportunities for students, as well as maintaining currency in the field in respect of emerging event and technological developments.
267. The assessment team notes that the Academy's procedures for course approval and review have not yet been implemented. The New DAPs plan states that little or no modification to the draft documents submitted is expected and that the Course Approval Procedure will be implemented for the first time in year 1, quarter 1, and the Periodic Review Procedure will be implemented in a planned revalidation event in year 1, quarter 3. Given that the existing courses and their content (modules, curriculum, assessments) have been developed by the Academy itself, and that the assessment team considers them to be of a good standard, the team is satisfied that the knowledge and experience to apply the procedures effectively with the desired outcomes exists within the Academy's staffing body.
268. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has credible plans for the setting and maintaining of academic standards to take appropriate account of relevant external points of reference and external and independent points of expertise, including students. This is because the policy and procedure documents covering the setting and maintenance of academic standards are exhaustive, clear and operable. Furthermore, the Academy's relevant policies stipulate the involvement of external input in detail and at each stage of the setting and maintaining of academic standards. The Academy's record of managing this to date indicates that it has the necessary expertise within the organisation to carry out its plans.

Subcriterion 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 Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). Organisations with degree awarding powers are expected to demonstrate that the standards that they set and maintain above the threshold are reliable over time and reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.

Advice to the OfS

269. The assessment team's view is that the New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion B2.2 because the Academy is able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ and has designed in readiness a well-developed procedure for doing this under its own authority. The Academy is also able to demonstrate that the standards that it sets above the threshold are reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies. The Academy has credible plans for how it will ensure that the standards it sets above the threshold will be maintained and will be reliable over time.

270. However, the assessment team's view is that the following specified change is required to the New DAPs plan. This change should be made to the New DAPs plan before the probationary period commences, and should include timelines and milestones:

- Details on the further development and implementation of annual programme monitoring and review arrangements.

271. The assessment team's view is that the Academy has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion B2.2 because it has demonstrated that it is able to design courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ and which are reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies, and it has designed in readiness a procedure to manage and assure this under its own authority. The assessment team's view is that the Academy's plans for ensuring that the standards it sets above the threshold will be maintained and will be reliable over time will be effective.

272. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the Academy's New DAPs plan and evidence which shows that the Academy can be reasonably expected to meet the evidence requirements for B2.2 in full by the end of the probationary period.

Reasoning

273. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure that programme approval arrangements are robust, applied consistently, and ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with its own academic frameworks and regulations.

274. The Academy's Course Approval Procedure (draft August 2024) remains a draft and has not yet been applied as the provider is currently a validated institution: therefore, the Academy's current courses have been approved through the validating partner's procedure.
275. The assessment team has reviewed the draft procedure. The procedure has three stages, and each is described fully and clearly. The Academic Board has the responsibility for deciding whether or not to approve a course that has completed all stages of the procedure. The provider's self-evaluation document provides the rationale for the approach it has taken. This includes mention of the external reference points that must be considered as part of the Course Approval Procedure, to ensure that UK threshold standards are met. External reference points include the FHEQ standards (2024), the QAA Masters' Degree Characteristics Statement (2020) and relevant subject benchmark statements. There are currently no applicable professional and statutory regulatory body (PSRB) requirements. The Academy's Standards, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework provides a further summary of the course development procedure and its requirements.
276. The Course Approval Procedure has an appendix providing guidance to those responsible for developing new academic provision. Also included are a suite of proformas to capture relevant information such as details of the new course proposal, consultation with employers and students, details of course and module specifications and assessment and learning outcome mapping. There is also a proforma to record the outcome of a validation event. The assessment team considers that all of these documents are thorough and fit for purpose, and underpin the Course Approval Procedure document.
277. There is also a Guide to Course Design at ALT (draft 2025), a Principles of Assessment document and related staff development material such as the 'stackable modules' document ('stackable modules' are a form of curriculum design that devises modules that can equally well stand alone, or combine into coherent programmes of study). These documents, intended for the guidance of staff responsible for developing new courses, provide extensive and useful guidance that is in line with good and current sector practice and aim to ensure that course design is robust and applied consistently.
278. The Academy's academic regulations (draft 2024) outline the course approval procedure, but refer to the Course Approval Procedure document for details. The draft Course Approval Procedure follows the prescriptions of the academic regulations so far as they are set out therein.
279. The view of the assessment team is that the regulatory and supporting documents are evidence that the Academy's programme approval arrangements are robust, can be expected to be applied consistently, and if used as intended will ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with its own academic frameworks and regulations.
280. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure that credit and qualifications will be awarded only where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme learning outcomes in the case of qualifications) have been demonstrated through assessment, and both the UK threshold standards and the academic standards of the relevant degree awarding body have been satisfied.

281. In respect of the assessment and the awarding of credit and qualifications, the Academy as a validated institution currently operates under the regulations of its validating partner. In preparing for New DAPs authorisation, the Academy has drafted undergraduate and postgraduate academic regulations, which include regulations for assessment and awarding of credit and qualifications. The Academy's New DAPs plan indicates that it intends to approve and publish these in the first quarter of the first year of the New DAPs probationary period.
282. The draft regulations detail what is required for students to achieve credit, to progress from level to level, and to receive a qualification by the provider. It makes clear the difference between the process for awarding marks for assessment and credit deriving from the marks. The regulations stipulate that only a formally constituted Assessment or Progression and Awards Board can confirm of marks, credit, progression and awards. The regulations also plan a Review Board to consider academic appeals.
283. The draft regulations require that the Academy's courses should align with the FHEQ, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, relevant benchmark statements, and any PSRB requirements. According to the draft regulations, awards will derive from accumulated credit, and it will award credit where students demonstrate the achievement of module learning outcomes, as identified by a marking scheme. The academic regulations also include assessment regulations, covering regulatory aspects of the marking procedure, whereas pedagogic aspects of how staff should appropriately assess students is set out in supplementary documents, such as the 'Principles of Assessment'. The regulations set out the pass requirements for students, the arrangements for retrievals (reassessment), when it will allow condonement, the consequences of late submission, academic misconduct and arrangements for mitigating circumstances.
284. The regulations state the requirements for a student to progress through each level of the course, and the circumstances in which unachieved credit may be 'trailed' (carried forward to the higher level of study to be achieved later). The regulations specify how the Academy will determine the classification of an award and 'borderline' student achievement (when a student is very close to the threshold for a higher classification).
285. The regulations require that each course of study must have an external examiner, and that the external examiner will be a member of the relevant Assessment and Progression Boards. The Academy's External Examiner Policy requires that before a Board may confirm a mark list or pass list, the external examiner to the course must have exercised their scrutiny and confirmed to the Board that they are satisfied that the marks and grades proposed at Assessment Boards are appropriate and that the assessment processes set out by in the regulations have been adhered to. The purpose of the external examiner, as set out in the Academy's policy, alongside confirming that the Academy's own regulations have been adhered to, is to use their knowledge and experience to consider the standards of assessment and marks achieved in relation to national standards and those of comparable institutions, and report to the relevant Board in respect of this. The external examiner reports provided as evidence show that the Academy's process is followed in practice and that the external examiners are satisfied that the provider's academic standards are secure.
286. The assessment team considers that the evidence provided supports the view that the Academy's applicable regulations and procedures, if applied as intended, will ensure that

credit and qualifications will be awarded only 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 is satisfied that the Academy does have, within its current staff body, the knowledge and expertise to apply its procedures effectively as intended.

287. The assessment team has also considered evidence in relation to the Academy's current practice. The assessment team has reviewed a range of student work submitted in evidence and is satisfied that the evidence shows that assessment standards are secure across all Levels 4-7; therefore the Academy awards credit arising from the marks only when the learning outcomes have been met and demonstrated through assessment.
288. Scrutiny of an Assessment Board agenda and minutes show that the Academy follows its current approved procedure for the confirmation of marks. Scrutiny of a marks spreadsheet, as presented to an Assessment Board, shows that the Academy has accurately calculated the student credits accumulated according to the marks entered on the spreadsheet. Observation of an Assessment Board provided assurance that the external examiners present were cognisant of the module assessments and student work related to the Board's business and had opportunity to ensure that the marks as presented to the Board were the same marks that they had earlier expressed themselves satisfied with. They also had opportunity to pass comment on the standards as they felt appropriate.
289. The assessment team therefore considers that the Academy's current practice demonstrates that it only authorises credit and qualifications 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. Its plans to ensure it continues to authorise credit and qualifications in this way are credible because it demonstrates a track record of effective mechanisms and existing practice in this area that it plans to maintain.
290. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure that its programme 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 maintained.
291. The assessment team considers that the Academy has credible plans to ensure its programme approval arrangements are robust and applied consistently (see paragraphs 258-261 for discussion of the arrangements). The Academy's plans, if applied as intended, will also 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. This is because the programme approval document states at the outset that any new course being proposed for development must meet the academic standards as set out in the national Frameworks for Higher Educational Qualification, and the validation report proforma requires that the alignment of the proposed new course with the national academic standards is verified by the validation panel.
292. The assessment team has considered the Academy's draft programme monitoring and review arrangements. The Academy's arrangements for periodic review (the process through which

the Academy reviews and revalidates the whole of a cognate set of provision) is discussed at paragraph 262. The assessment team considers the review arrangements satisfactory and that they will ensure, if applied as intended, that the Academy will explicitly address whether students achieve UK threshold academic standards and whether the Academy maintains the academic standards required by the individual degree awarding body.

293. The assessment team has considered the Academy's arrangements for annual and continuous or ongoing monitoring and review of provision. The current structure for annual and ongoing monitoring and review is set out in the Academy's Standards, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework (the Framework). This describes the purpose and principles for monitoring and review, and states matters that staff should take account of as part of the monitoring and review process. These include student outcome datasets, outputs from surveys and committees, student feedback, reviews of resources, and external examiner and employer comments. The Framework also states that staff should use national benchmarks. The Academy intends that its regular internal reviews and enhancement processes will safeguard academic standards, ensure the quality of learning opportunities, and promote systematic improvements.
294. The Academy currently completes annual module reviews and course-level reporting is incorporated into the Annual Quality Reviews. This process is intended to ensure that knowledge of student outcomes and delivery-level factors is shared and used to support the setting and maintenance of standards. Examples are: targeting actions at modules or student groups where improvement would be desirable, and to share good practice where the evidence shows good performance in respect of the achievement of standards. The Academy engages external examiners to provide independent comment on its provision, and requires that they should report on academic standards. Observation of an Assessment Board indicated that external examiners fully engage with the process of assuring standards, and the assessment team saw a trail of emails between an external examiner and a course leader discussing how best to assess group work. This provided further evidence of the effective use that the Academy makes of its external examiners.
295. The Framework stipulates that course teams should have annual Module Review Meetings and biannual course committees, and describes their purpose. Such meetings and committees are established so that staff and students (where appropriate) can engage in a dialogue to discuss their courses. The sharing of information in these forums is intended to ensure that as much knowledge as possible about the functioning of a course is shared, so that every possible opportunity for securing standards and enhancement is taken. The Framework requires that course committees and the Annual Quality Reviews send their minutes to the LQSC. As discussed under criterion A1, this committee does not currently exist; however, as part of the Academy's preparations for planned growth, it has now decided to institute such a committee, and has shared the draft terms of reference. The assessment team considers that such a committee will help the Academy to ensure the consistent application of annual reviews and to monitor the maintenance of academic standards. The draft terms of reference indicate an appropriate membership and purview.
296. The assessment team has reviewed sample module reports. Module reports are intended to ensure that there is a shared understanding through detailed knowledge of outcomes at module delivery level of how well the module is safeguarding academic standards. The reports are brief, containing summary student outcome data (first attempt, pass rate, average

mark), alongside the number of students and their average attendance, the response rate to a student module evaluation and report on comments provided. There are opportunities for staff to note strengths and areas for development in the module, and consequent actions arising. The module reports usually contain brief comments from staff, noting both what is working well and where enhancements may be sought, and give suggested actions. The student response to the evaluation is usually very small, or sometimes none, and staff summary of student response is often very superficial, or non-existent. The staff commentary on the performance of the module is similarly usually brief, although it is clear that staff feel able to introduce comments that are critical of institutional decisions. The actions suggested are in general focused and actionable, but there is no opportunity in the proforma to comment on the effectiveness of an action from a previous year.

297. Student outcome data is an important factor in understanding how well standards are being maintained. However, the student outcome data in the Academy's module reports is limited and not split by any student characteristic, nor is any benchmark, threshold or performance target indicated. The Academy explained that – in its view – the cohort sizes are too small for differentiated datasets to be of statistical or practical value, and that it considers that such use may breach data protection law, in identifying individuals. The Academy also explained that student outcome data is held and examined in more detail in other areas, for example at the EDI Committee, in the APP and in the Annual Quality Review.
298. The assessment team has reviewed the Annual Quality Reviews that include reporting on course performance. For each undergraduate course, there is considerable data and reporting on applications and enrolments, followed by data and comment on attendance, first attempt passes, average marks and achievement of 'good honours'. Institutional averages are used as an 'internal benchmark'; no other or external thresholds or benchmarks are included. Course leaders also report on what they know of graduate employment destinations. There are then summaries of external examiner reports, student and industry engagement and finally a note of good practice or innovation. As with the module reports, at this level of the Quality Review, the detail and analysis are brief, with no split metrics, no external benchmarks for student achievement and no reporting on the effectiveness of past actions. The 'cross-institution' evaluation of the year summarises the course-level data as above. It is not clear whether the presentation or synthesis of this data enables course teams to identify or mitigate against possible relevant risks, such as inconsistent marking or grade inflation.
299. Substantial detail from the annual NSS is included, including respondent comments. There is a commentary and analysis of the outcomes, with the need for action noted where considered necessary.
300. Section 5 of the Annual Quality Review is the provider's annual action plan. This includes a section on actions outstanding from the previous cycle, actions arising from the NSS, actions arising from module reports, and 'other' (for example, New DAPs application preparation or periodic review preparation). The action plan is relatively brief (in 2022-23, actions aside from 'other' totalled 11; in 2023-24, actions aside from 'other' totalled 11). It is noted that minor or module-specific actions are to be found in module reports. The actions do not normally comment on the performance requiring action in terms of data outcomes or targets.

301. Appended to the Quality Review for 2022-23 are external examiner reports, module reports, and a student support annual report. Appended to the Quality Review for 2023-24 are external examiners' reports, a student attendance report, a table of attainment data and a student support annual report. The assessment team considers that the student support reports are detailed and useful documents.
302. The assessment team has reviewed the Academy's access and participation plan (APP) for 2020 to 2025. It contains detailed data on the outcomes of the Academy's students, split by characteristics such as deprivation, minority group, disability and age. National averages are included as comparative benchmarks. Following the description of the provider's performance, there is a useful summary table of performance across the data subsets of student outcomes. There follows a section on the Academy's aims to address performance gaps, with target dates for achievement. This is followed by a section setting out the specific actions, desired outcomes and measures that will be put in place. Section 3 is the Academy's strategic plan for achieving the aims and objectives given in the previous sections. There is an appendix setting out how it will address OfS priorities for access and participation.
303. The Academy has completed an APP for 2025 to 2029. This document identifies the risks that the Academy faces to achieving its aims in respect of access and participation. It identifies interventions and desired outcomes to address the risks identified, alongside methods for evaluation. It gives data for student outcome performance for recent years, split by characteristics such as deprivation, minority group, disability, care leaving and age, alongside reference to data for national outcomes. Annex B of the plan explains how the Academy has constructed its interventions using academic sources to support accurate analysis and solution planning. The assessment team considers that the APP is sufficiently detailed, containing much relevant data and contextual information.
304. The assessment team has reviewed sample minutes from the Academy's EDI Committee. While the purpose of this committee is not to address academic performance, the minutes do show that the Academy is aware of the characteristics of its student body in relation to diversity groups, and takes actions intended to support them to achieve.
305. The assessment team's view is that, to date, the Academy's annual and ongoing monitoring and review arrangements have been satisfactory in some respects, but could be enhanced in others. Specifically, it is clear that the Academy does have full sets of data in respect of undergraduate student outcome performance for its modules and courses, and that this is carefully analysed for action at institutional level (including as split metrics). However, the module and course monitoring at 'local' level does not take account of much of this detailed data. Evidence provided in respect of postgraduate provision is limited to the postgraduate external examiner reports, the Academy's response and a statement from the Academy's validating partner that it is satisfied with the current arrangements. While teaching staff have access to the data through published reports, the view of the assessment team is that there may be a beneficial impact from asking module and course teams to address data subsets for specific student groups, in relation to such targets or benchmarks as the provider may decide to employ, in the module and course reports. In this way, the wider teaching teams are more likely to be aware of where the provider has attainment gaps, and aware of the proposed strategies for addressing them. The assessment team is aware of the provider's anxiety about the usefulness of data drawn from small cohorts; however, the assessment team's view is that such data is likely to be more reliable over time and could be issued with caveats if

thought necessary. The assessment team believes that concerns in respect of General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) compliance can be overcome.

306. In relation to the comments above, which were discussed with the Academy at the New DAPs visit, the Academy has now stated its intention to revise its annual monitoring arrangements in a way that would substantially address these concerns. In the post-visit submission, the Academy states that it will institute 'a more focused, course-centred monitoring process with the existing provision as soon as possible', and that 'course leaders will be asked to comment on a broader range of data'. It states that it intends to include postgraduate annual monitoring in the same proposed procedure. The data that course leaders will be asked to comment on is set out in a table and includes data related to student population subsets. The Academy also intends to introduce benchmarking. Documents associated with the development in practice have been supplied: an Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review and a proposed annual monitoring process. The Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review document sets out a list of questions that course leaders should ask themselves to help reflect constructively on the data while conducting course reviews, and there is a column to give benchmarks. The annual monitoring process document sets out the procedure for termly and annual review. The assessment team considers that this change in procedure will address the concerns identified – if carried out as described in the documents and applied to both undergraduate and postgraduate provision. Therefore, the assessment team identified this as a specified required change to the New DAPs plan. The plan should be updated before the start of any New DAPs monitoring period to include timelines and milestones for the further development and implementation of annual programme monitoring and review arrangements.
307. The assessment team has determined that the Academy's programme approval, monitoring and review arrangements are largely 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. Where weaknesses have been identified by the assessment team, such as those relating to the level of data analysis, the Academy has responded quickly and appropriately to update its plans for strengthening its programme monitoring and review arrangements. Should the specified change be made to its New DAPs plan prior to commencement of the probationary period, the assessment team considers that the Academy has a credible plan because the documents provided indicate a clear understanding of the requirements and provide a clear workable structure and process for ensuring that standards are met.
308. The assessment team has considered whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure that, in establishing, and then maintaining, threshold academic standards and comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications, it makes use of appropriate external and independent expertise.
309. The provider's Course Approval Procedure (draft 2024) stipulates that external expertise must be used in course design, so that academic standards are addressed appropriately. It requires the use of both individuals (such as employers, industry representatives and external academics) and sources (such as subject benchmark statements, FHEQ standards and academic tools such as taxonomies). The Course Approval Procedure specifies the number and type of external experts that should be engaged in the procedure and secures the proper conduct of the procedure through the use of standard proformas that must accompany a

proposed new course to validation. The procedure requires reports from an academic adviser, an industry adviser, students and 'industry'. In respect of the individuals who will sit as external validation panel members, there is an appointment process to ensure appropriately qualified and independent appointments. The Academy's Guide to Course Design (draft) advises that 'stakeholder engagement' is critical to effective course design.

310. The assessment team is satisfied that the Academy's External Examiner Policy and appointment procedure will ensure the appointment of individuals suitably qualified to contribute to ensuring the setting and maintaining of standards. The assessment team's scrutiny of their appointment, reports and communication with the Academy confirms that they are an effective asset to the it in setting and maintaining standards and specifically in assuring comparability with standards at other providers offering qualifications at the same levels.
311. The assessment team is satisfied that the Academy's procedures ensure that the external individuals charged with contributing to the establishing and maintaining of standards are suitably independent.
312. The assessment team therefore considers that the Academy makes use of appropriate external and independent expertise in establishing, and then maintaining, threshold academic standards and comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications.
313. In conclusion, the assessment team found that the Academy has a credible plan to ensure that, in establishing, and then maintaining, threshold academic standards and comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications, it makes use of appropriate external and independent expertise because its policy and procedure ensures the appointment of a range of appropriate and suitably qualified external contributors, and engages them meaningfully and in depth in well-designed procedures to ensure that academic standards are established and maintained.

Conclusions

314. In conclusion, the assessment team formed the view that the Academy has credible plans to design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) because it has a track record of doing so as a validated institution, and has well-designed procedures in place to do so under its own authority.
315. The assessment team considers that the Academy has a credible plan to demonstrate that the standards that it sets and maintains above the threshold will be reliable over time and will be reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies. In the team's view, existing processes, together with the plans that the Academy has set out for changes and enhancements to its quality monitoring and action planning processes, will be effective.
316. The assessment team advises that the effectiveness of the proposed new structures and practice for ongoing termly and annual monitoring and review during the New DAPs probationary period should be subject to review in probationary assessments.

317. The assessment team's view is that the following specified change is required to provide a suitable basis for monitoring and further assessment of criterion B2:

- The plan should be updated before the start of the New DAPs probationary period to include timelines and milestones for the further development and implementation of annual programme monitoring and review arrangements.

318. The assessment team concluded that if the plan is amended to reflect these specified changes, it will form a credible New DAPs plan which can be reasonably expected to enable the Academy to meet criterion B2 in full by the end of the probationary period.

Specified changes to the New DAPs plan

319. The assessment team's view is that the following specified change is required. This change should be made to the New DAPs plan before the probationary period commences, and should include timelines and milestones:

- Details on the further development and implementation of annual programme monitoring and review arrangements.

Criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience

Advice to the OfS

320. The assessment team's view is that the Academy's New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience.
321. The assessment team's view is that the Academy has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion B3.
322. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows in summary that the Academy is able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience to all students and that the learning opportunities will be rigorously quality assured.
323. However, the team identified some areas that should be monitored during the first year of the Academy's probationary period regarding the learning and teaching strategy, new VLE and revisions to its quality review procedures.
324. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the Academy's New DAPs plan and evidence which shows that it can be reasonably expected to meet the evidence requirements for B3 in full by the end of the probationary period.

Subcriterion 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.

Reasoning

325. The assessment team determined whether the Academy has a credible plan to demonstrate 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 educational background or nationality and that learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured. To do this, the team observed a meeting of the Assessment Board and reviewed the following evidence:
- New Course Approval Process (draft)
 - Guide to Course Design (draft)
 - Undergraduate academic regulations (draft)
 - Postgraduate academic regulations (draft)
 - Staff development strategy

- Staff development timetables
- Principles of assessment document
- Stackable modules
- Programme specifications
- Level outcomes map
- Risk assessments
- Boot camp schedule
- Software list
- Regulations for the use of computer facilities
- Harassment, Bullying and Sexual Misconduct Regulations
- EDI Policy
- Attendance and Engagement Policy
- Personal tutorial scheme
- Screenshot of OnTrack
- Internal moderation form
- Sample student work and assessments
- Sample module specifications
- Sample module guides
- Academic Misconduct Procedure
- Undergraduate Student Handbook
- Postgraduate Student Handbook
- External Examiner Policy
- External examiner reports
- Assessment and Progression and Awards Boards Report
- Academic Review Procedure
- Committee Handbook
- Student Complaint Procedure.

Design and approval of programmes

326. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to operate effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes.

327. The Academy has not as yet carried out these procedures under its own authority. It has developed the courses and modules that it currently offers in line with the policy and regulation of the validating institution. The assessment team has found that the courses and modules currently in use are of a good standard in all respects, indicating that the procedures in use to guide and secure the quality of newly developed provision has been effective, and that the provider has the capacity to effectively use those procedures. It has drafted a new

course approval process (draft 2024) as discussed under criterion B2. The draft new course approval process has elements in common with that of the validating institution but has been further developed to include more guidance to staff, and a full set of the proformas that are required to be used by those involved in the procedure. This indicates to the assessment team that the Academy has considered its previous experience of programme development and sought ways to improve the process.

328. The Academy's draft procedure is a detailed and thorough document with attachments and appendices that will help those preparing courses for approval. It sets out what must be done to comply with the provider's regulations, and offers guidance to those developing the new provision on matters to consider. It closely specifies a validation procedure to ensure that it thoroughly scrutinises proposed new courses for all aspects of compliance and good pedagogic practice. The Academy intends to implement the new course approval process for the first time in year 1, quarter 1, if New DAPs are authorised, initially for a limited range of new courses. If the process is carried out as intended, the team's view is that it will secure new course provision of a high quality, offering relevant, accessible, employment-focused education.
329. The assessment team is satisfied that the Academy has credible plans for operating effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes. This is because the plans show that the process is thorough, has extensive guidance for those undertaking the task, has clear and appropriate oversight and approval mechanisms, and includes all necessary stakeholders.
330. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure that relevant staff are informed of, and provided with, guidance and support on course design development, approval procedures and their roles and responsibilities in relation to them.
331. The draft new course approval document (2024) provides detailed and helpful guidance to staff developing new courses as well as specifying the approval process and its requirements. It is supplemented by a draft Guide to Course Design (2025) which provides a well-judged balance of current UK higher education context, educational principles for curriculum design, explanations of pedagogic terms and meaning with references to key sources, while remaining accessible to staff who may not have a background in pedagogy. It clearly sets out whom one should consult in the course development and validation process, their responsibilities, and that only the Academic Board has the authority to approve a new course. To support course design and delivery, a principles of assessment document sets out how the Academy regulates assessment, offers guidance on how and why to assess, and on effective, accessible, inclusive and fair assessment strategies.
332. The Academy has provided a sample staff training document on 'stackable modules' which provides evidence that the Academy offers purpose-designed staff training and development that is relevant to its courses and students, and up to date in recognising the educational context that will help staff in designing or modifying courses. The Academy has also submitted its Staff Development Strategy and sample staff development timetables which indicate a managed approach to staff development. The Academy has stated its intention to further enhance the training and development that it offers to its staff, in preparation for exercising degree awarding powers. However, there is limited detail on what this will include (wider staff training and development plans are discussed under criterion C1).

333. The assessment team considers that the Academy has credible plans to ensure relevant staff are informed of, and provided with, guidance and support on course design development, approval procedures and their roles and responsibilities in relation to them. It has already drafted comprehensive guidance for staff, and provided some staff training.
334. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure responsibility for approving new programme proposals is clearly assigned, including the involvement of external expertise, where appropriate, and subsequent action is carefully monitored.
335. The draft new course approval document (2024) clearly assigns responsibility for approving new programmes to the Academic Board. The Academy has no courses regulated by PSRBs other than by the OfS, and as such does not need to involve external experts in approving courses, although its policy requires significant external involvement in course development. When the Academy approves courses subject to conditions, the policy sets out the subsequent action required to fulfil conditions, and those responsible. The template validation report (included as an appendix to the draft course approval document) has a section recording conditions and recommendations, and a further section requiring description of the action taken to address the conditions. This is the final section before the fields for signatures of the Chairs of the Validation Panel and Academic Board, meaning that oversight of the conditions, and the actions taken to satisfy them, is at a senior level.
336. The assessment team has determined the Academy has a credible plan for ensuring that responsibility for approving new programme proposals will be clearly assigned, including the involvement of external expertise where appropriate, and subsequent action will be carefully monitored. This is because the plans show that the Academy has identified a clear academic authority (Academic Board) for approving courses and monitoring any implementation conditions.
337. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure the coherence of programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways is secured and maintained.
338. The Academy states that at present it has no provision with multiple elements or alternative pathways, other than the option of studying Live Events Production at foundation degree or bachelors' degree level. However, its courses contain 'multiple elements' in the form of optional modules. The Academy intends that the coherence of its courses with optional modules will be assured by the programme specification. This will stipulate available optional modules, together with a level outcomes map, which will map learning outcomes by module across a course. This is intended to ensure that whichever programme of modules is taken by a student, the selection of core and option modules together will fulfil the overarching programme's learning outcomes. The Academy has developed its own programme and module specification templates with associated assessment and learning outcome mapping grids. The assessment team is satisfied that the documents produced for future use will ensure the coherence of its programmes. The assessment team considers that this is a secure means of assuring the coherence of a programme.
339. The assessment team's view is that the Academy has credible plans to ensure the coherence of programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways is secured and maintained

because the risk is contained to courses with optional modules, and the provider has a secure process to manage that risk.

340. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure close links are maintained between learning support services and the organisation's programme planning and approval arrangements.
341. The Academy's draft new course approval document (2024) states that the teaching and learning methods of a proposed new course should consider adaptations for students with additional needs, but does not make clear how this should be done. An appendix states in several places that those designing courses should consider the needs of those with a disability, and ensure that student support is in place, but does not state how this should be done, nor whom to consult. The Academy has acknowledged 'that the involvement of the support team could be made more explicit and will undertake to revise the process documentation to make this clear'. The New DAPs plan states that if New DAPs are authorised, the Academy will revise this document in the first quarter of the first year of a probationary period.
342. The assessment team's view is that since the need to do this is proactively stated in the self-evaluation document, the Academy has a credible plan to establish and maintain close links between learning support services and the organisation's programme planning and approval arrangements. Revision of the process document as stated (to take place in year 1 quarter 1 according to the New DAPs plan) will ensure that the necessary communication between learning support services and those developing new course provision will be secured.

Learning and teaching

343. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure it articulates and implements a strategic approach to learning and teaching which is consistent with its stated academic objectives.
344. The Academy plans to develop a learning, teaching and assessment strategy document, by quarter one of the second year of a probationary period if it is awarded New DAPs. Despite not having an overarching document that articulates a strategic approach to learning and teaching, elements of a strategy are elsewhere. While not prepared for its own functions, the self-evaluation document the Academy prepared for the New DAPs test articulates a standard pedagogical approach to education at Levels 4, 5 and 6 of 'equip, develop and consolidate' respectively. The Academy's stated approach makes particular mention of the importance of external input from industry professionals and work-based learning opportunities for its students. The Principles of Assessment document evidences good, detailed knowledge of current thinking and practice about assessment in higher education. Course development and staff guidance documents also evidence a strategic approach to learning, teaching and assessment. Collectively, these documents indicate that the Academy has the expertise to develop its planned effective and consolidated learning, teaching and assessment strategy.
345. The assessment team is satisfied that the Academy has a credible plan to articulate and implement a strategic approach to learning and teaching which is consistent with its stated academic objectives. Its stated aim, together with the elements of a teaching and learning plan that already exist, indicate that it understands the need for such an approach, and that it has the capacity to develop and implement one.

346. The assessment team has considered whether the Academy has credible plans to maintain physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use.
347. The assessment team toured the Academy's site, observing technical spaces, IT spaces, classrooms, social spaces and the library. In technical spaces, the assessment team found that safety was well managed because it saw staff and students equipped with the necessary safety equipment, working in a calm and orderly manner students were under the supervision of competent staff. The Academy inducts students into safe working practice at a two-week 'boot camp' at the beginning of each academic year and schedules show that this covers an appropriate range of safety practice and regulation. The boot camp includes some training that leads to accreditation in the form of the 'Event Safety Passport', recognised by the Production Services Association. Students value this highly as it enables them to access some types of paid employment during their course. During the site visit, the assessment team saw students wearing appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) and working under supervision in well-managed spaces.
348. The Academy implements a 'no lone working' policy to ensure that in the event of an accident someone nearby can give prompt assistance. The Academy has submitted a number of risk assessments for premises and activities which are detailed and thorough and follow established good practice. Students from every level of study told the assessment team that they were clearly and thoroughly briefed in health and safety matters, felt safe working in technical spaces and were challenged by staff and denied access if they did not use the correct PPE for a taught or self-directed 'access' session.
349. The assessment team did not observe any spaces that were less accessible than they could be; students of various physical abilities confirmed that the Academy went to considerable lengths to make their access to resources as full as possible. Students reported that access to the spaces was generally reliable, although occasionally busy at some times of year, but recognised that staff would work hard to prevent and resolve any access issues. Students also reported that they have very good facility access to resources, both equipment and spaces, both in and between taught periods. Students reported that the Academy encourages them proactively to borrow equipment so they can familiarise themselves with its use, even when not part of a module's content or assessment task. The assessment team visited the students' social space and the cafe which were welcoming and accessible.
350. The Academy demonstrated its VLE to the assessment team at the institutional visit. The demonstration confirmed that the VLE was easily navigable and loaded with a significant amount of useful resources for students to use to support their studies. The navigation format was consistent across modules, meaning that students would not have to relearn how to find the material they are looking for in each module they accessed. The provider is currently planning its migration from the current VLE arrangement, which is provided by the validating institution, to its own provision. The details of which VLE platform/provider have not been confirmed yet, but the Academy plans to progress this work at the start of the probationary period and further evidence will become available for the Year 1 Monitoring Assessment.
351. The Academy has library facilities consisting of a modest number of specialist hard copy publications and access to the extensive online holdings of its validating institution. As with the VLE, the Academy is currently planning how it will transition to making its own

independent library provision. Its current plan is to have fully achieved these migrations by the first quarter of the second year of the New DAPs probationary period, but it has not stated how it will provide the necessary staffing expertise to manage digital library resources. Some of the academic delivery of the Academy's courses depends on software packages, such as programmes for designing visual effects, sound and lighting design, and computer-aided design. These are provided by the Academy and both students and staff reported that software is industry-standard and up to date. If particular software is expensive and has no free or student version, the provider has a means of providing these to students on loan.

352. The Academy has a number of policies intended to promote and ensure dignity, courtesy and respect in the use of facilities and while on campus. These include:

- the regulations for the use of computer facilities, which has a section on acceptable behaviour
- the Harassment, Bullying and Sexual Misconduct Regulations, which are clear about defining these behaviours and state how victims may seek help and what may happen to perpetrators
- the EDI Policy, which sets out the principles of equity which the Academy aims to adhere to. It states what the responsibilities of staff, managers and the HR department are to secure compliance.

The Academy's current approach to maintaining its physical, virtual and social learning environments, alongside actions to assume responsibility for services (such as library provision) currently delivered by its validating partner, satisfied the team that it has credible plans in this area. Observation by the assessment team, reports from students, and evidence submitted, all support the view that the provider has the intention and capacity to provide and manage these resources appropriately.

353. The assessment team considered the extent to which the Academy has credible plans to have robust arrangements for ensuring that the learning opportunities provided to those of its students who may be studying at a distance from the organisation are effective.

354. The Academy's self-evaluation document does not address this evidence requirement, because it has no distance-learning courses or hybrid on-site/online arrangements, or plans to develop any, because of the practical nature of much of the curriculum. The Academy's Attendance and Engagement Policy states that it requires all students to attend all timetabled classes, but in the event that a student is temporarily unable to attend on-site, it endeavours to support them through the VLE, regular tutorial support and adjustments in assessment.

355. The assessment team considers that the arrangements to provide VLE, tutorial and assessment support to a student temporarily absent from in-person attendance are appropriate. Provided support is detailed and personalised, it is likely to be an effective way of providing individual students with learning opportunities.

356. The assessment team concluded that, while the Academy does not currently offer distance study programmes, there are nonetheless robust arrangements for ensuring that the learning opportunities provided to those of its students that may need to study at a distance for brief and unavoidable periods from the organisation are effective.

357. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure that every student is enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development.
358. The Academy maintains an online records system 'OnTrack' which it describes as 'a real-time personalised learner hub that allows to monitor their progress by viewing grades'. The Academy gave the assessment team screenshots of a student view, and demonstrated the portal during the institutional visit. While the area of the portal that holds student assessment records was not available at the time of demonstration, the assessment team considered that the student view of the portal is clear and user-centred. Essential information is easily accessible, and includes timetables, records of recorded attendance, requests for extensions and, for applicants, tracking of the progress of their applications.
359. The Academy operates a personal tutorial scheme. The purpose of the scheme specifically states that one of the responsibilities of the personal tutor is to ensure that the student understands their progress on their course. A student is guaranteed three tutorials each year, and each is recorded. Additionally, students told the assessment team that they can easily access course tutors outside scheduled class, and that the student support service is similarly easily and promptly accessible. Students told the assessment team that the Academy actively encourages them to undertake extra-curricular projects and activities to further develop knowledge and understanding of their discipline, which further supports their independent academic development.
360. The assessment team's view is that the Academy has credible plans to ensure that every student is enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development because its relevant systems and facilities, and culture of staff availability to students, ensure that this happens.

Assessment

361. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to operate valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.
362. In order to assess the Academy's processes of assessment, the assessment team considered:
- the assessment instruments set for its students
 - the marks awarded and the feedback given
 - the process for assessment and moderation of marks
 - the provider's accreditation of prior learning (APL) arrangements.
363. The Academy states that its Principles of Assessment intend to ensure an approach of 'constructive alignment' in assessment. This seeks to make assessment a part of learning rather than simply a test of learning, and an opportunity for students to demonstrate what they know and can do, rather than to try to discover gaps in their knowledge. The Academy uses formative assessment as a key part of the constructive alignment approach. The assessment team's review of sample module specifications and guides indicates that a 'constructive

alignment' approach to assessment is evident in the documents, in that students are offered the opportunity to show what they have learned, and what they can do, rather than being tested to find out what they do not know or cannot do. The Academy also states that it will offer reasonable adjustments in assessment for students with disabilities.

364. The construction of the Academy's assessment instruments is guided by the 'Principles of Assessment' document. This document is a thorough and effective guide to staff as to how to design assessment that is fair and appropriate for the curriculum, and for students. The type and weighting of assessment is stipulated in validated specifications, and assessments are advised on in advance by external examiners. The Academy states that it has an internal moderation process for the setting of assessment instruments, but did not provide evidence of this in use.
365. Scrutiny of a sample of modules across all levels of study indicated that the Academy appropriately sets module assessments. The assessment team found assessments to be of a suitable level of challenge and weight for the level of study and volume of credit, they clearly ask and enable the students to address the module learning outcomes, and assessment instructions are expressed in clear, uncomplicated language. Module guides include full and detailed assessment criteria, which guide students on how to address the module learning outcomes in a planned way in their assignments. The guides provide a clear grading criteria matrix which helps students understand the marks and feedback given for their work. Guides inform students of acceptable use of AI for assessment, to help students avoid academic misconduct. Students are also informed of how staff will mark their work and of when to expect the outcome of formative and summative assessment. Guides also inform students of how to request recognition of any mitigating circumstances that might have affected their assessment. Overall, the module guides are a comprehensive guide to the assessment requirements and arrangements for the modules.
366. The assessment process has several stages. The relevant module leader (or member of the teaching team) marks student assessments initially before another member of academic staff conducts second marking work as a form of internal moderation. The course external examiner will also sample student work and marks and confirm (or query) the marking standards and compare standards with other UK higher education providers. Following that, marks are submitted to the Academy's Assessment Board for confirmation and approval.
367. The assessment team has reviewed a sample of student work submitted for the modules listed above, and the marks and feedback the work received. The assessment team found staff mark student work accurately, applying national standards and against the module learning outcomes, at all levels of study. Feedback to students is sufficient, clear, constructive and actionable. The Academy requires staff to record internal moderation on a form, and the assessment team found that this reliably happens in practice. There is evidence of external examiner scrutiny and the external examiners are present and contribute at Assessment Boards. The assessment team is satisfied that the Academy makes effective use of its external examiners, including in respect of contributing to the assessment process. (Also see External examining section of this report.)
368. The Academy operated under its validating institution's APL procedure but has drafted its own in anticipation of New DAPs. The draft procedures are detailed and clear in differentiating between prior experiential and certificated (credit-bearing) learning and specify

the limits of credit that students can carry into its courses. Importantly, the policy is clear that experience alone is not sufficient for it to award credit, and students need to demonstrate learning that has arisen from the experience. The Academy has not yet applied this policy, but the assessment team considers it fit for purpose because it is detailed and specific in its conditions. It provides an access opportunity for those without a formal access route (holding examination qualifications) to higher education, while ensuring it would not give applicants advanced entry to a course that would not be in their best interests.

369. The assessment team is satisfied that the Academy has credible plans to operate valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought. The Academy has submitted evidence that shows it has thorough and effective procedures for assessment, and that these are reliably carried out in practice, at all levels of designing assessment instruments, marking student work, and verifying the marking process.
370. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure its staff and students engage in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made.
371. The Academy has accessible and clear documents detailing curriculum requirements and the related assessment instruments, which explain the purpose of and requirements for assessment in module guides and the assessment criteria. It has a grade descriptors guide for both staff and students. Application of the principle of 'constructive alignment' means that assessment relates to the curriculum content of a module.
372. Module guides clearly inform students that work is assessed according to a multi-stage process of scrutiny and approval. Feedback to students on assessments sampled by the assessment team was clear in enabling the student to understand how their assignment and the marks it received relates to the marking criteria.
373. The personal tutorial scheme can assist students who might not understand what is required of them in assessments. Students who met with the assessment team indicated that the learning and teaching culture is open, student-centred, flexible and inclusive, and that students have confidence that a lecturer will help and offer clarifications about an assessment when approached.
374. The assessment team's view is that the Academy has credible plans to ensure its staff and students engage in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made. In the team's view, the documents setting out assessments and the marking process to staff and students are very clear, and there is ample opportunity for students to seek clarification and support for assessment preparation.
375. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure it provides students with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice.
376. The Academy states that all students take an Academic and Professional Skills module. This module has curriculum content and learning outcomes that focus on good academic practice. It requires students to complete a formative task early in the module that enables tutors to

offer feedback on where work falls short of expected standards, particularly regarding plagiarism. In this way the Academy seeks to prevent students from engaging in academic misconduct during their studies. In addition, the module guides and student handbooks warn students of the possible consequences of misconduct and module guides give specific advice on the use of AI in assessment. These examples demonstrate to the assessment team that the Academy provides students with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice.

377. The Academy recognises AI as a useful tool, but that it must manage and constrain its use. Its guide to artificial intelligence usefully sets out forms of acceptable and unacceptable practice in its use for study and assessment, and how the Academy may detect its use. It advises students of its benefits and drawbacks, and how to make best use of the tools. It includes a checklist for students to use to ensure that they have not inadvertently committed academic misconduct using AI in unacceptable ways. It also explains with clear examples how students should reference the use of AI in any work they submit for assessment. The document explains the Academy concentrates on guiding students in the acceptable use of AI (as opposed to other, more 'traditional', forms of plagiarism), because tools such as internet search engines are also now AI-assisted and so their use comes under the regulations for academic conduct. The Academy also uses plagiarism detection software, with its AI detection feature enabled to help staff detect plagiarism and other academic misconduct, and so students can check their work before submission, to ensure they demonstrate good academic conduct.
378. The assessment team therefore considers that the Academy has credible plans to ensure its students are provided with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice because it provides up-to-date advice and guidance to all students on good academic practice.
379. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to operate processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice.
380. The Academy's three-stage assessment procedure – of marking, moderation and external examination – provides a reasonable safeguard against unacceptable academic practice. The use of plagiarism detection software, including AI detection, gives significant capacity for the detection of academic misconduct. The assessment team saw a sample case of academic misconduct brought against a student. The documents recording the case were thorough and provided a body of evidence and an accompanying full narrative from the staff member. The sample showed that staff carried out the Academic Misconduct Procedure thoroughly and the assessment team is satisfied that the penalty imposed was fair and in accordance with the Academy's policy.
381. The assessment team is satisfied that the Academy has credible plans to operate processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice. Its guidance to students about how to avoid academic misconduct is clear, and its tools and processes for identifying unacceptable practice are robust and take account of current issues.

382. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure its processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are clearly articulated and consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process.
383. Paragraphs 363-371 discuss the Academy's assessment processes. The draft undergraduate and postgraduate regulations state that the Principles of Assessment document details assessment processes. The procedures outlined in the document are thorough and clearly articulated, covering the purposes of assessment and the different types, and what approach to assessment is appropriate for each one. It stipulates who may mark student work, and sets out the requirements for moderation (sample size, special categories for mandatory moderation). The procedure also covers the arrangements for dealing with disagreement between markers as to the correct mark for a piece of work. It defines the role of the external examiner, noting in particular that the external examiner is not a 'marker'. The document includes an appendix setting out specific guidance for assessing the work of students with specific learning disabilities.
384. The assessment team has reviewed samples of student work submitted for assessment, together with the marksheets and feedback, and found clear evidence of the assessment, moderation and external examining procedures in consistent practice. For example, for the module Contemporary Issues in Live Events 2024-2025, the assessment team reviewed the student work, marks and feedback and found accurate marking and high quality feedback to students that is full, positive and actionable. The related moderation form shows that the required sample size has been met and that the narrative provided by the moderator indicates that they have read the student work closely before agreeing the marks. Observation of an Assessment Board showed external examiners fully engaged with and fully conversant with the student work and marks that they were responsible for confirming.
385. The assessment team considers that the Academy has credible plans to ensure its processes for marking assessments, and for moderating marks, are clearly articulated and consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process. Evidence submitted shows full compliance of those engaged in marking with the Academy's procedure, and that the procedure is effective for the Academy's context.

External examining

386. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to make scrupulous use of external examiners, including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work.
387. The Academy's policy and practice in respect of external examiners is discussed under criterion B2. The assessment team is satisfied that the Academy's policy and practice in respect of external examiners is thorough and sound because it saw evidence of detailed engagement with external examiners in respect of assessment. However, the Academy supplied evidence in respect of its undergraduate provision only. Specifically in respect of the moderation of assessment tasks, the provider's External Examiner Policy states that external examiners have responsibility for reviewing assessment tasks set for students. A sample of external examiner reports confirm that they have done this.
388. The external examiner reports confirm that external examiners moderate assessed student work as required. At an Assessment Board observed by the assessment team, the external

examiners were important contributors to the meeting, confirming marks and offering comments about the standards and quality of provision. Minutes of an Assessment Board show that the Board invites external examiners to comment after the presentation of each student cohort's results record that the Board would consider and respond to the feedback offered before the next academic cycle. A summary report of Assessment and Progression and Awards Boards to the Academic Board, prepared by the Director of the Registry, summarises key external examiner comments from the academic year. The comments indicate that external examiners are fully satisfied with the provider's management of assessment and awarding marks. A trail of correspondence between an external examiner, the Head of Quality and Standards and a course leader indicates a productive relationship between the Academy's external examiners and academic staff. In general, the external examiner reports indicate that they find the Academy's provision effective, industry-relevant and supportive of its students.

389. The assessment team considers that the Academy has credible plans to make scrupulous use of external examiners, including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work – it saw evidence of close engagement between external examiners and teaching staff in relation to the assessment process, and external examiner participation in the formal procedure of confirming marks.
390. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to give 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.
391. Annual Quality Reviews consider and respond to external examiner reports. Each course-level report appends external examiner reports and contains a field for comments on the external examiner reports. Sometimes, these are not completed and, if given, the comments are generally brief – partly because the external examiner reports are usually positive and do not raise issues for attention. When external examiners do raise an issue, it is noted in course-level reports with a statement of further action. The Director of the Registry submits an annual summary report of Assessment and Progression and Award Boards to the Academic Board, including a summary of external examiner feedback, showing that institutional managers read external examiner reports as well as course leaders. The Academy states that it responds to external examiners by sending them a final version of the Annual Quality Review, once it's approved.
392. The assessment team advises that the Academy should ensure that external examiner reports and course leader comment sections of the Annual Quality Reviews provide more detail. Action plans attached to Annual Quality Reviews should include actions arising from external examiners' comments in order to fully evidence how the Academy gives full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations contained in external examiners' reports, and how it provides external examiners with a considered and timely response to their comments and recommendations. However, from the other evidence scrutinised, the assessment team is satisfied that the Academy pays serious attention to the feedback of its external examiners and appropriately manages its relationship with them.
393. The assessment team is satisfied that the Academy has credible plans to give 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. This is because its current practice, which it plans to continue, indicates that this is already an embedded part of its annual assessment process.

Academic appeals and student complaints

394. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to have effective procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of the academic experience; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.

395. The Academy has prepared an Academic Review Policy and procedure in anticipation of receiving New DAPs. The procedure intends to ensure an efficient process, conducted by appropriate postholders, equipped with all relevant evidence. The new policy, if implemented, will enable staff to consider student requests for academic review (appeals) in a timely manner. A Review Board, reporting to the Academic Board and the Senior Leadership Team, will conduct academic reviews. The Review Board is unitary, considering all student appeals and complaints. These include academic appeals, appeals against findings of academic and non-academic misconduct, unsatisfactory attendance and student complaints.

396. The policy sets out what the Academy may and may not consider as grounds for appeal. In summary, students can appeal on the grounds of procedural irregularity, personal circumstances affecting performance which they could not notify to the Academy prior to assessment, and regarding a penalty which the student considers disproportionate to the reason for the penalty. Students may not appeal on the basis of disagreement with academic judgement. The document clearly advises students how to appeal and information to include. It sets out what students should expect in terms of procedure and possible outcomes, and who or which body will be responsible. The policy informs students of their right, if called to a Review Board meeting, to have another person attend a Review Board meeting with them, and of their right to complain to the OIA. The assessment team's view is that the procedure's design is clear, fair and suitable for the Academy's provision.

397. The assessment team has reviewed the Academy's Student Complaint Procedure, prepared in prospect of receiving New DAPs. The document is written in student-facing language and makes clear throughout when to use the Complaint Procedure, and when another procedure is more appropriate (for example for an applicant, or for an academic matter). It is a three-stage procedure of informal complaint, formal complaint and review (appeal). The procedure guides the complainant as to how best to present their case, where to find the complaint forms (in the VLE), the timeframe for consideration and resolution of complaints and those responsible for considering the complaint. It also advises complainants of their right to complain to the OIA including a working hyperlink. The Academy plans to present an annual summary of complaints to the Academic Board to enable 'continual quality improvement' and to 'make changes to procedures' if required. The assessment team's view is that the procedure's design is clear, fair and suitable for the provider's provision.

398. The assessment team is satisfied that the Academy has credible plans to ensure effective procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of the academic experience; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.

399. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to take appropriate action following an appeal or complaint.
400. The Academy was unable to provide evidence of a formal appeal or complaint from any students and stated that it had received no formal appeals or complaints in the most recent completed academic cycle. In the event of future student appeal or complaint, the assessment team is satisfied that the procedures described above provide a fair, accessible and timely process for their consideration and resolution because the procedure set out is clear and adaptable to circumstances.
401. The New DAPs plan states that, should the Academy receive a formal appeal or complaint during the probationary period, it will use this experience to test the effectiveness of its arrangements for taking appropriate action following such an appeal or complaint.
402. The assessment team considers that the Academy has a credible plan to take appropriate action following an appeal or complaint because the policy prepared in readiness sets out clearly the outcomes and actions that will result from the process, and has clearly allocated the responsibility for those actions. Furthermore, the Academy plans to test the effectiveness of its arrangements and share this evidence with the OfS, when available.
403. In conclusion, the assessment team formed the view that the Academy is able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience to all students and has plans to ensure that the learning opportunities will be rigorously quality assured.

Conclusions

404. Based on its findings, the assessment team concluded that the Academy has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion B3 and has a credible New DAPs plan which can be reasonably expected to enable the Academy to meet the criterion in full by the end of the probationary period.
405. The assessment team concluded that the Academy is able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience to all students and has plans to ensure that the learning opportunities will be rigorously quality assured.
406. However, the team identified the following areas that should be monitored during the first year of the Academy's probationary period. The Academy should also provide an update on these at its first quarterly self-assessment submission. These are:
- an update on the development of the learning and teaching strategy
 - an update on the migration to new VLE provision and library resources, including details on any staffing resources required to implement these changes
 - an update on revisions to the Annual Quality Review procedure to ensure more detailed feedback from course leaders, and specific comment on external examiner feedback.
407. The Academy should also provide evidence of records of any formal student appeal or complaint, if these arise.

Specified changes to the New DAPs plan

408. The assessment team's view is that no specified changes are required for 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

409. The assessment team's view is that the Academy's New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion C1: The role of academic and professional staff.
410. The assessment team's view is that the Academy has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion C1.
411. The assessment team found that the Academy assures itself that it has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students, and that everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, is appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the level and subject of the qualification awarded.
412. The Academy has a credible plan to further enhance staff scholarship and pedagogical effectiveness during the probationary period, which supports the Academy's stated aim of embedding staff development as a continuous, evidence-informed process.
413. However, the team identified some areas that should be monitored during the first year of the Academy's probationary period regarding the development of its new peer review process using external reviewers and staff development sessions on course design and pedagogical planning.
414. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the Academy's New DAPs plan and evidence which shows that it can be reasonably expected to meet the evidence requirements for C1 in full by the end of the probationary period.

Subcriterion 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.

Reasoning

415. From its review of the New DAPs plan and supporting documentation, the assessment team concluded that the Academy has credible plans to ensure that all staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work develop relevant learning, teaching and assessment practices that are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice and subject-specific and educational scholarship. Its New DAPs plan outlines a phased implementation of a peer review scheme for teaching staff, which it will pilot during the probationary period. Explicitly enhancement-led in its design, the scheme aims to support

academic staff through cycles of peer observation, feedback, and self-reflection, fostering professional dialogue and a culture of continuous improvement of their academic practice.

416. The Academy expects that academic staff will engage with both subject-specific and pedagogic development, and academic staff CVs and job descriptions reflect this. These include academic professional fellowships, postgraduate qualifications in learning and teaching, and list of continuous professional development (CPD) in technical and creative disciplines. Based on this range of evidence, the assessment team considers that the Academy expects its staff to reflect on their teaching effectiveness and adapt practice in line with student needs, sector developments, and emerging technologies.
417. The Academy embeds mechanisms for the evaluation of learning and teaching practice at multiple levels. Academic Board minutes include discussions on enhancing teaching and the monitoring of action plans linked to student and external examiner feedback. The 2023 annual effectiveness review of Academic Board confirms the Board's role in overseeing continuous improvement in academic quality, including the use of reflective processes such as module evaluations and programme-level reviews.
418. Documentation produced at course level reflects this institutional approach to the evaluation of learning and teaching practice. Sample module guides show clearly articulated learning outcomes aligned with subject benchmark statements, assessment designed to support progressive learning, and embedded opportunities for reflection and formative feedback. Programme Committee minutes confirm that teaching staff adapt their teaching and assessment based on both formal feedback mechanisms and informal student dialogue.
419. The Academy also benefits from external input, with external examiners nominated, inducted and engaged in reviewing and evaluating assessment practice. Reports from 2021-22 and 2022-23 confirm alignment between learning outcomes and assessment, along with suggestions to improve feedback quality and the consistency in assessment application across modules. Further module-level reports record patterns of student engagement and provide evidence of course-level adjustments based on reflection and review.
420. Taken together, the evidence demonstrates that the Academy underpins its academic practices with structured and iterative processes of review, peer observation, and engagement with both subject and pedagogic scholarship. The assessment team found this approach coherent, appropriately embedded, and capable of supporting academic standards during the probationary period.
421. The team concluded that the Academy's staffing profile, underpinned by structured review of and institutional expectations, provides a credible plan to ensure that relevant learning, teaching, and assessment practices are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship.
422. The assessment team determined whether the Academy has a credible plan to ensure academic staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work have academic and (where applicable) professional expertise. To assess this, the team reviewed:
 - the Academy's Standards, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework

- its New DAPs plan
- a representative sample of academic staff CVs.

The CVs demonstrate that staff possess relevant subject expertise, professional experience in the live events and creative industries, and active engagement with scholarly or pedagogic practice. Many staff have contributed to conferences, publications, or collaborative industry-academic projects.

423. The Academy has clear expectations for staff to engage with a third party professional standards framework for academic staff, and outlines its support for their fellowship applications. The Academy plans an annual review of scholarly activity at departmental level, overseen by the Academic Board. Minutes from several Academic Board meetings held in 2023 to 2025 confirm this ongoing monitoring.
424. The team concluded that the Academy has a credible plan to ensure that all staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, have academic and (where applicable) professional expertise. Staff are recruited against clear role descriptions requiring both academic and professional expertise, and their expertise is maintained through CPD, peer review and engagement with external examiners.
425. The assessment team considered the extent to which the Academy has a credible plan to ensure staff have active engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge. This includes all staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work. To do this, the team reviewed:
- the Academy's New DAPs plan
 - academic staff CVs
 - internal development resources and documentation relating to curriculum and assessment design.
426. Academic staff CVs demonstrate engagement in pedagogically informed and discipline-specific professional practice, particularly in response to technological advances in the live events industry. Several staff combine teaching with current freelance or consultancy roles, supporting their ability to integrate emerging industry practices into their teaching. The Academy's self-evaluation document highlights its commitment to fostering a reflective and self-critical academic culture, while programme specifications and research activity (at the Academy's onsite research and innovation centre, XPLOR) evidence how staff and students engage with sectoral shifts, including developments such as virtual production and real-time media platforms.
427. The Academy's New DAPs plan includes the development and phased introduction of a teaching observation scheme, intended to promote structured professional dialogue, self-reflection, and enhancement-led review of teaching practice. While this framework is still under development, the team heard from staff that they welcomed its potential to support meaningful discipline-specific reflection and to inform their teaching practice as the Academy grows. The Academy embeds pedagogic principles into curriculum development processes. The Guide to Course Development emphasises a backward design model, encouraging staff to align assessment methods with real-world industry tasks, such as collaborative project

planning, time-critical delivery, and audience-facing outputs. This document reflects a strong institutional commitment to fostering pedagogic practices specific to the Academy's disciplinary context.

428. The team saw further evidence of staff engagement with pedagogic development through evolving assessment approaches. The Academy plans to implement negotiated and alternative assessments at Levels 6 and 7, including portfolios and live demonstrations, to better reflect industry standards and promote student autonomy. These assessment strategies have a clear pedagogic rationale and are tailored to the professional demands of the live technology and creative production sectors.
429. Staff development sessions, such as the December 2023 session on 'stackable modules', indicate an ongoing commitment to reviewing and enhancing the delivery of disciplinary content and pedagogy. Staff contributions to these sessions, alongside the planned use of data from internal review and student feedback, provide a constructive environment for collaborative pedagogic development.
430. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has credible plans to ensure that all staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work have active engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge. The New DAPs plan sets out a programme of teaching observation and peer review, supported by CPD and staff development weeks, while job descriptions and CVs show staff are expected to maintain pedagogic as well as professional expertise. In addition, the self-evaluation document highlights a reflective and self-critical academic culture, and external examiner reports confirm that practice is aligned with sector expectations.
431. While some initiatives remain in the planning phase – including the peer review of teaching framework – there is clear evidence that the Academy develops disciplinary pedagogy in a structured and intentional way, informed by industry developments and supported by institution-wide guidance and professional learning opportunities.
432. To determine whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure that all staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, have a clear understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline, and whether such knowledge and understanding directly inform and enhances their teaching, the assessment team reviewed:
- the New DAPs plan
 - academic staff CVs
 - programme specifications
 - committee minutes.

The team also evaluated whether the provider has credible plans to ensure staff are actively engaged with research and/or advanced scholarship to a level commensurate with the level and subject of the Academy's provision.

433. Academic staff CVs provided evidence of recent and ongoing engagement with professional practice and scholarly activity in the fields of live events, production technologies, digital

media, and creative industries. This includes contributions to industry white papers, sector-specific research projects, and presentations at national and international conferences. Discussions with academic staff and senior leaders at the site visit confirmed to the assessment team that many academic staff draw directly on their professional expertise and applied research when designing and delivering course content.

434. Staff teaching on both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes are actively engaged in discipline-relevant inquiry, often at the intersection of industry innovation and academic practice. Examples include the integration of real-time media systems, immersive experience design, and virtual production pipelines into module content and assessment tasks. Programme specifications confirmed that students are expected to critically engage with emerging technologies and research trends in their field.
435. While the Academy does not yet operate a formal research centre or unit, it supports practitioner research and advanced scholarship through workload allocation and developmental guidance. Several academic staff hold higher degrees (including doctorates and masters' degrees) in areas aligned with the Academy's provision. The Academy's CPD approach allows staff to attend external conferences, undertake funded projects, and pursue scholarly activity that informs their teaching. Staff told the assessment team that they integrate their scholarly work into their classroom teaching, project supervision and assessment design.
436. The team found that staff engagement with current developments in their field is expected in the course development processes. The Guide to Course Development encourages curriculum teams to incorporate cutting-edge developments in creative technologies and live event design. This was exemplified in the December 2023 staff development session, which focused on modular flexibility and research-led curriculum design.
437. Although the Academy is at an early stage in developing a systematic approach to an institutional research strategy, the alignment between staff expertise, research activity and the subjects delivered is clear from staff CVs and the self-evaluation document. These collectively demonstrate that research and professional practice inform programme specifications and student learning. The team also noted the Academy's plans to formalise its support for advanced scholarship through expanded CPD frameworks during the New DAPs probationary period. The team noted that the Academy's New DAPs plan outlines support for scholarly activity through individual CPD and professional body recognition, with future development planned during the probationary period to systematise such activity institution-wide. The self-evaluation document also highlights the Academy's intention to embed a reflective, enhancement-led culture that links staff scholarship with teaching and learning.
438. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has a credible plan to ensure that staff understand current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline, and that such knowledge and understanding directly informs and enhances their teaching. Staff CVs and programme specifications demonstrate alignment between staff expertise and course content, and the self-evaluation document confirms that industry-informed scholarship is embedded into programme design and delivery. The Academy also has a credible plan to ensure staff actively engage in research and/or advanced scholarship to a level commensurate with the level and subject of the qualifications offered. Courses are well matched to staff expertise,

and the New DAPs plan sets out a coherent trajectory for strengthening institutional support for scholarly activity over time, including CPD frameworks and peer review of teaching.

439. The assessment team evaluated whether the Academy has a credible plan to ensure that all staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, have opportunities to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice. The team reviewed and analysed:
- the New DAPs plan
 - academic staff CVs
 - committee papers
 - internal review documents
 - developmental materials
 - mechanisms for professional dialogue and feedback
 - mechanisms for the integration of evidence-informed practice across the Academy's provision.
440. In the New DAPs plan, the Academy commits to fostering a reflective academic culture, notably through the planned implementation of a peer review of teaching framework. It intends that this will promote developmental observation, collegial feedback, and enhancement-led discussion of practice, initially through a pilot phase during the early stages of the New DAPs probationary period.
441. The Academy provides staff with reflective opportunities through the course annual monitoring process. It is enhancing the process to include module-level reviews and termly reflection points, designed to distribute evaluative activity throughout the year, rather than concentrate it in a single annual report. The Academy hopes this will ensure teaching staff engage meaningfully with both qualitative and quantitative data related to student learning.
442. The Academic Board has piloted an annual effectiveness review, supported by guidance from an external academic adviser, which encouraged greater reflection on the Board's performance against its terms of reference and its relationship with enhancement processes. While initially limited in scope, the revised approach aims to be more reflective and tailored, with feedback mechanisms being developed for wider committee structures.
443. The Academy's Guide to Course Development also incorporates prompts for staff to consider how assessment strategies, learning activities and curriculum design reflect pedagogic intent and support inclusive, industry-relevant learning. The guide aligns with the Academy's broader strategic direction, as articulated in its enhancement narrative and draft committee structures.
444. Staff told the assessment team that regular course team meetings and development sessions include time for reflective dialogue and action planning, particularly around student feedback, assessment outcomes and curriculum coherence. The team heard that the Academy specifically designed the December 2023 staff development session and the planned July 2025 development week to facilitate staff-led reflection on teaching approaches and course design.

445. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has credible plans and emerging practices in place to ensure all staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, have opportunities to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice. This is despite the Academy not having fully implemented the peer review framework, and its evaluation of committee effectiveness being at an early stage. The self-evaluation document highlights the Academy's commitment to a reflective and self-critical academic culture, and the annual effectiveness review evidences early steps to embed evaluative practice within governance structures. The Academy is progressively embedding these opportunities into institutional processes and this is appropriate for the scale and stage of its development.
446. The assessment team assessed whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure that staff have development opportunities aimed at enabling them to enhance their practice and scholarship. This includes all staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning and in the assessment of student work. The assessment team reviewed:
- academic staff CVs
 - the New DAPs plan
 - institutional development documents
 - supporting evidence relating to CPD activity.
447. The Academy plans to foster a culture of continuing professional development aligned to its strategic objectives and subject specialism. It encourages staff to pursue CPD through a range of internal and external activities, including participation in sector networks, conferences and teaching development programmes. In particular, the Academy supports staff to apply for professional recognition schemes and has included this within the framework of professional progression.
448. Academic staff CVs confirm that many have undertaken recent CPD activity relevant to their teaching roles. This includes attendance at specialist higher education pedagogy events, industry-aligned training in immersive technologies and digital workflows, and contributions to external workshops or symposiums. A number of staff also hold or are studying for postgraduate certificates in higher education, or preparing professional fellowship applications, indicating engagement with sector-recognised CPD pathways.
449. The Academy cited internal development activities as evidence of CPD engagement. For example, the staff development session in December 2023 explored modularity and stackable course structures, prompting discussion of credit design, delivery models and student workload management. The Academy expects a forthcoming development week to focus on course and assessment redesign, and is structured to allow teams to collaboratively develop revised module specifications grounded in prior reflection and sector guidance.
450. The Academy's CPD offer is complemented by its approach to curriculum and assessment development. It supports staff to trial new approaches (e.g. negotiated assessment, immersive experience design) through collaborative course development processes. The Guide to Course Development reflects this, setting out clear pedagogic principles and encouraging innovation, particularly where it is informed by industry engagement or teaching research.

451. Although the Academy does not yet operate a formal institutional CPD framework, the team found credible evidence that the Academy embeds CPD within its academic culture and that engagement is appropriately aligned to the scale and subject of its provision. Staff gave examples of applying CPD learning directly to their teaching, including adaptations to assessment formats, learning resources and teaching strategies in response to developments in the field.
452. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has credible plans to ensure all 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. The New DAPs plan sets out structured CPD and peer review of teaching; staff job descriptions and CVs require pedagogic and professional development; the self-evaluation document emphasises a reflective and self-critical culture; meeting notes from June 2025 provide evidence of staff applying CPD learning directly to assessment design, teaching strategies and use of new technologies.
453. The assessment team evaluated whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure that staff have opportunities to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design and to engage with the activities of other higher education providers. This includes all staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work. The team reviewed academic staff CVs, the New DAPs plan, internal development documents, and feedback from staff during the assessment visit.
454. Staff CVs evidence involvement in curriculum design and assessment activity across the Academy's portfolio, including contributions to course validation documentation, module specification, and the review of programme-level learning outcomes. Academic staff described to the assessment team their active involvement in preparing for curriculum reform associated with the Academy's transition to New DAPs. This included a review of modular structure, assessment models, and alignment with the Lifelong Learning Entitlement framework.
455. The Academy has taken steps to embed curriculum development experience into routine academic practice. The December 2023 development session and a planned curriculum week both provide structured opportunities for staff to contribute to course and assessment design in a collaborative setting. It supports these events with design guidance and institutional principles, allowing staff to experiment with new approaches and reflect on their effectiveness in a supportive environment.
456. Staff also told the assessment team that the Academy encourages them to engage with external higher education activities where appropriate. CVs demonstrate that several members of academic staff have experience as guest lecturers, visiting tutors, or industry advisers at other higher education institutions, particularly in specialist creative arts and production programmes. Some staff have participated in course validation events or acted as reviewers for partner institutions, though few have had formal external examining appointments.
457. The team noted that while opportunities to serve as external examiners or panel members are currently limited, the Academy supports staff pursuing such roles as part of their professional development. This is evidenced in staff job descriptions and the self-evaluation document.

During the provider visit, senior leaders also referred to opportunities for staff exchanges with its US partner, PCA&D, as part of wider sectoral engagement. As the Academy expands and its academic profile grows, it anticipates further opportunities for reciprocal external engagement with peer institutions. The Academy's New DAPs plan includes milestones for embedding peer review of teaching and strengthening CPD frameworks during the probationary period, which are intended to underpin and encourage broader sector exchange and benchmarking.

458. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has credible plans to ensure all staff involved in teaching and supporting student learning and the assessment of student work have opportunities to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design. Programme specifications and module guides show staff input into design and review, the self-evaluation document evidences staff involvement in course development discussions, and the New DAPs plan sets out milestones for embedding structured peer review and curriculum consultation during the probationary period. There is some evidence of external engagement with the wider higher education sector, and the Academy has plans to extend this as its academic maturity increases. These plans are credible because staff are encouraged to pursue external examiner roles, it is developing staff exchange opportunities with its US partner PCA&D, and the New DAPs plan includes staged activities to broaden CPD and external engagement. These opportunities are appropriate to the current size and stage of development of the institution and support the Academy's wider enhancement aims.

459. The assessment team evaluated whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure that all staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, have expertise in providing assessment feedback that is timely, constructive and developmental. The team reviewed:

- academic staff CVs
- the Academy's Principles of Assessment document
- programme specifications
- the New DAPs plan.

It triangulated these with testimony from staff and students during the assessment visit, and with internal documents setting out feedback expectations and enhancement activity.

460. The Academy's Principles of Assessment articulate a clear commitment to developmental feedback that supports student learning and progression. The guidance defines feedback as integral to the learning cycle and specifies that staff should provide feedback that is actionable, timely, and oriented towards future improvement. It also encourages the use of both formative and summative feedback, with consideration of inclusivity and clarity.

461. Programme specifications and staff testimony confirmed that staff embed feedback as a key component of module delivery. The Academy provides students with comments aligned to learning outcomes and marking criteria. It frequently uses oral feedback in practical settings to support continuous improvement. Staff described adapting feedback styles to different cohorts and assessment types, and students confirmed that they generally receive feedback on time and is helpful in guiding future performance.

462. However, the team noted that in the 2024 NSS the student satisfaction rate for the Academy in Theme 3: Assessment and Feedback was 74 per cent - this is lower than similar institutions. The data indicates that there remains scope for improvement in students' experience of assessment feedback.
463. The Academy has taken steps to improve assessment feedback, including revision of assessment design principles, the adoption of negotiated and alternative assessment models, and increased emphasis on staff development around feedback literacy. The Academy also plans to implement new module review mechanisms from 2025-26, which will include scrutiny of feedback quality and timeliness.
464. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has credible plans to ensure that all staff involved in teaching and supporting student learning and the assessment of student work have expertise in providing assessment feedback that is timely, constructive, and developmental. Staff are required to follow assessment and feedback principles set out in ALT's regulations and policies. Sample marking sheets and moderation forms show structured feedback practices, and student meeting notes provide examples of students valuing clear and in-depth tutor feedback. While this is supported by policy and practice, student satisfaction data highlights variability in the student experience of feedback. Nonetheless, there is evidence that the Academy is actively responding to these issues through enhancement initiatives and revised assessment strategies.
465. The assessment team evaluated whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure that all staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work have experience in curriculum development and assessment design. The team spoke with academic staff at the Academy and considered the following documentary evidence:
- academic staff CVs
 - the New DAPs plan
 - programme specifications
 - course development documentation
 - internal development activities.
466. Academic staff CVs provide clear evidence of direct involvement in the design and development of curriculum and assessment. Staff have contributed to learning outcome development, module specification, credit structure review, and the design of assessment strategies. Several have also held roles in other institutions or professional settings where their remit included curriculum design.
467. The Academy's recent introduction of a Master of Science (MSc) in Virtual Production is a notable example of curriculum development undertaken in direct response to changing industry needs. It developed this programme to reflect the growing demand for hybrid skills across film, television, and live performance sectors, and incorporates innovative delivery and assessment models designed to replicate real-world production environments. The Academy involved staff centrally in the design of the curriculum and assessments, drawing on both technological fluency and pedagogical experience.

468. The New DAPs plan outlines a phased approach to portfolio expansion and course redevelopment, which will involve all academic staff in the review and design of provision. In preparation for this, the Academy has developed structured development resources, including the Guide to Course Development, and has hosted targeted staff sessions – such as the December 2023 session on modular structures and stackability. It intends that these sessions embed pedagogic principles such as backward design, modular flexibility, and inclusive assessment into curriculum planning across all levels.
469. The Academy’s academic staff demonstrated awareness of assessment design frameworks and could describe how they have integrated new forms – such as negotiated and alternative assessments – into module delivery and assessment strategies to improve inclusivity, authenticity and student engagement.
470. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has credible plans to ensure that all staff involved in teaching and supporting student learning and the assessment of student work have experience in curriculum development and assessment design: this is evident both in the creation of new programmes, such as the MSc in Virtual Production, and in the ongoing enhancement of existing provision. Staff contributions are supported by institutional frameworks and developmental opportunities, and these opportunities align with the Academy’s strategic priorities and subject specialism.
471. To evaluate whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure that all staff involved in teaching and supporting student learning and the assessment of student work engage with the activities of other higher education providers through roles such as external examining, validation panel membership, or external review, the assessment team spoke with staff at the Academy and considered academic staff CVs and the Academy’s New DAPs plan.
472. Staff CVs demonstrate the involvement of a number of academic staff in external activity across the higher education sector. This includes acting as visiting lecturers, participating in curriculum development at other institutions, and serving as industry advisers for higher education programmes in aligned subject areas such as production, performance technology, and digital design. Several staff bring prior experience from working within other higher education providers, including subject-specific teaching and assessment responsibilities that reflect institutional-level engagement.
473. The Academy’s self-evaluation document reports that it values such engagement and recognises the benefits of academic staff participating in wider sector activity. It notes that external roles enhance academic credibility, benchmarking, and understanding of sector-wide standards. The Academy encourages staff to take on roles such as external examining or validation panel membership as part of their broader professional development, through expectations set out in job descriptions, opportunities for CPD and peer review identified in the New DAPs plan, and discussions with staff during the provider visit. This evidence confirmed that such engagement is supported and encouraged.
474. The team also noted that the Academy’s current relationship with its validating body provides a structured context in which academic staff engage with external academic processes, including validation documentation, programme approval and annual review. While this engagement is largely mediated through institutional mechanisms, it has exposed staff to the academic standards and quality assurance expectations of a larger, established higher

education provider. This experience is likely to provide a strong foundation for future engagement with sector-wide activities during and beyond the New DAPs period.

475. During the visit, staff told the assessment team that the Academy supports them in undertaking external activity where possible. However, few staff have formal external examiner appointments. The assessment team recognised that this reflects, in part, the early stage development of the Academy as a higher education provider, and that broader engagement is likely to increase as the Academy's academic profile grows.
476. The assessment team concluded that while formal engagement with other higher education providers – through roles such as external examining or validation panel membership – is currently limited, the Academy has a credible plan to ensure that all staff involved in teaching and supporting student learning and the assessment of student work can engage with activities of providers of higher education in other organisations. Evidence for this includes staff job descriptions and the self-evaluation document, which show that such engagement is encouraged as part of professional development; the New DAPs plan, which sets milestones for strengthening CPD and external activity during the probationary period; and testimony from staff during the provider visit, which highlighted emerging opportunities such as exchanges with the Academy's US partner PCA&D. Current activity is proportionate to the size and maturity of the academic staff base and is likely to increase over the course of the New DAPs period.
477. The assessment team reviewed the New DAPs plan, self-evaluation document, academic staff CVs, programme documentation, and committee minutes to determine whether the Academy has a credible plan to make a rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise required to teach all students, and the appropriate staff-to-student ratios.
478. The Academy's evaluation and self-evaluation documents set out a strategic approach to academic staffing, aligned with its subject specialism and industry-facing mission. They describe how staff expertise is evaluated during course planning, recruitment, and curriculum review processes, with particular attention to the evolving demands of the creative technologies and live production sectors. Evidence of this includes programme and module specifications, which show staff contributions to course design; Academic Board minutes and effectiveness review, which record staff involvement in curriculum review and quality assurance; and provider-visit testimony, where staff explained how their industry knowledge informed assessment and curriculum development. The Academy has also reviewed staff capacity against projected growth, with the New DAPs plan modelling delivery scenarios to ensure continuity of teaching quality.
479. The Academy recruits academic staff on the basis of both pedagogic capability and current or recent industry practice. CVs reviewed by the team evidenced substantial professional experience in live events, virtual production, performance technology, and digital content development, and confirm that this expertise informs curriculum delivery and assessment design. Programme specifications further demonstrate that specialist modules align to staff expertise and that students benefit from teaching teams with appropriate disciplinary and applied knowledge.

480. The recent introduction of the MSc in Virtual Production provides an example of how the Academy assesses and aligns staff expertise to curriculum innovation. The programme draws on a cross-functional team of academics and industry professionals to deliver a technically complex and practice-led curriculum that responds directly to emerging sector needs.
481. The Academy's New DAPs plan indicates that it operates at a relatively low staff-to-student ratio (SSR), typically 1:18, particularly in practical and project-based modules. The Academy reports that SSRs are centrally monitored through course planning discussions, with adjustments made in response to fluctuations in cohort size, delivery format, and learning environment requirements. During the provider visit, staff also explained that they intend to maintain manageable SSRs as provision expands, in order to protect contact time and staff availability as part of the Academy's quality commitment.
482. During the visit, staff and students described a high level of access to teaching and technical staff, with student feedback confirming that class sizes support effective learning and individualised support. The team found that academic planning incorporates consideration of both pedagogic and operational factors, and that mechanisms exist to review staffing sufficiency on an ongoing basis.
483. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has a credible plan to make a rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise required to teach all students, with staff-to-student ratios actively monitored and planned for. Evidence from the New DAPs plan and self-evaluation document shows that SSRs are built into course planning discussions, with adjustments made in response to changes in cohort size, delivery format, and learning environment requirements. Testimony from staff during the provider visit confirmed the intention to maintain manageable SSRs as provision expands, in order to protect contact time and staff availability. This approach is supported by strategic documentation, curriculum delivery, and student experience, and is appropriate for the size, subject, and projected growth of the Academy.
484. The assessment team reviewed the New DAPs plan, self-evaluation document, academic staff CVs, and institutional documentation relating to recruitment policies and procedures to evaluate whether the Academy has credible plans for appropriate staff recruitment practices.
485. The Academy outlines a structured and criteria-led approach to staff recruitment, informed by its subject specialism and educational mission. It advertises posts externally through appropriate sector channels and convenes recruitment panels with academic and industry representation where relevant. The recruitment process is guided by transparent selection criteria, alignment to curriculum need, and a focus on both pedagogic capability and relevant professional practice. This is evidenced in staff job descriptions and CVs, and supported by the Academy's New DAPs plan, which sets milestones for strengthening academic staffing during the probationary period.
486. Staff CVs reviewed by the team confirm that the Academy has successfully recruited academic staff with significant industry experience in live events, virtual production, creative technologies, and performance design. Many hold postgraduate qualifications and professional certifications, and several bring cross-sector experience that enhances interdisciplinary teaching. The team also noted the Academy's balance between established

academics and industry practitioners transitioning into teaching roles, which reflects the nature of the subject area and the Academy's applied ethos.

487. The Academy reports that it makes academic appointments with reference to course requirements, staffing forecasts, and the institution's strategy for portfolio growth. It anticipates needing additional appointments during the probationary period as it introduces new provision, and has identified recruitment pipelines and succession planning models to ensure academic coverage. The assessment team considered these plans proportionate to the Academy's size and stage of development, noting that recent appointments have been aligned to curriculum needs, and that staffing capacity and succession planning are discussed at senior level. This evidence indicates that the Academy's approach to staffing during the probationary period is both credible and appropriate.
488. Staff interviewed during the visit reported that they had received structured and supportive inductions, and that recruitment processes are clear and professionally managed. Students commented positively on the industry credibility of teaching staff and the relevance of their professional experience to curriculum delivery.
489. Overall, the Academy continues to adapt its programme delivery and student experience planning in response to sector-wide risks, including international recruitment volatility and inflation-related cost pressures. Strategic adjustments have included reallocating marketing spend towards more effective international markets, narrowing postgraduate course promotion to focus on stronger performers, and adjusting the Clearing campaign to maximise undergraduate conversion. The Academy has also reviewed staffing deployment to ensure manageable staff-to-student ratios, maintained contact time, and introduced mentoring schemes to support the student experience. These actions indicate that the Academy prioritises continuity and quality of delivery, and that course staffing is actively aligned to fluctuations in student demand and financial pressures.
490. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has credible plans to have appropriate staff recruitment practices, because recruitment processes are publicly advertised through sector channels, guided by transparent selection criteria, and overseen by panels that include academic and industry representation. These are transparent, aligned to institutional needs, and effective in securing staff with the disciplinary and pedagogic expertise required to deliver its provision, as evidenced by job descriptions, CVs and forward planning for additional posts in the probationary period.

Conclusions

491. Based on its findings, the assessment team concluded that the Academy has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion C1 and has a credible New DAPs plan which can be reasonably expected to enable the Academy to meet the criterion in full by the end of the probationary period.
492. The assessment team found that the Academy assures itself that it has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students, and that everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, is appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the level and subject of the qualification awarded. The Academy has a credible plan to further enhance staff scholarship and pedagogical effectiveness during the

probationary period, which supports the Academy's stated aim of embedding staff development as a continuous, evidence-informed process.

493. The assessment team also found that the Academy has relevant learning, teaching and assessment practices informed by reflection and evaluation of subject, professional practice and educational scholarship. Staff are active in the development of their subject discipline and have opportunities to enhance their practice and scholarship through peer review and CPD frameworks, as well as external opportunities such as attending conferences and contributing to industry white papers and sector-specific research projects.

494. However, the team identified the following areas that should be monitored during the first year of the Academy's probationary period. The Academy should also provide an update on these at its first quarterly self-assessment submission. These are:

- An update on the launch of the new peer review process using external reviewers
- An update on the focused staff development sessions on course design and pedagogical planning.

Specified changes to the New DAPs plan

495. The assessment team's view is that no specified changes are required for criterion C1.

Assessment of DAPs criterion D: Environment for supporting students

Criterion D1: Enabling student development and achievement

Advice to the OfS

496. The assessment team's view is that the Academy's New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion D1: Enabling student development and achievement.
497. The assessment team's view is that the Academy has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion D1.
498. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows in summary that the Academy has established, and is further strengthening, policies and practices which can reasonably be expected to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.
499. However, the team identified some areas that should be monitored during the first year of the Academy's probationary period, including the development of its Student Support Strategy, its student induction framework and updates to its approach to monitoring student progression and performance.
500. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the Academy's New DAPs plan and evidence which shows that it can be reasonably expected to meet the evidence requirements for D1 in full by the end of the probationary period.

Subcriterion 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.

Reasoning

501. The assessment team considered whether the provider has credible plans to ensure that it 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 Academy adopts an integrated, institution-wide approach to student development, with responsibilities delineated across its governance structure. Council, operational leadership by the Senior Leadership Team, and academic governance by the Academic Board, exercise strategic oversight of student development, as defined in the revised Articles of Association and Council terms of reference. This alignment ensures that student support and development are embedded in institutional priorities. The New DAPs plan and self-evaluation document confirm that the provider will strengthen its monitoring of student achievement by systematically analysing performance data disaggregated by student characteristics, with outcomes reported through the Academic Board and EDI Committee. These measures

provide a credible trajectory for ensuring that the development and achievement of the full diversity of the student body are evaluated and acted upon during the probationary period.

502. The Academy has introduced a suite of evaluative mechanisms to ensure ongoing scrutiny of its approach. For example, the Academic Board piloted an annual effectiveness review in 2024, which led to the development of a more robust, reflective framework in consultation with an external Board member. The Academy approved this revised framework in April 2025 and is rolling it out across relevant deliberative committees to ensure that committee operations remain fit for purpose and are enhancement-led. In parallel, it has established a committee action tracking system to improve institutional oversight, enabling the Academic Board to maintain a comprehensive record of decisions and actions and report transparently to the Council.
503. The Academy's strategic and operational monitoring is further informed by a data dashboard compiled annually as part of the enhancement review process. This dashboard incorporates indicators on student continuation, progression, attainment gaps, and satisfaction, enabling the provider to identify areas of strength and risk. These metrics are triangulated with internal student feedback mechanisms – such as the Freshers' Survey, module-level evaluations, and course committee minutes – and with external benchmarks, including comparative NSS data against comparator providers, to inform enhancement activity across the institution.
504. The Academy documented strategic measures to sustain the student experience in April 2025, including risk planning linked to financial uncertainty and provider growth. The Senior Leadership Team has aligned industry partnerships, short-course revenue strategies, and APP interventions to secure continued investment in core student-facing provision.
505. During the New DAPs probationary period, the Academy plans to embed the LQSC within its deliberative structure to provide operational oversight of quality assurance and student development. The Academic Board will maintain strategic oversight, supported by termly monitoring of learning and teaching at module level, beginning in 2025–26. The monitoring framework will combine internal data with external benchmarks drawn from comparator institutions to inform strategic planning and performance improvement. These developments represent a maturing approach to academic governance and demonstrate the Academy's capacity to support student achievement at scale.
506. The assessment team considered that the Academy has credible plans to ensure that it takes a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to determine and evaluate how it enables student development and achievement for its diverse body of students. Responsibilities for student development are embedded across its governance structure; monitoring will be informed by annual enhancement reviews and a data dashboard that includes disaggregated performance indicators; and the New DAPs plan sets milestones for strengthening evaluation of student outcomes by characteristic during the probationary period.
507. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure that students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in an effective way and that account is taken of different students' choices and needs. The Academy delivers a multi-stage induction and enrolment process designed to prepare students for both the academic and social dimensions of higher education. Evidence from the Freshers Survey

Report 2024 shows that 91 per cent of respondents felt they had received sufficient information before arriving on campus, and 91 per cent confirmed receipt of a physical welcome guide and freshers' event schedule prior to their first day. On arrival, students were positive about their orientation experience: 100 per cent reported knowing where to register, and 100 per cent said they understood the agenda for the first day. The welcome and atmosphere were described by students as 'very welcoming and friendly', with staff being 'approachable', 'helpful', and 'clearly visible'.

508. Enrolment and registration processes were also praised in the Freshers Survey report 2024. Students gave an average satisfaction score of 8.91 out of 10, with comments such as 'quick and easy', 'straightforward', and 'everything was explained well' cited throughout the report. These outcomes indicate that the Academy has an effective pre-arrival communications strategy and robust operational delivery of on-site registration and orientation to support students' transition into higher education. In addition, applicants are offered one-to-one meetings with Student Support following their interview, enabling proactive planning for additional needs, safeguarding concerns, or access requirements before enrolment.
509. Crucially, the Academy recognises and responds to the differing needs of its student body. The Freshers Survey report 2024 captured responses from both younger undergraduates and mature learners, some of whom highlighted the need for earlier release of timetables due to work or childcare responsibilities. Others noted the value of pre-arrival phone calls with Student Support staff to disclose support needs in advance. The induction process also provides access to course leaders, Student Support Advisers, and peer-led activities, contributing to a supportive and responsive environment. This personalised approach is reflected in the high approval rating (96 per cent) of staff approachability and understanding of student needs, demonstrating a credible plan for tailoring support to the full diversity of learners.
510. During the New DAPs probationary period, the Academy plans to strengthen its approach to evaluating induction by embedding relevant metrics – such as attendance, early withdrawal, and first-term satisfaction – into its revised annual monitoring process. Its proposed annual monitoring process for 2025-26 outlines a shift toward termly data reviews that will feed through course committees and will be overseen by the LQSC and Academic Board. Although induction is not addressed as a standalone category in the proposed process, the document explicitly identifies 'early experience' data as an area for institutional monitoring, with mechanisms in place to trigger responsive adjustments to academic and support provision.
511. The rationale for this enhanced scrutiny is grounded in current practice. The Academy reports that it uses student feedback from the Freshers' Survey to inform refinements to its teaching and induction design. For example, in 2023 it adjusted the pacing of early-term module delivery and implemented improvements to orientation guidance in response to student suggestions. These adaptations demonstrate that the Academy acts on early stage student experience data, and embedding this activity into formal quality processes during the probationary period represents a logical and achievable development.
512. In parallel, the Academy plans to introduce a refreshed induction framework from September 2025. It will co-design this with students and staff, drawing on findings from the Freshers Survey report 2024 – which highlighted, for example, the need for clearer signage, earlier

release of timetables, and better spatial coordination during initial activities. The new framework will ensure that academic orientation, digital onboarding, and support signposting remain inclusive, timely, and aligned to the expectations of an increasingly diverse student body. The assessment team concluded that the provider has credible plans to ensure that students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in an effective way, since the refreshed framework is explicitly designed to respond to diverse student needs identified through feedback, embeds co-design with staff and students, and aligns with the Academy's strategic commitment to inclusive, student-centred induction.

513. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has credible plans to ensure that students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes in an effective way. The Academy takes account of different students' choices and needs, since the refreshed induction framework will be co-designed with students and staff, informed by feedback from the Freshers Survey report 2024, and supported by structured pre-arrival communication and personalised support planning.
514. The assessment team evaluated whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure that the effectiveness of student and staff advisory, support and counselling services is monitored and that any resource needs arising are considered. The Academy provides structured support to students through a coordinated safeguarding and advisory framework led by the Director of Student Support and Experience. The institutional safeguarding structure includes designated and deputy safeguarding leads, as well as a named Student Support and Experience Officer, establishing a clear point-of-contact model for advisory and wellbeing concerns. While the Academy does not currently offer in-house counselling, the Safeguarding Policy sets out a robust network of external services to which staff can signpost students, including a 24-hour helpline staffed by counsellors and psychotherapists and partnerships with mental health charities. These resources supplement internal guidance and ensure that students have access to both preventative and crisis support as appropriate. Provision for staff support services is more limited: the provider signposts staff to external wellbeing and occupational health services but does not currently operate an internal advisory or counselling service. The New DAPs plan includes a commitment to reviewing staff development and support arrangements during the probationary period, which the team considered an appropriate trajectory for a provider at this stage.
515. Student feedback gathered through the Freshers Survey report 2024 indicates that the availability and visibility of support staff during induction is a particular strength of current provision. Students rated the quality of support during enrolment and induction at 9.13 out of 10, and 96 per cent reported that staff were approachable and responsive to their needs. Comments highlight staff attentiveness, ease of contact, and personalised assistance with academic adjustments, wellbeing referrals, and onboarding processes. Although the operational model for supporting students (for example, drop-in versus appointment-based provision) is not explicitly set out in published documentation, the survey evidence demonstrates high levels of student engagement and access. Academic Board minutes from April 2024 reinforce these patterns, recording positive feedback on student support and recommending enhanced resourcing in future planning cycles.
516. Qualitative responses highlight the responsiveness of the support team, including personalised pre-arrival phone calls, quick access to learning accommodations, and a strong sense that staff were 'always around checking up on us'. The Academy's commitment to early

engagement with students with protected characteristics or additional needs is also reflected in survey responses describing proactive phone-based support arrangements prior to enrolment.

517. In January 2025, the Academy reported seven students diagnosed with specific learning difficulties, all of whom were supported through a newly implemented Individualised Learning Plan (ILP) matrix and tracking system. This system monitors attainment, attendance, and engagement with support services, and links to students' previous educational support plans from other providers to ensure continuity of provision.
518. The Academy delivered 71 wellbeing sessions in 2024-25, covering trauma, bereavement, self-harm, finances, and academic stress. It supported these with individual risk assessments and ILPs tailored to course and operational needs.
519. Monitoring of student support services takes place through regular feedback surveys (including the Freshers and End-of-year Surveys), student representation on course committees and the Student Experience Committee, and the escalation of trends to Academic Board. For example, Academic Board received a summary of student support effectiveness at its April 2024 meeting, which highlighted student satisfaction with initial contact, clarity of service roles, and response times. The Board also discussed emerging themes such as timetabling-related stress, where students reported both the challenge of clashing sessions and the intensity of having too many activities on the same day. It recommended that resource planning for 2025-26 address staffing capacity and ensure that support services are more visible and accessible during busier or more stressful periods of study.
520. During the New DAPs probationary period, the Academy plans to embed the monitoring of advisory and support services into its institutional quality assurance cycle through existing mechanisms and planned enhancements. As set out in the proposed annual monitoring process for 2025–26, student-facing data such as that relating to complaints, appeals, equality and attainment gap analysis, and feedback from student representatives, will be incorporated into course annual monitoring reports and considered by the LQSC and Academic Board. Although student support services are not currently disaggregated as a standalone monitoring category, their associated indicators (for example, complaints and appeals, continuation and engagement) are embedded in the quality framework. The New DAPs plan commits to ensuring that annual monitoring outputs explicitly include student support data by the end of the probationary period. This will allow the provider to track and respond to student needs systematically, representing a credible plan for the monitoring and resourcing of advisory and support services at institutional level.
521. To enhance this approach, the Academy plans to disaggregate support-related themes in course annual monitoring reports from 2025-26, drawing on survey data, Student Experience Committee discussions, and service access logs. These insights will inform future decisions on staffing and delivery, including whether additional capacity or specialisation is required. In parallel, the Academy has committed to developing a formal Student Support Strategy during the probationary period, including a review of delivery models, staffing capacity, and the feasibility of introducing in-house or hybrid counselling provision.
522. The Academy plans to consider the feasibility of introducing in-house or hybrid counselling provision, based on analysis of student need and demand. While it has taken no final

decision, the Academy will likely review this through the Academy's risk register and annual resource planning cycle, with any proposed investment reviewed by the Finance and Audit Committee and reported to Council. This is consistent with the Academy's broader approach to strategic enhancement and the progressive strengthening of its teaching and learning infrastructure.

523. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has credible plans to ensure that the effectiveness of student and staff advisory, support and counselling services is monitored and that any resource needs arising are considered. Support-related indicators are embedded in the annual monitoring framework; plans are in place to disaggregate and report on student support themes in course annual monitoring reports from 2025-26; and the Academy has committed to developing a formal Student Support Strategy during the probationary period. These measures represent a credible approach to ensuring that advisory and support provision is systematically evaluated and appropriately resourced.
524. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure its administrative support systems enable it to monitor student progression and performance accurately and provide timely, secure, and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management needs.
525. The Academy monitors key performance indicators – including module attainment, progression, completion, continuation, and attendance – through structured data reporting frameworks, as outlined in its Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review 2025. These metrics are drawn from internal systems such as the Academy of Live Technology's Education Business System and from Module Assessment Boards – they cover academic misconduct cases, first attempt pass rates, good degree outcomes, and attainment gaps by ethnicity, gender, disability, care experience and age. For each indicator, the Academy establishes internal benchmarks and sector comparators, and provides course teams with interpretation prompts to guide local analysis and action planning. The introduction of a new ILP matrix in 2025-26 will further support the Academy's ability to monitor student progress, by tracking diagnostic outcomes, academic progress, attendance, and support access to identify early risk indicators. However, as the assessment team has noted under criterion B2, more of the detailed student outcome data that the provider holds could be provided for annual and in-year analysis and action at course and module level.
526. Academic staff and student representatives review module-level data during termly course committee meetings, in line with the staged model set out in the proposed annual monitoring process for 2025-26. Course leaders then consolidate this data into course annual monitoring reports, which the LQSC reviews. The Academic Board subsequently considers institutional-level summaries and thematic analyses and reports outcomes to Council. Through this process, the Academy interrogates student performance data at every level of governance and acts on the findings to strengthen academic quality and student support.
527. The Academy has already acted on this system to address areas of concern. At its April 2024 meeting, the Academic Board reviewed continuation data and termly student feedback alongside course committee reports. In response, it recommended refinements to the structure and pacing of first year modules, revised expectations for early assessment, and stronger alignment between support availability and teaching schedules. These

recommendations informed the course annual monitoring reports for 2024-25, and the Academy will evaluate their impact through the annual monitoring cycle.

528. During the New DAPs probationary period, the Academy will enhance the granularity of its data reporting to support more responsive decision-making. The new reporting templates introduced for the 2025-26 cycle require course leaders to analyse individual and cohort-level trends, identify early signs of academic risk, and evaluate attainment gaps across student groups. Course committees will review this data on a termly basis and escalate themes to the LQSC and Academic Board, as set out in the proposed annual monitoring process 2025-26. The assessment team considered these plans credible and proportionate, but noted that they were developed in response to conversations with the Senior Leadership Team during the provider visit, and that the Academy is still developing its institutional capacity for student data analysis. This trajectory is consistent with the expectations of a provider at this stage of maturity.
529. The New DAPs plan states that, by the end of year 3 of the probationary period, student support and performance data will be embedded within the Academy's annual monitoring framework and used to shape institutional oversight and enhancement priorities. This commitment forms part of a broader strategy to integrate student experience and outcome data systematically into academic and operational planning, ensuring that decisions are increasingly data-informed.
530. The LQSC will oversee the integration of these data streams into course annual monitoring reports, identify cross-institutional themes, and escalate recommendations to the Academic Board. The Academic Board will review these themes and submit an institutional annual monitoring report to Council as part of the governance and accountability structure. Although the Academy does not yet use real-time dashboards, its structured termly reporting system allows it to respond to emerging risks, track performance over time, and inform strategic decision-making at institutional level.
531. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has credible plans to ensure its administrative support systems enable it to monitor student progression and performance accurately and provide timely, secure, and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs. The Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review and proposed annual monitoring process 2025-26 require course- and institution-level reporting on progression, attainment and engagement; new reporting templates embed analysis of attainment gaps and early academic risk ; and the Individualised Learning Plan (ILP) matrix provides a framework for tracking and responding to student progress in real time. Together, these measures represent a credible plan for ensuring that accurate management information informs both academic governance and operational decision-making.
532. The assessment team evaluated whether the Academy has credible plans to provide 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 Academy embeds the development of professional skills into both the formal curriculum and its broader industry-facing activities. All courses include skills-based modules focused on employability, reflective practice, and the application of technical knowledge to live projects. These are assessed through practical and portfolio-based submissions that

replicate real-world conditions and working patterns. Students also benefit from masterclasses, guest lectures, and live briefs delivered by practising professionals, coordinated as part of the wider industry engagement strategy. Alongside this vocational emphasis, the Academy provides opportunities for students to develop academic skills relevant to postgraduate progression, including structured research methods components in Level 7 programmes. The assessment team also observed a teaching session focused on broader employment and life skills – including taxes, pensions and financial planning (with a focus on working as a self-employed professional in the live events industry) – which reflects the Academy’s holistic approach to preparing students for both professional and personal progression.

533. The Academy’s physical location at Production Park provides a unique embedded learning environment where students train alongside world-class live events companies. This co-location affords daily exposure to the technologies, workflows and professional expectations of the sector, and enables both informal and formal engagement with employers. During the assessment team visit, students and staff emphasised the value of being immersed in an operational creative campus, citing spontaneous interactions with industry professionals, early access to commercial-grade equipment, and on-site shadowing opportunities as key factors in their professional growth.
534. The Academy systematically integrates these sector-facing opportunities into course design and enhancement processes, ensuring that students’ academic and professional development is embedded within a live industry context. A key element of this provision is the Academy’s dedicated industry partnerships function, led by the Industry Partnerships Director. The role is specifically designed to broker industry-facing opportunities and ensure students have access to contemporary technologies, professional networks, and placement pathways. The Director is responsible for scheduling regular masterclasses, coordinating industry feedback into curriculum design, and generating industry placements for students in collaboration with academic and student support staff. Evidence from the provider visit confirmed that students had undertaken live briefs, placements and masterclasses with Production Park companies and visiting professionals; students emphasised the value of these activities for building networks and enhancing employability. The role therefore operates across both academic and commercial functions, ensuring that employer engagement is not only reactive but embedded in programme design and enhancement.
535. The Academy embeds industry-facing enrichment through the Industry Practices Programme, which in spring 2025 included sessions led by professionals in lighting design, sound engineering, stage management, tour production and creative technologies. Sessions covered career planning, technical training, and case studies on large-scale tours and productions, ensuring that students gain direct insights into current industry practice.
536. According to internal reports, students have also engaged in live international events and in producing a musical in collaboration with peers from partner institutions, reinforcing applied, cross-cultural professional development.
537. Course committees, course annual monitoring reports, and the Student Experience Committee track and review industry-related opportunities. In the Freshers Survey report 2024, students praised the integration of professional experience into their studies, describing early access to real equipment and industry-led scenarios as ‘confidence boosting’ and ‘a real

insight into how the industry works'. The Academy triangulates these qualitative outcomes with progression and destination data to monitor and enhance the effectiveness of its employability offer.

538. During the New DAPs probationary period, the Academy will formalise the mapping of professional, academic and personal skills across its curriculum. The updated Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review framework requires course leaders to analyse programme-level skills development and identify opportunities for enhancement. From 2025–26, new data capture templates will record progression tracking, placement uptake, and student reflections on professional readiness, and the LQSC will review these themes and escalate them as appropriate.
539. The New DAPs plan states that personal and professional development opportunities will be reviewed as part of ongoing enhancement planning throughout the probationary period. In parallel, the Academy will strengthen the strategic role of the Industry Partnerships Director by expanding consultation with employers and working with course teams to co-design curriculum elements that anticipate industry trends. These enhancements will support students in achieving their qualifications and in developing the competencies and confidence required to transition successfully into employment or further study.
540. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has credible plans to provide opportunities for all students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression, for example academic, employment and future career management skills. Skills-based modules embed employability and reflective practice; research training is included in postgraduate provision; industry-facing enrichment is delivered through the Industry Practices Programme; and broader life-skills teaching and international collaborative projects further extend opportunities for students. These measures represent a coherent and proportionate plan to ensure that students develop the competencies needed for progression to both employment and further study.
541. The assessment team examined whether the Academy has credible plans to provide 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. The Academy provides structured induction and ongoing training in the safe and effective use of both specialist facilities and digital learning platforms. On enrolment, staff introduce students to the Academy's virtual learning environment (VLE), which hosts module content, assessment information, timetables, and links to wider learning resources. Course teams embed support for navigating the VLE and related academic systems into induction activities during the first weeks of term. In the Freshers Survey report 2024, students reported that they received early support with accessing digital systems and praised the user-friendliness of learning platforms, while also recommending clearer signposting of file locations and notifications.
542. Student feedback from Enrichment Week shows that they valued hands-on sessions with industry-standard technical equipment and digital tools. In response, the Careers and Employability Strategy for 2025-26 sets out plans to embed more applied, resource-based sessions into the core timetable.

543. Specialist technical resources sit at the heart of the curriculum. Staff train students to use industry-standard equipment and software, including live production technologies, studio infrastructure, and digital design tools. Course teams introduce these resources through induction sessions, technical briefings, and supervised practical work, and reinforce them through assessed projects. The Academy's co-location with Production Park companies fosters a culture of shared professional standards, where staff apply health and safety protocols, workflow expectations, and technical rigour consistent with sector practice. During the assessment team visit, staff and students highlighted how early and repeated access to professional-grade equipment and commercial environments accelerated students' technical development.
544. The assessment team reviewed the Academy's digital learning platforms and physical resources during the visit, including studio spaces, teaching environments and student-facing systems. Students told the team that specialist and digital resources were available and accessible, and that staff supported them effectively in learning how to use them. These observations align with wider student feedback in the Freshers Survey 2024, where respondents highlighted the value of staff guidance and peer support in navigating new systems and technologies.
545. The Academy's student support structure contributes to this training. The Safeguarding Policy lists the Student Support and Experience Officer and Director of Student Support and Experience among the designated contacts for advising on safe usage of equipment and responding to wellbeing and safety concerns. Safety in use of resources is further reinforced by technicians, academic staff and the operations team, particularly where students are using equipment shared with Production Park tenants.
546. During the New DAPs probationary period, the Academy plans to continue to review and strengthen its approach to training students in the effective and safe use of resources. The Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review 2025 introduces data prompts requiring academic teams to evaluate how well they support students in engaging with digital and physical learning tools, and to identify any gaps in provision or access. This data will inform termly reviews at course committee level and escalation to the LQSC and Academic Board where relevant.
547. The New DAPs plan identifies learning resources and the student environment as a priority theme for enhancement during the probationary period, with the provider aiming to align resources, teaching practice, and student success. The provider plans to improve digital file organisation on the VLE, clarify resource booking systems, and enhance orientation materials for specialist equipment rooms. The assessment team considered these proposals credible and proportionate, since they focus on ensuring that students not only access resources but also use them efficiently and safely.
548. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has credible plans to provide 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. Structured induction and training cover both specialist equipment and digital platforms; survey evidence confirms that students feel supported in accessing and using these systems; and the New DAPs plan sets milestones to enhance resource booking systems, digital file organisation, and equipment orientation during the probationary period.

549. The assessment team considered whether the Academy has a credible plan to develop an organisational approach guided by a commitment to equity. The Academy embeds equity considerations into its strategic planning and operational delivery. The EDI Committee, a formal part of the governance structure, meets termly and reviews access, participation, attainment and progression data across student groups. The Committee draws on disaggregated data across protected characteristics and intersectional factors, such as disability status and socioeconomic background.
550. As detailed in the Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review 2025, course teams will review progression, continuation and attainment data disaggregated by ethnicity, gender, disability, care experience and age group. The new reporting templates, due to be introduced in 2025-26, include targeted prompts to support interpretation and responsive action planning. Course leaders will incorporate these metrics into course annual monitoring reports, which the LQSC and Academic Board will then review. While the process has not yet been tested, the assessment team considered it a suitable and proportionate approach, consistent with sector practice, and therefore a credible plan for ensuring students are treated fairly.
551. Data reviewed at EDI Committee has already prompted targeted interventions. For example, analysis of the 2023-24 cohort highlighted continuation and attainment risks among students with declared disabilities. This led to the implementation of an ILP matrix to monitor attendance, attainment and engagement with support services, as well as expanded one-to-one appointments and guidance documentation to support students transitioning from support plans from their previous education providers.
552. The Academy has also begun to explore a financial support strategy to contribute to laptops and diagnostic assessments for students applying for a Disabled Students Allowance without prior institutional funding. This intervention is specifically designed to support those facing compound disadvantage or from low-participation neighbourhoods.
553. Support structures continue to expand in response to these equity considerations. In 2025, the Academy relaunched its Buddy Scheme with 15 trained student mentors and 17 mentees. Training for mentors covered confidentiality, safeguarding, and suicide awareness, and included scenario-based exercises to prepare them to support a diverse student cohort. The Academy has also introduced further inclusive provision, including a dedicated faith and quiet space, individualised hardship support, and bursary offers aligned to APP priorities, such as mature students, students with disabilities, and Black and ethnic minority students.
554. Outreach activity under the APP has also expanded. In March 2025, the Academy partnered with other parties to deliver a Uni Connect Digital Media Event for year 12-13 students from backgrounds with low higher education participation. Staff and students led sessions and worked as technical crew, showcasing accessible pathways into specialist creative education.
555. During the assessment team visit, students described the Academy's approach to support as inclusive, responsive and highly personalised. They reported confidence that their individual needs were understood and taken seriously, and highlighted rapid responses to support disclosures, flexibility around assessment deadlines, and ongoing communication with safeguarding staff.

556. The Academy plans to strengthen its equity framework during the New DAPs probationary period by formalising its approach to identifying, analysing and responding to disparities in continuation and achievement. The Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review will be the principal vehicle for this work, with further developments planned to support staff in interpreting and responding to disaggregated data. This includes staff training on supporting care-experienced and estranged students, as well as adjustments to resourcing and learning support in response to rising numbers of applicants declaring disabilities for 2024-25.
557. The New DAPs plan states that equity and student experience will remain a focus of institutional enhancement throughout the probationary period. The Academy monitors equity-related risks through its institutional risk register and discusses them at Academic Board and Council to ensure alignment between strategic priorities, governance oversight, and operational practice. Key risks include the challenge of maintaining equitable outcomes as student numbers grow, ensuring consistent practice in implementing reasonable adjustments, and sustaining specialist support capacity as the student body diversifies. The assessment team considered the Academy's plan to embed equity monitoring into risk management a credible approach to scaling support systems while retaining its student-informed ethos.
558. The assessment team's view is that the Academy provides an inclusive, professionally focused student support environment underpinned by maturing governance and quality assurance processes. The team noted a coherent institutional approach to student development, with responsibilities clearly delineated across governance structures and underpinned by regular monitoring, triangulated data, and student. The Academy's multi-stage induction, visible and proactive support teams, and responsive adjustments based on lived student experience were viewed as strengths. Planned enhancements, such as the implementation of the LQSC, disaggregated support metrics in course annual monitoring reports, and expanded tracking of attainment and engagement, are proportionate, feasible and aligned with the provider's mission to support diverse student success at scale.
559. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has a credible plan to develop an organisational approach guided by a commitment to equity. It has embedded EDI governance structures; requires the analysis of disaggregated student performance data through its monitoring framework; has introduced inclusive initiatives such as the Buddy Scheme, hardship support, and bursaries aligned to APP priorities; and has committed in its New DAPs plan to monitoring equity-related risks through the risk register and governance cycle.

Conclusions

560. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion D1. This is because the Academy has in place arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The Academy has also developed effective mechanisms to monitor and evaluate these.
561. The assessment team found that the Academy provides a coherent and evolving environment for supporting students, characterised by proactive engagement, embedded inclusivity, and a strong alignment between academic, operational, and strategic functions.

562. The team also considers the Academy's New DAPs plan to be credible in terms of how it will operate and further develop its arrangements for enabling student development and achievement through the probationary period.

563. However, the team identified the following areas that should be monitored during the first year of the Academy's probationary period. The Academy should also provide an update on these at its first quarterly self-assessment submission. The areas are:

- An update on the development of a formal Student Support Strategy, including review of delivery models, staffing capacity, and feasibility of introducing in-house or hybrid counselling provision.
- An update on the introduction of the refreshed induction framework from September 2025, co-designed with students and staff, drawing on findings from the Freshers Survey 2024 to enhance orientation, timetabling, spatial flow and support signposting.
- An update on the strengthening of personal and professional development tracking in annual monitoring, including mapping of transferable skills, placement data, and student reflections on industry readiness.
- An update on the enhanced evaluation of student engagement with digital and specialist learning resources, with a focus on VLE usability, resource booking systems, and health and safety training linked to equipment use.
- An update on the disaggregation of student support themes in course annual monitoring reports, drawing on survey data, service access logs, and student committee discussions to inform planning and improvement of wellbeing and advisory services.

Specified changes

564. The assessment team's view is that no specified changes are required for criterion D1.

Assessment of DAPs criterion E: Evaluation of performance

Criterion E1: Evaluation of performance

Advice to the OfS

565. The assessment team's view is that the Academy's New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion E1: Evaluation of performance.
566. The assessment team's view is that the Academy has demonstrated an understanding of criterion E1 because, in summary, it is developing appropriate mechanisms to enable it to critically review its own performance through internal and external monitoring and review.
567. However, the team identified weaknesses in the Academy's current arrangements for self-criticality and the Academy's approach to how it monitors and reviews its academic provision. The team also identified a weakness in the contribution of course teams when evaluating course-level performance.
568. Despite these issues, the team was assured that the Academy has recognised these areas for improvement and has appropriate plans in place to strengthen its capabilities of assessing its own performance, responding to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths. The team has recommended the Academy provide specific updates to enable monitoring of these developments during year 1 of the probationary period.
569. While the Academy has plans to ensure postgraduate provision is covered within its proposed Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Reviews, the team noted a lack of detail within the Academy's New DAPs plan regarding this and recommended that this is a required specified change to plan.
570. In summary, the team found that the Academy can be reasonably expected to meet the evidence requirements for criterion E1 in full by the end of the probationary period.
571. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the Academy's New DAPs plan and evidence which shows that, should the Academy make the specified changes set out, it can be reasonably expected to meet the evidence requirements for E1 in full by the end of the probationary period.

Subcriterion E1.1

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

Reasoning

572. To determine whether the Academy has credible plans to ensure critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of its higher education provision and that action is taken in response

to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review, the assessment team met with staff, students and senior leaders at the Academy and reviewed evidence including:

- ALT Committee Handbook
- Annual Effectiveness Report update, Academic Board, 9 April 2024
- Annual Quality Reviews
- LQSC draft terms of reference, June 2025
- Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review 2025 – review of course-level data (three years)
- Proposed annual monitoring process 2025-26
- Standards, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework
- ALT external examiner nominee form
- Sample external examiner nominee form and CV
- Academic Board agenda and papers
- Group and collaborative projects, 2024-25.

573. The Academy delegates responsibility for quality and standards to the Academic Board which is responsible for oversight of all matters relating to academic regulations, academic standards, quality assurance, enhancement and the student experience, and for overseeing general issues relating to the teaching, scholarship, research and academic portfolio of the Academy. As discussed under criterion A1, the Academy had previously changed its intention regarding the implementation of a Learning, Quality and Standards Committee (LQSC). The Academy's change in approach regarding the LQSC had initially raised concern around inconsistency in practice as the team noted that, in its draft Standards, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework, the current process for monitoring and evaluating academic quality assurance is through course committee minutes, Annual Quality Review reports and action plans submitted to the LQSC with any necessary recommendations for actions for approval.

574. However, as further discussed below, the concern regarding the role of LQSC has since been resolved with the Academy. The Academy confirmed that it has reinstated its plans to develop and implement a quality committee from 2025-26 to enable it to fulfil its role within its new annual monitoring procedures, with effect from 2025-26, and has submitted draft terms of reference for such a committee. The assessment team is satisfied that the terms of reference and membership of the committee are suitable for its responsibilities and therefore that it is likely to be an effective enhancement to quality assurance and will provide a means of critical self-assessment and action in response. However, as a new committee yet to be established, the team recommend that the finalised terms of reference and membership of the committee are submitted as evidence during the first year of its probationary period.

575. The Annual Quality Review (AQR) is the current primary mechanism for monitoring undergraduate provision at the Academy. The Academy states that the purpose of the AQR process is 'to manage and maintain academic standards' and assure its validated partner that it is upholding those standards for the awards it validates. The AQR is prepared by the Director of Learning, Quality and Standards and is presented to the Academic Board for approval, after overview by course committees. The self-evaluation document states that

when the provider's relationship with the validating institution changed from that of running franchised courses to having its own provision validated, the procedure, format and datasets for the AQR have evolved but remain broadly consistent with previous practice. The procedures are therefore substantially based on the validating institutions approach. The Academy has made it clear that it intends to further evolve its academic quality monitoring procedures from the current arrangements, through a new Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review process, which is discussed further below.

576. A range of quantitative and qualitative data is considered by the Academy as part of the AQR, including:

- the NSS
- internal student satisfaction surveys
- student module feedback
- external examiner reports
- national benchmarks
- graduate outcomes
- recruitment data including applications, conversions and enrolments at course level
- progression and completion data.

577. The assessment team examined the AQR reports for academic years 2022-23 and 2023-24 and found there was a great deal of high-level data and commentary regarding course applications, conversion rates, enrolments and attendance. The reports also contain some summary data on student achievement and attainment at course level, but very little data or commentary pertaining to the quality of teaching and learning on each course. Currently, within the AQR reports, course leaders provide an overview of course performance and the team considered that these summaries are brief and do not include a critical evaluation of performance based on available data and student feedback. The Academy has stated that the procedure, format and datasets used are substantially based upon the validating institution's template, but with more institution-specific data, and that it intends to develop its annual monitoring procedure during its New DAPs probationary period, which is commented on below.

578. During the team's review of this evidence, it was noted that much of the course-level reporting lacks in-depth analysis and recommendations for action. For example, the team noted a lack of interrogation of the data or analysis in terms of critically understanding the data presented and potential actions required. For example, for one course the team noted that a course leader's analysis entailed only the following statement: 'An improvement in passed at first attempt, which may be due to the two modules per term, and other improvements in delivery' regarding pass rates for all modules on a course for the year. Another similar analysis made by a course leader showed a lack of detailed interrogation and action planning. In some cases, for AQRs reviewed, the team found that there is no comment at all by course leaders. However, the team noted that the Academy also provides module-level reporting, and the team found that evidence of these reports includes more detailed analysis and commentary. While module-level reporting appears more effective, the team noted that it is not

consolidated at course level within the AQRs, and therefore doesn't present a clear and accurate overview of performance and trends.

579. To explore this issue further, during the visit to the Academy, the assessment team discussed course-level annual performance monitoring and review and how teaching teams were involved in this process. Academic teaching staff at the Academy described the critical evaluation of course-level performance as taking place at institutional level by the Director of Learning, Quality and Standards but confirmed they felt that they currently had limited to no input in the process of monitoring and measuring quality and standards at course level. Staff expressed that they currently provide a high-level overview of performance only, with in-depth analysis undertaken by senior colleagues.

580. Subsequently, as part of an additional evidence request, the assessment team asked the Senior Leadership Team for more information about the monitoring and review of quality and standards at course level. The Academy responded as follows:

'Over the past two years, as we have developed our own data sets, course leaders have been invited to contribute to a shared document providing commentary on key aspects of their courses. Course-level data, compiled by the Director of Learning, Quality and Standards, includes figures from the previous two years (where available) to support longitudinal trend analysis. Additionally, this data is presented alongside institutional averages as an internal benchmark'.

581. Within the AQR, the team noted that it was difficult to ascertain whether internal benchmarking is taking place. The team found evidence of cross-academy visual graphs and tables relating to module marks, degree classification and academic progression; however, the related reporting is very descriptive and lacks analysis. The assessment team specifically noted that:

- It is not clear if individual courses have key performance indicators, other than those set by its validating partner, which are focused on student recruitment.
- As course directors are not responsible for reporting and action planning, it is not clear how course-specific strengths and weaknesses being identified and acted upon; nor is it clear how they are measured against threshold and benchmark standards.
- The reports do not offer any insight into variables that may impact outcomes such as assessment types, credit values or student characteristics therefore offering very little value to critical self-assessment.

582. The assessment team sought to clarify these queries, alongside discussion regarding critical self-assessment, with senior leadership during the visit. The Academy provided further insight regarding proposed new peer review schemes, periodic review and review of committee effectiveness. Through this, staff provided assurances to the team that further granular discussions about programme enhancement and attainment takes place at Academic Board. Furthermore, staff stated that they recognised that detailed analysis of monitoring its academic provision was an area where it required further development – specifically regarding engaging with data, benchmarks and thresholds. Subsequently, following the visit, the Academy provided further details of its developments of the new Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review, set out in its New DAPs plan. The Academy states that it intends to

build on its original structure of self-assessment through AQRs, by implementing a more robust approach through benchmarking against institutions within the same Higher Education Classification of Subjects (HECOS) code and aligned competitors, and by initiating a more focused approach to course-centred monitoring. The New DAPs plan states that this new Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Review approach will be implemented in year 1, quarter 1. The team was therefore assured by the updates it received both during and after the visit, and considered that this evidence, alongside the existing detail in its New DAPs plan, were sufficient to demonstrate it has credible plans in place to develop mechanisms to ensure that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of its higher education provision.

583. Regarding its plans to enhance its approach to course monitoring should it gain New DAPs, the Academy intends to put in place a 'more focused, course-centred monitoring process with the existing provision as soon as possible', and that 'course leaders will be asked to comment on a broader range of data'. It will further enhance the benchmarking for its course reviews. The team reviewed the benchmarks the Academy provided to inform this and noted that these reflect the OfS threshold standards for condition B3 – continuation, completion and progression – alongside further indicators such as attendance, attainment and external examiner reports.
584. The team reviewed documents associated with the framework for quality monitoring including detailed mapping of how the Academy intends to develop its self-criticality in terms of reporting mechanisms, data sets and responsible stakeholders, along with a draft template to capture data for the annual monitoring and enhancement review process and a proposed annual monitoring process. This included a list of questions that course leaders should ask themselves to help them reflect constructively on the data while conducting course review, and details regarding which benchmarks will be given. The document also provided a procedure for termly and annual review of academic performance. This evidence demonstrated to the team that the Academy has credible plans to strengthen the role of self-criticality through its new procedures and provides assurance as to the breadth and depth of its planned analytical evaluation and action planning at course level.
585. As discussed under criterion A1, the Academy also plans to establish a new subcommittee of the Academic Board, namely the Learning, Quality and Standards Committee (LQSC). The draft terms of reference for this committee outline its key functions, which include facilitating the continuous improvement of learning and teaching quality, and overseeing Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Reviews of all the Academy's higher education provision, including monitoring and securing implementation of actions. The committee intends to review relevant institutional-level data and propose measures to improve the quality and effectiveness of learning, teaching and enhancement. This gives the assessment team assurance that there will be a dedicated deliberative function to assess that appropriate criticality is taking place and that any improvement or maintenance work is being completed.
586. The course monitoring reports produced under the proposed new procedure will be presented to the LQSC. The assessment team considered that this plan, if carried out and applied to both undergraduate and postgraduate provision, will address the weaknesses identified in the Academy's current approach. These plans should enable the Academy to ensure that, by the end of the probatory period, it can demonstrate that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of its higher education provision and that action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review.

587. However, the team found that the Academy's current arrangements for monitoring and reviewing its postgraduate provision are currently limited to engaging a dedicated postgraduate external examiner and receiving and responding to their annual reports. The postgraduate external examiner annual reports and the Academy's response to the external examiner show a constructive relationship between the external examiner and the Academy, and detailed consideration of the courses, to which the Academy responded appropriately. While the Academy has provided evidence that its validating partner is satisfied with the current arrangements, the team queried whether this was effective practice and considered the same level of self-assessment and review should apply to all of the Academy's higher education provision. Furthermore, the team noted that the Academy's New DAPs plan does not currently set out details or milestones regarding developing and implementing monitoring and review arrangements specifically for postgraduate provision during the probationary period.
588. The team queried this with the Academy which subsequently confirmed, via an additional evidence request, that it does have plans to develop postgraduate annual monitoring and reporting and integrate it with the new annual monitoring process described for undergraduate provision. The team consider that, if established, this will ensure that the Academy can demonstrate that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of all of its higher education provision. However, due to the current omission from the New DAPs plan, the team have identified this as a required specified change that will need to be made to the plan before the probationary period begins.
589. The team considered how the Academy utilises external monitoring and external examiners. As discussed under criterion B3, the team found that it is clear that the Academy values the role of the external examiner and recognises the importance of impartial independent critical scrutiny. The Academy makes use of a clear framework to ensure successful engagement with its external examiners. The team reviewed the current external examiner nominee form template; the completed external examiner nominee form and CV assured the assessment team that the Academy actively seeks to employ examiners that demonstrate competence and experience in their field of study, therefore having the capabilities to positively impact the courses they are examining.
590. The completed external examiner reports provided as evidence shows the examiners' responses to a range of questions relating to standards, awards, academic experience and resources, with a final free text box relating to important matters. The evidence of engagement with externals provides assurance that action is taken in response to matters raised externally; for example, one external examiner report identified a potential issue with the grading of group work. Subsequently, an academy-wide code of practice was developed and approved by Academic Board (October 2024) to support issues with group working.
591. In conclusion, based on the review of the documents, the assessment team formed the view that the Academy has credible plans to establish mechanisms to ensure that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of its higher education provision and that action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review. The team concludes that, if the Academy fully enacts its plans, it will be able to demonstrate that it meets this evidence requirement by the end of the New DAPs probationary period.

592. To determine whether the Academy has credible plans for establishing clear mechanisms for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision, the assessment team reviewed a range of policies and operational documents, including:

- ALT Committee Handbook 2024 terms of reference for Council and Academic Board
- ALT Periodic Review Procedure
- Annual Quality Review 2022-23
- Annual Quality Review 2023-24
- University of Bolton Assessment and Moderation Procedure
- ALT Sample blank assessment moderation for marked work 2024-25
- ALT Module reports 2022-23
- ALT Module reports 2023-24
- Standards, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework.

593. The Academy has, in draft, a Standards, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework which it will implement if the Academy is granted New DAPs. This provides a clear framework of how to assign, complete and discharge actions in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision. The document, outlines some principles of monitoring and enhancing curriculum, referring to both incremental and transformational change. Principle 6 states 'To track and understand the impact of enhancement, we employ methods that review and evaluate our progress'. Furthermore, in section 3 the document details additional mechanisms for reviewing, evaluating and actioning activities to scrutinise, monitor and evaluate academic provision through the annual course and module reviews and through the activity of cyclical periodic review. As discussed above, the Academy has plans to update its draft Standards, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework in light of its additional plans – to introduce benchmark and threshold data standards, an improved reporting mechanism with specific measurable outcomes, and clear stakeholder responsibilities (as outlined in the post-visit submission and related documents).

594. To consider if the Academy has established clear mechanisms for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision, the assessment team was provided with evidence of current module assessment reports and templates for the internal moderation of marks. Internal moderation of marks is a mechanism for ensuring critical review of marking standards prior to external examiner review, to ensure the reliable, correct and effective assessment of student work. The assessment team considered that the moderation template was fit for purpose because it allows space for internal moderation comments and further detailed commentary relating to wider quality standards monitoring, such as quality of feedback/feed forward and enhancements. There is also guidance in the footnotes to support sample selection and the parameters of the moderation exercise.

595. Review of a sample completed moderation form shows that the required sample size has been met and that the narrative provided by the moderator indicates that they have read the student work closely before agreeing the marks. The module assessment reports and internal moderation forms provide evidence of mechanisms for internal monitoring academic provision and for assigning and discharging actions. The module reports give a clear oversight of how

strengths and areas for development are identified within a module – the proforma is clear and asks for narrative comment on areas of good practice and where improvement should be sought, although the analysis and commentary asked for is limited in scope. The report also details actions required, and these actions triangulate with the AQR report actions. For example, in the module report for Academic and Professional Skills for Live Events for 2022-23, there is an observation that an amendment to the assessment strategy may help students to manage the demands of the module better. This is reported on and recorded as an action in the action plan section of the AQR for the year; the effectiveness of the change as implemented is reported on in the module report for the following year. Therefore, the assessment team's view is that the Academy is sufficiently assigning and discharging actions in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision and currently has clear and established mechanisms for this. The team considers that the process in place will be improved when the proposed new annual monitoring process is implemented, as discussed earlier.

596. The assessment team also reviewed the Academy's proposed Periodic Review Process along with committee terms of reference specifically for Council, and the Academic Board. The Council has a specific responsibility to 'maintain oversight of the institution's quality assurance and enhancement activities and the monitoring of identified academic and performance quality indicators'. As discussed previously, the Academic Board receives AQR and external examiner reports and actions plans and has a responsibility for the 'management of Academy of Live Technology's framework for academic quality, standards and enhancement'. The team considered that such mechanisms further illustrate the Academy has active mechanisms for assigning and discharging actions in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of academic provision and has credible plans in place to enhance and further develop these, should it be granted New DAPs. This will specifically be enabled by the role of the new LQSC and the Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Reviews.
597. To assess whether the provider has credible plans to ensure that ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation (for example on programme design and development, on teaching, and on students learning and assessment) are drawn into its arrangements for programme design, approval, delivery and review, the assessment team reviewed the following documents:
- Periodic Review Procedure
 - Course Approval Procedures and documentation
 - Professional Industry Symposium sessions 2023-24
 - Professional Industry Symposium sessions 2024-25.
598. Currently, the Academy follows and complies with its validating institution's requirements for new course approval and periodic review. These set out its requirements for external stakeholder and adviser consultation (discussed further under criterion B2). In readiness for New DAPs, the assessment team is satisfied that the evidence provided demonstrates that the Academy has credible plans to meet the criterion, should New DAPs be granted, because its proposed policies and plans require and enable it to actively seek ideas and expertise from both within and outside of the organisation for programme design, approval, delivery and review. The team found that the Periodic Review Procedure and the Course Approval Procedure are both good examples of the Academy's plans and preparedness to engage with

external and internal stakeholders for the design and approval of academic curriculum. Detailed commentary regarding periodic review and the Course Approval Procedure can be found under criterion B2. In summary, the Academy intends to use the Periodic Review Procedure to undertake a full undergraduate and postgraduate review in year 1, quarter 3 of its probationary period and intends to follow the Course Approval Procedure to develop new courses from year 2, quarter 2, according to the New DAPs plan.

599. The proposed Periodic Review Process will consider the ongoing validity of academic courses, reflecting on strengths and potential areas of improvement. According to the process documents, the panel allocated to periodic review will include course directors from different areas, an external academic panel member, an industry specialist or employer and a student representative or graduate. During the review meeting, it is expected that the panel will engage in discussion with the course team and a representative group of students studying the course. The panel would then make a recommendation based on their review to Academic Board to either reapprove without conditions or recommendations, or to reapprove with conditions or recommendations.
600. The Academy's proposed course approval process follows a similar procedural structure to the periodic review. According to the process, course writing teams in stage 2 of course development will consult with external academics, industry practitioners, employers, students and alumni while developing course structure, curriculum content and assessment strategies. The course validation activity mirrors the membership and process of the periodic review outlined above. The team considered that both proposed processes highlight that the Academy places significant importance on the role of internal and external expertise and show robust consideration and implementation of process to support this work.
601. Additionally, the Academy has in place a draft Course Modification process. Courses that do not require a full periodic review or validation event may make modifications. This process outlines that the course team must consult with students and external examiners before any changes can be implemented.
602. Finally, the Academy provided the assessment team with evidence of a list of professional industry sessions that were delivered each month of the academic year for students. The symposiums were industry- and employment-related and complemented the delivery of the main programme.
603. In conclusion, the assessment team was satisfied that the Academy works to assure at every opportunity that it engages with internal and external stakeholders to draw on their expertise during the writing, development, delivery and review of their programmes. Accordingly, the team finds that the Academy has a credible plan to meet the requirement to use ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation in its arrangements for programme design, approval, delivery and review. The team concluded that, should the Academy's proposed plans and draft procedures be implemented fully, it can reasonably be expected to meet the criterion in full by the end of the probationary period.

Conclusions

604. Based on its findings, the assessment team concluded that the Academy demonstrated a full understanding of criterion E1 and has a credible New DAPs plan which can be reasonably expected to enable the institute to meet the criterion in full by the end of the probationary period.
605. The assessment team found that the Academy has in place plans for clear mechanisms through its committees and its procedures for quality oversight, annual reviews, moderations and reporting to ensure that it is consistently scrutinising and monitoring academic provision and assigning and discharging actions to improve and maintain standards.
606. The Academy shows a rigorous and reliable approach to engaging with internal and external expertise, working in partnership to ensure academic provision is appropriate and aligned with sector standards. The Academy recognises that there is still developmental work to be undertaken throughout the probationary period to ensure it can meet the criterion in full, but the team found that this showed the Academy's desire to reflect, with an emphasis on continuous improvement and critical self-assessment.
607. Specifically, the team identified the following areas that should be monitored during the first year of the Academy's probationary period. The Academy should also provide an update on these at its first quarterly self-assessment submission. These are:
- An update on the development and implementation of the LQSC, including terms of reference, membership and clarification of its role and remit to evaluate and monitor performance.
 - An update on the development of its Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Reviews to include postgraduate provision.

Specified changes to the New DAPs plan

608. The team's view is that the following specified change is also required to provide a suitable basis for monitoring and further assessment of criterion E1. This change should be made to the New DAPs plan before the probationary period begins. The specified change is:
- Include details and milestones of how the Academy will integrate postgraduate programmes to its processes for Annual Monitoring and Enhancement Reviews.

Assessment of overarching criterion for the authorisation of New DAPs

New DAPs: An emerging self-critical, cohesive academic community with a clear commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective (in prospect) quality systems.

Advice to the OfS

609. The assessment team's view is that the Academy meets the overarching criterion for New DAPs because it can be reasonably expected to meet the underpinning criteria in full by the end of the probationary period.
610. The assessment team's view is based on its review of the evidence, which shows in summary that the Academy has credible plans to develop a self-critical and cohesive academic community. It further has a clear commitment to the assurance of standards, supported by clear quality systems which can be reasonably expected to be effective.
611. This view is based on consideration of the evidence requirements for the DAPs criteria alongside any other relevant information.

Reasoning

612. The assessment team found that the Academy has credible plans to demonstrate **self-criticality** through the governance structures it has already set up, as well as those it plans to establish during the first year of the probationary period, namely the Learning, Quality and Standards Committee.
613. The assessment team concluded that the Academy's senior committees and subcommittees function effectively and provide academic oversight for all policies and procedures relating to review and evaluation. Clear lines of accountability and oversight will be in place by the end of the New DAPs probationary period. This will ensure that academic provision is consistently scrutinised and monitored, with actions assigned and carried out to continuously improve and maintain standards.
614. The assessment team found the Academy to have an emerging **cohesive academic community** with credible strategies that will ensure all individuals responsible for teaching, learning and assessment are suitably qualified. Furthermore, these individuals will receive appropriate support and ongoing professional development relevant to the levels and subjects of the qualifications being awarded. The Academy currently offers structured opportunities for staff development, such as institutional development weeks and peer-to-peer learning initiatives. Additionally, the Academy has pledged to implement a peer review of teaching framework during the first year of the probationary period. Together, these strategies form a clear and cohesive plan to ensure that staff are well qualified, well supported, and continually developed.

615. The Academy has demonstrated a **clear commitment to the assurance of standards** and is able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience to all students. The Academy shows a rigorous and reliable approach to engaging with internal and external expertise to work in partnership to ensure academic provision is appropriate and aligned with relevant external points of reference and sector standards.
616. The assessment team considers the Academy to have **clear** and appropriate **quality systems** which are expected to be effective. Its quality systems are underpinned by clear governance structures and reporting lines, with policies for monitoring and review and engagement with external reference points.

Conclusions

617. The assessment team therefore concluded that the Academy meets the overarching criterion as its New DAPs plan and supporting evidence demonstrates that the Academy has an emerging self-critical, cohesive academic community with a clear commitment to the assurance of standards as supported by effective (in prospect) quality systems.

New DAPs test conclusions

Advice to the OfS: credibility of the New DAPs plan

618. The assessment team's view is that the Academy has a credible New DAPs plan. However, specified changes are required to ensure the plan will provide a suitable basis for monitoring and further assessment. These specific changes are summarised in Table 2 and detailed in the conclusions of criteria A1, B1, B2 and E1.
619. Should the Academy make the specified changes set out, it can be reasonably expected to meet the DAPs criteria in full by the end of the probationary period.

Advice to the OfS: understanding of the DAPs criteria

620. The assessment team's view is that the Academy has demonstrated a full understanding of the DAPs criteria. However, the assessment team have identified areas in each criterion that the Academy should further develop and should provide an update on during the first year of its probationary period.
621. The team's view is based on its review of the evidence, which shows in summary that the Academy has developed, and is further developing, structures to support effective academic governance with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities. The New DAPs plan sets out how the effectiveness of these arrangements will be monitored and reviewed during the probationary period, although some of these plans require further development to ensure accuracy and consistency.
622. The assessment team concluded that the Academy has established a clear framework for working in partnership with its students across all aspects of academic governance and management of the organisation, and it will be able to further demonstrate the effectiveness of these arrangements during the probationary period.
623. The Academy has plans to formalise arrangements that will enable effective governance of its approach to working with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, and that will ensure that decisions to work with other organisations are the result of a strategic approach. Where weaknesses were identified in the planning and oversight of working with partners, the Academy demonstrated a willingness to review its arrangements and further develop its policies and processes.
624. The Academy successfully operates under a range of robust academic frameworks and regulations in collaboration with its validating partner. It has built on this experience to begin developing equivalent regulations and frameworks more tailored to its context in readiness for governing awards under its own DAPs, although these require further development to ensure accuracy and consistency. There are definitive records of the Academy's courses and these act as the reference point for delivery and assessment. Records of study are provided to students, although further development is required in the processes that support this.
625. The Academy has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications through its current collaborative partnership. It has also outlined clear policies and processes for programme design, approval

and review that will ensure its qualifications continue to align with the threshold academic standards of the FHEQ should it gain its own DAPs. The Academy has also provided evidence of mechanisms for maintaining standards above the threshold, ensuring they are reliable over time and reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies. The Academy is drawing on its experience under its collaborative partnership to develop its own processes for awarding its own degrees, including new annual programme monitoring and review arrangements.

626. The Academy has a good understanding of, and – in conjunction with its validating partner – currently operates sound processes for the design and approval of programmes, high quality learning, teaching and assessment, academic appeals and student complaints, and the appropriate use of external examiners. The Academy is also developing its own appropriate policies and procedures to ensure it will be able to continue to deliver in these areas effectively if it is awarded DAPs. However, further details are required regarding the development of the Learning and Teaching Strategy, new VLE and library arrangements, and revisions to the Academy's quality review procedures.
627. The Academy 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. Further work is required in the development of its new peer review process using external reviewers and staff development sessions on course design and pedagogical planning.
628. The Academy has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources which enable its students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. For example, student inductions are tailored and effective, and students are able to access a range of academic and non-academic support to aid their progression. Further development work is required in the production of its Student Support Strategy, its student induction framework and updates to its approach to monitoring student progression and performance.
629. The Academy has some effective practice in place currently to review its own performance through internal and external monitoring and review and has mechanisms in place for assigning and discharging of actions. However, the assessment team identified weaknesses in the Academy's approach to implementing critical self-assessment through its review of its academic provision. The team found that the Academy, however, has credible plans to improve and develop these areas during the New DAPs probationary period. The team was assured that its plans, which include the implementation of a Learning, Quality and Standards Committee, should be impactful in enhancing this practice, and noted that this area would require specific monitoring as the new committee and the Academy's new approach to annual monitoring is implemented.
630. The team's view is based on its review of the evidence which shows in summary that the Academy has an understanding of the DAPs criteria and has plans in place to fully meet the criteria by the end of the probationary period if it fulfils the specified changes.

Advice to the OfS: academic standards

631. The assessment team's view is that the standards set by the Academy for the proposed courses are at an appropriate level.
632. The team's view is based on its review of the evidence which shows in summary that the Academy is developing regulations, policies and procedures that are robust and support the setting and maintenance of academic standards and the security of the award of credit and qualifications.
633. The evidence reviewed shows that the setting and maintenance of academic standards takes account of the appropriate reference points and external and independent points of expertise. The assessment of academic standards is discussed under criterion B1; criterion B2 provides further detail on these points and the evidence considered by the team.

Conclusions

634. The team therefore concluded that the Academy meets the overarching criterion as its New DAPs plan and supporting evidence demonstrates that the Academy has an emerging self-critical, cohesive academic community, with a clear commitment to the assurance of standards as supported by effective in prospect quality systems.
635. Should the Academy make the specified changes set out, it can be reasonably expected to meet the DAPs criterion in full by the end of the probationary period.

Annex A: Abbreviations used

Abbreviation	Meaning
the Academy	Academy of Live Technology
AI	artificial intelligence
ALT	Academy of Live Technology
ALT/EBS	Academy of Live Technology's Education Business System
APL	accreditation of prior learning
APP	access and participation plan
AQR	Annual Quality Review
CPD	continuous professional development
DAPs	degree awarding powers
EDI	equality, diversity and inclusion
FHEQ	Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies
the Framework	the Academy's Standards, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Framework
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
HECOS	Higher Education Classification of Subjects
HERA	Higher Education and Research Act 2017
ILP	Individualised Learning Plan
LLE	Lifelong Learning Entitlement
LQSC	Learning, Quality and Standards Committee
NSS	National Student Survey
OfS	Office for Students
OIA	Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education
OnTrack	An online records system that allows students to monitor their progress by viewing grades
PCA&D	Pennsylvania College of Art and Design
PPE	personal protective equipment
PSRB	professional and statutory regulatory body
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QAC	Quality Assessment Committee
SSR	staff-to-student ratio
UoGM	University of Greater Manchester
VLE	virtual learning environment



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