Degree awarding powers (DAPs) assessment report for Lamda Limited

Assessment for variation of degree awarding powers

Contents

Executive summary

Type of assessment:	Quality and standards assessment for variation of degree awarding powers
For:	Lamda Limited (LAMDA)

1. This report represents an assessment for a variation of degree awarding powers (DAPs) for London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA). LAMDA applied for indefinite DAPs for all taught awards up to and including Level 7.

2. 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 visit to the provider. This report contains the advice and judgement of the team following its assessment.

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

Table 1: Summary of findings against the DAPs criteria

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

Variation of 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 already holds degree awarding powers (DAPs) may apply to the OfS to amend its powers through a variation to this authorisation. The OfS can decide to vary powers irrespective of how they were initially awarded (for example, by the OfS or the Privy Council).

Types of variation

There are a number of ways in which powers may be amended.

1. From New DAPs to Full DAPS (assessed via a New DAPs End Assessment)

Providers that have been granted New DAPs are assessed for suitability for Full DAPs after three years.

2. From Full DAPs to indefinite DAPS

Full DAPs are initially granted on a time-limited basis. A provider that has held Full DAPs for three years or more is normally eligible to apply to have 'indefinite' DAPs, with no time limit.

3. To extend the scope of DAPs

DAPs may be granted for a particular level of award, for example foundation degrees, or in specific subjects. In these cases, a provider that holds Full DAPs on a time-limited or indefinite basis can apply to extend its powers, for example to other taught awards or additional subjects.

Assessment and decision-making process

Before deciding whether to vary a provider's powers, the OfS will assess the provider. The assessment is designed to gather evidence to inform a judgement about whether the provider continues to meet the criteria for awarding degrees and has the ability to:

- provide and maintain higher education of an appropriate quality

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

The full requirements of the criteria are detailed in Annex C of the OfS regulatory framework.[2]

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[1] See Higher Education and Research Act 2017.

[2] See 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 the scope and level of detail of the variation assessment, and an initial position on whether the variation assessment should be desk-based or include a visit to the provider.

Assessments for DAPs 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 the HERA on the quality of and standards applied to the higher education being delivered by providers for which the OfS is considering granting, varying, or (in certain circumstances) revoking authorisation for DAPs.[3]

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

In making its decision about whether to vary a provider's powers, 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.[4]

Further information

We have published further information about varying DAPs in Regulatory advice 17.[5]

4.   LAMDA is a company limited by guarantee incorporated on 20 December 1940, though it was originally founded in 1861. It provides a range of undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses in the performing and creative arts.

5.   The OfS awarded LAMDA time-limited Taught DAPs on 1 August 2021 for a period of three years and three months. The time-limited Taught DAPs order was due to expire on 31 October 2024. The OfS extended this on 24 October 2024 for an additional 24 months giving the current order a new expiry date of 31 October 2026.

6.   In accordance with the OfS's regulatory framework and the guidance for providers on the variation and revocation of degree awarding powers, LAMDA is eligible for indefinite Taught DAPs because it has held time-limited degree awarding powers for three years.[6]

7.   The OfS appointed an external assessment team on 8 December 2023 to undertake a DAPs variation assessment. The OfS asked the assessment team to give its advice about the

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

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

[5] See Regulatory advice 17: Variation and revocation of degree awarding powers.

[6] See Regulatory advice 17: Variation and revocation of degree awarding powers..

quality of and standards applied to higher education courses at LAMDA and whether it continues to meet the DAPs criteria.

8.   The OfS initially commenced a desk-based assessment. Following the desk-based assessment stage of the process, the assessment team informed the OfS that a one-day site visit was required to further clarify areas that arose from the desk-based assessment and to triangulate findings.

9.   The assessment team considered a range of information submitted by LAMDA in support of its application to vary its DAPs authorisation. This report does not represent any decision of the OfS in respect of whether this DAPs authorisation should be granted.

10.   The OfS's Quality Assessment Committee (QAC) will consider this report at its meeting on 10 September 2025. QAC will formulate its advice to the OfS regarding quality and standards at LAMDA, having considered this report in accordance with the regulatory requirements set out in HERA.[7]

11.   The OfS will have regard to this assessment report and QAC's advice in deciding whether to vary LAMDA's DAPs authorisation on the basis requested. The OfS will also consider its own risk assessment for LAMDA and will have regard to advice received from others where it has sought this. It will also take into account other relevant considerations, such as the OfS's general duties under section 2 of HERA.[8]

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

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

Introduction and background

12. This report represents the conclusions of an assessment for a variation of degree awarding powers (DAPs) for London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art (LAMDA).

13. The Office for Students (OfS) awarded LAMDA Full Taught DAPs on 1 August 2021 for a period of three years and three months. Following this time-limited period, LAMDA applied for indefinite DAPs for all taught awards up to and including Level 7.

14. The OfS's Quality Assessment Committee (QAC) will consider the report and formulate its advice to the OfS regarding the quality and standards at LAMDA.

15. The OfS will consider this assessment report, and QAC's advice in deciding whether to vary LAMDA's DAPs authorisation on the basis requested. The OfS will also consider its own risk assessment for LAMDA 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.[9]

Context

16. LAMDA is a higher education provider that was originally founded in 1861. It is a company that is limited by guarantee incorporated on 20 December 1940. It currently operates from its campus in west London which includes its three theatre spaces: the Sainsbury Theatre, the Carne Studio Theatre and the Linbury Theatre.

17. It provides academic and vocational training to actors and performers, stage managers, technicians, directors and designers offering a range of both undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses in the performing and creative arts in the areas of acting, production and technical arts, musical theatre and directing.

18. In July 2019, it relinquished its membership of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama (CDD), a higher education institution that was a federal collaboration of specialist schools. Prior to obtaining its own time-limited Taught DAPs in 2021, LAMDA delivered higher education courses under a validation agreement with the University of Kent.

19. Since 2021, LAMDA has awarded all its degrees under its own DAPs and currently delivers three undergraduate and six postgraduate degrees including:

    - Foundation in Stage and Screen (CertHE)

    - Bachelors' of Arts (BA) (Hons) Production and Technical Arts: Stage and Screen

    - BA (Hons) Professional Acting

    - Masters' of Fine Arts (MFA) Professional Acting

    - Masters' of Arts (MA) Classical Acting for the Professional Theatre

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

- MFA Classical Acting: Performance and Practice

- MA Directing

- MA Musical Theatre

- MFA Musical Theatre.

20. LAMDA also offers a variety of non-degree short courses through its summer school, which introduces students to acting, production and technical arts, musical theatre and directing.

21. Overall, based on the latest available OfS 'Size and shape of provision data dashboard', LAMDA had an approximate student population in 2022-23 of 360 students. This includes 250 full-time students of which 150 were undergraduate and 110 postgraduate. It had 110 part-time students it reported as studying for credits or modules, rather than for full qualifications.[10]

22. Based on the HESA data for the 2023-24 academic year, LAMDA employed 75 academic members of staff, which included 35 full-time and 40 part-time staff. It also employed 15 additional non-academic staff.[11]

23. On 5 September 2023, LAMDA wrote to the OfS and requested to be considered for indefinite Taught DAPs.

24. In accordance with the OfS's regulatory framework and the guidance for providers on the variation and revocation of DAPs, the OfS undertook an initial eligibility and suitability assessment of LAMDA.[12] It decided that the DAPs assessment should be desk-based, in the first instance, to gather and test evidence. This was to inform a view about whether LAMDA has exercised its powers securely since obtaining them in 2021, whether LAMDA continues to meet the DAPs criteria and whether it has the ability to:

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

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

25. The OfS appointed an assessment team on 8 December 2023 which consisted of three academic expert assessors and a member of OfS staff in the following roles:

a. Julie Kentsley-Holt – committee chair and lead assessor

b. David Bebbington – deputy committee chair and assessor

c. Dr Charlotte Purkis – deputy committee chair and assessor

d. Molly Bonser – committee member and assessment manager (up to 8 November 2024)

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

[11] Available at Table 1 - HE staff by HE provider and activity standard occupational classification 2014/15 to 2022/23 | HESA.

[12] See Regulatory advice 17: Variation and revocation of degree awarding powers'.

e.   Adam Shea – committee member and assessment manager (from 8 November 2024).

26.   The OfS asked the team to give its advice and judgements about the quality of, and standards applied to, higher education courses at LAMDA and whether it continues to meet the DAPs criteria.

27.   The assessment team considered a range of information submitted by LAMDA in support of its application to vary its DAPs authorisation.

Assessment process

Information gathering

28. In accordance with the process outlined in the operational guidance for providers on DAPs variations by the OfS, LAMDA submitted a self-assessment document on 1 March 2024.[13] The document set out how LAMDA considers it continues to meet the DAPs criteria for the Taught DAPs authorisation it already held.

29. To support the statements made in the self-assessment document, LAMDA submitted a range of documentary evidence including, but not limited to, strategy documents, course documentation, information related to academic policies and processes, and governance information alongside minutes from committee and Board meetings.

30. Following its review of the initial evidence submission, the assessment team requested further evidence on 26 April 2024, 9 July 2024 and 23 December 2024. In each case LAMDA submitted evidence and the assessment team undertook a desk-based analysis.

31. On 27 June 2024, an online meeting took place between three members of the assessment team, including the OfS assessment manager, and three senior staff members from LAMDA to discuss further matters related to new committee structures, curriculum development, curriculum review and modifications, student voice, staffing and learning support.

32. Additionally, the assessment team observed a recording of the Academic Board meeting that took place on 27 November 2024.

33. Although the OfS initially commenced the assessment on a desk-based basis, the assessment team informed the OfS that it required a one-day site visit to LAMDA to further clarify areas that arose from the desk-based assessment and to triangulate its findings before it could draw its conclusions.

34. The assessment team subsequently undertook a one-day site visit to LAMDA on Monday 27 January 2025. During the site visit, the assessment team met with senior staff, academic staff, support staff and students. LAMDA provided further documentary evidence to the assessment team during the site visit.

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[13] See Regulatory advice 17: Variation and revocation of degree awarding powers - Office for Students.

Assessment of DAPs criterion A: Academic governance

Criterion A1: Academic governance

Advice to the OfS

35. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA meets criterion A1: Academic governance because it meets subcriteria A1.1, A1.2 and A1.3. However, the team identified concerns relating to evidence of how the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority is applied during decision making.

36. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows in summary that, on balance, LAMDA has in place sound academic governance and management structures that deliver effective academic governance with clear and appropriate lines of accountability. However, the assessment was unable to fully evaluate the impact of multiple changes in LAMDA's governance and leadership and the impact of ongoing revisions to its academic governance structures occurring both prior to and during this DAPs assessment.

37. The team also considered there are weaknesses in the effectiveness of how LAMDA documents academic governance decision making and therefore recommends that LAMDA improve its processes in this area.

38. The evidence also demonstrates that it has appropriate oversight to ensure that, if it decides to work with other organisations, these arrangements will ensure the academic standards and the quality of courses delivered by partner organisations. The evidence also shows that LAMDA also engages students as partners in the academic governance and management of academic standards and quality.

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

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

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

41. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that LAMDA has met the evidence requirements for A1.1 and any other relevant evidence requirements. However, the team considered there to be weaknesses in the effectiveness of how LAMDA documents academic governance decision making and therefore recommends that LAMDA improves its processes in this area.

Background

42. The team found that LAMDA's governance and leadership structures have undergone multiple reviews and revisions since it was granted time-limited DAPs in 2021. This has included changes to the leadership team, Board membership and subcommittee structures. The team noted that there continued to be changes in these areas throughout the period of this DAPs assessment, which are detailed in the following paragraphs.

43. LAMDA has a complex constitutional position as it is a higher education provider, a registered charity and a limited company. LAMDA's governing body is its Board of Trustees (the Board) which is its most senior decision-making committee. The Board has responsibility for its charitable compliance, financial stability and growth and determining and monitoring LAMDA's Strategic Plan and has various subcommittees that it oversees. Its governing document is the Articles of Association, which it last updated in July 2020, prior to the awarding of time-limited DAPs. The Articles of Association set out LAMDA's governance framework, including its charitable status, limited liability, together with details of its committee structure including roles, responsibilities and membership.

44. The Board has oversight of all of LAMDA's higher education activity and delivery, including an overview of performance against key indicators. The Board also ensures that appropriate academic frameworks are in place to guide its higher education delivery, the responsibilities for which are delegated to the Academic Board as LAMDA's senior academic authority.

45. The team found that the July 2020 update to the Articles of Association set out the provision for the creation of an Academic Board. Its remit includes:

   'issues relating to research, scholarship, teaching and courses at the Charity, including criteria for the admission of students; the appointment and removal of external examiner;, policies and procedures for assessment and examination of the academic performance of students; the content of the curriculum; academic standards and the validation and review of courses; the maintenance of the quality of and procedures for the award of qualifications and the conferment of academic titles; and the procedures for the expulsion of students for academic reasons. Such responsibilities shall be subject to the requirements of validating and accrediting bodies; for considering the development of the academic activities of the Charity and the resources needed to support them and for advising the Board thereon; and for advising on such other matters as the Board may refer to the Academic Board.'

46. According to the Articles of Association, the Academic Board may establish any committees it considers necessary to discharge its responsibilities. Until 2024, the Academic Board was chaired by the Executive Dean of the Drama School; since 2024, the Academic Board has been chaired by the then newly appointed Head of Academic Affairs and Research.

47. The Articles of Association allow for 12 to 21 trustees to sit on the Board in addition to a non-voting president and vice-president who hold advisory roles. Following recent appointments and several changes of membership over the period in which LAMDA has held Full DAPs, the Board now has full membership with 21 members. This includes a chair, two vice chairs, a staff trustee, a student trustee and 16 independent external members representing a range of experience of both the creative and performing arts industries and the higher education sector.

48. In 2019-20, prior to LAMDA being granted Full DAPs, an Education Committee was created as a subcommittee to the Board (though the team note that LAMDA's Academic Regulations refer to this as a 'joint working group'). The terms of reference (dated November 2023) set out that this committee is to 'consider HE matters on behalf of the Board of Trustees' and that it will 'receive reports on the work of Academic Board and its committees and review these on behalf of the Board of Trustees, referring important matters on to the Board of Trustees'. The team noted from LAMDA's DAPs self-assessment document that the Education Committee did not replace the Academic Board but was created to advise and guide LAMDA's Executive Team on key higher education strategy and policy issues. The team found that the Education Committee played an advisory role in relation to LAMDA's duties as a higher education provider, for example reporting on issues such as the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), curriculum development, Prevent, research and knowledge exchange. Membership of the Education Committee consisted of trustees who had senior experience in the higher education sector and also included a student trustee as an ex officio member. The committee was chaired by a trustee and in attendance were the Principal/Chief Executive Officer (CEO), Chair of the Academic Board, Head of Academic and Student Services. As discussed under criterion A1.1, in November 2024, the Education Committee was disbanded.

49. In March 2022, an external governance effectiveness review was commissioned by the Board to review the effectiveness of governance arrangements at LAMDA. This was led by the Chair of the Audit Committee and Vice-Chair of the Board. An interim report of findings was received in July 2022 with the final report received in September 2022. The review noted the significant period of change that LAMDA had undergone between 2019 and 2022 due to the COVD-19 pandemic and changes in its senior leadership. The review recognised successes in a number of areas but also made 11 recommendations for change including in relation to strategic planning, communication, committee structures and working, clearer differentiation and delegation of responsibility and the undertaking of further reviews of its academic governance, among other things. The outcomes of the external governance effectiveness report were discussed between the Board's trustees and the Principal/CEO at the 17 November 2022 meeting of the Board. At the same time, a new Principal/CEO (the role formerly known as director) was appointed in October 2022, following the resignation of its director in September 2021.

50. The external governance effectiveness report was discussed further with the Board of Trustees at its meeting on 2 March 2023 where it was noted that some of the recommendations had already been acted upon. This included the decision in November 2022 to reappoint the Chair of Trustees for a fourth term of three years, to provide stability and continuity to the operation and governance of LAMDA (in line with LAMDA's Articles of Association). The extended term ends in February 2025 when a new chair will take up the post. At a meeting held with LAMDA during the assessment team's site visit in January 2025, the Principal/CEO stated the expectation that once the new chair is in post they may wish to make further changes to the academic governance structures. As a result, throughout this DAPs assessment, LAMDA's academic governance and structures have been transitioning to accommodate further implementation of the outcomes of the external governance review, meaning that not all changes have been fully implemented. Consequently, the assessment team could not fully assess the effectiveness of some of these changes.

51. In March 2024, at the point of its DAPs self-assessment and evidence submission, LAMDA provided evidence, via Figure 1 below, of its committee structure which supports and reports

to the Board of Trustees. The team found that the external governance review led to some of the changes of Board membership outlined above with new trustees joining the Board in April 2024.

Figure 1: LAMDA's committee structure (March 2024)
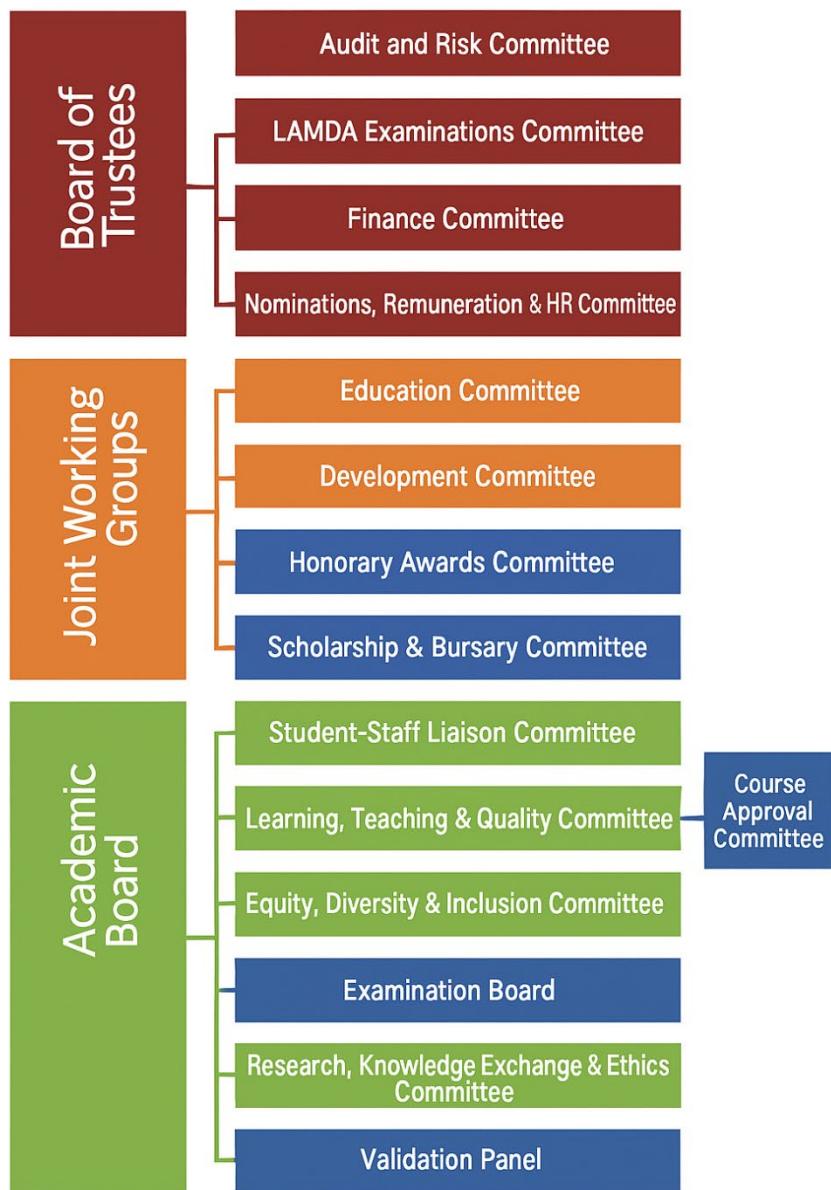
52. LAMDA's DAPs self-assessment submission, in March 2024, also set out that the Academic Board has delegated authority from the Board and is chaired by the Head of Academic Affairs and Research.

53. The team found that it was unclear from this structure (Figure 1) how the work of the Academic Board feeds into the Board of Trustees and the role of the Education Committee. The assessment team therefore requested further information about LAMDA's governance structure. LAMDA's additional evidence submission detailed further revisions to the Committee structure that were due in the academic year 2024-25. These changes would see the Academic Board, Audit, Development, Education, Examinations, Finance and

Nominations Committees all report directly to the Board of Trustees as illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: LAMDA's revised committee structure (November 2024)
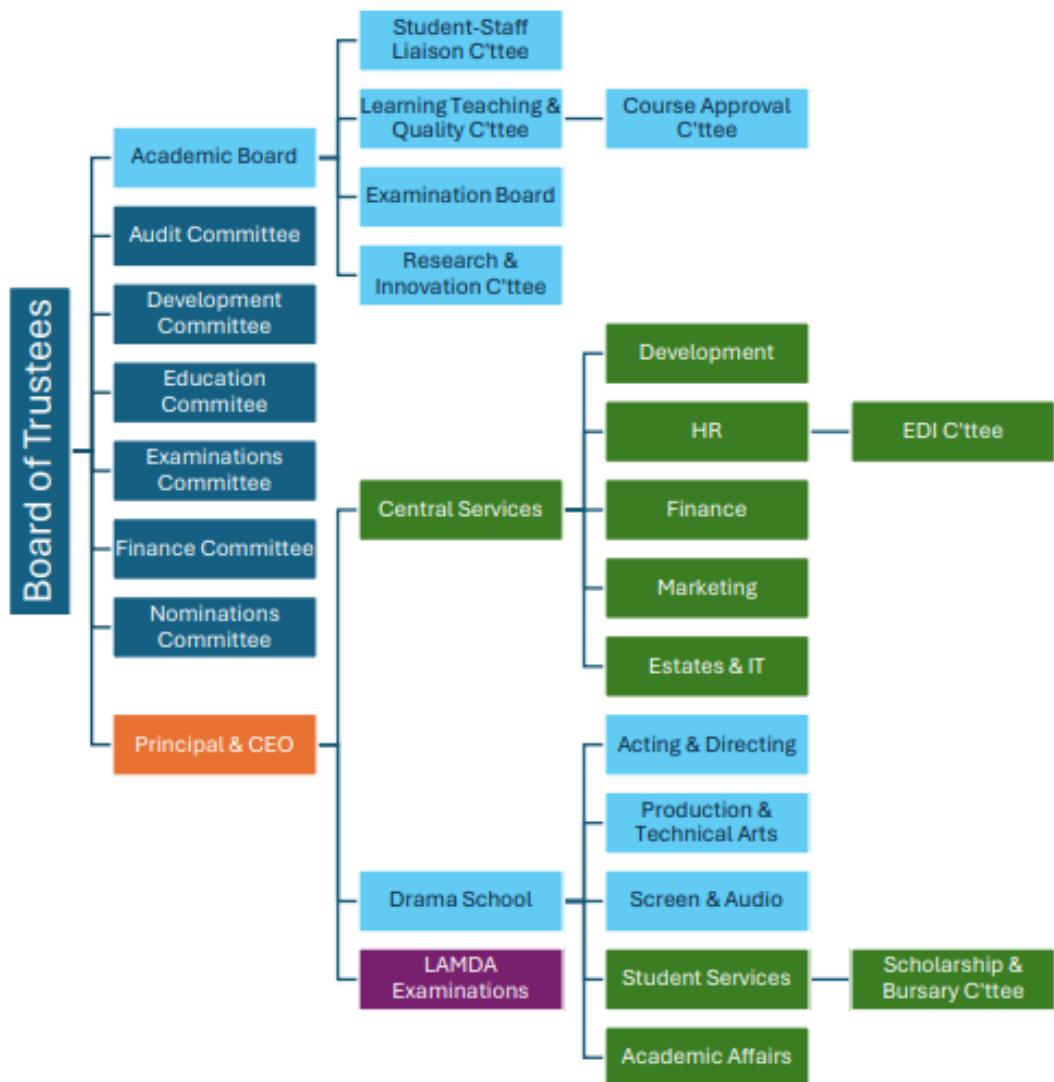
54. Following the team's receipt of the proposed amended committee structure, as per the above diagram, the team was informed that in November 2024, LAMDA decided that the Education Committee should be disbanded with immediate effect, and that its work would be subsumed into the Academic Board. LAMDA also reported that consequently an existing member of the Education Committee would be appointed to the Academic Board and that these changes were to take immediate effect in the 2024-25 academic year. This decision was approved at the Board meeting held on 14 November 2024 with terms of reference for the Academic Board being updated and approved to reflect the changes. The external governance effectiveness report, which set out the rationale for the changes, was made available to the assessment team in January 2025. The assessment team's view of these governance arrangements is set out throughout discussion in criterion A1 below.

55. Due to the extent of the changes made to LAMDA's senior leadership team, Board and committee structure since the 2022 external governance review, the assessment team sought further clarification from LAMDA regarding the relationship between committees, working

groups and their reporting lines within the broader academic governance structure. In January 2025, the Figure 3 revised governance structure was submitted by LAMDA which reflects the latest governance arrangements and committee structure.

Figure 3: LAMDA's latest governance arrangements and committee structure (January 2025)
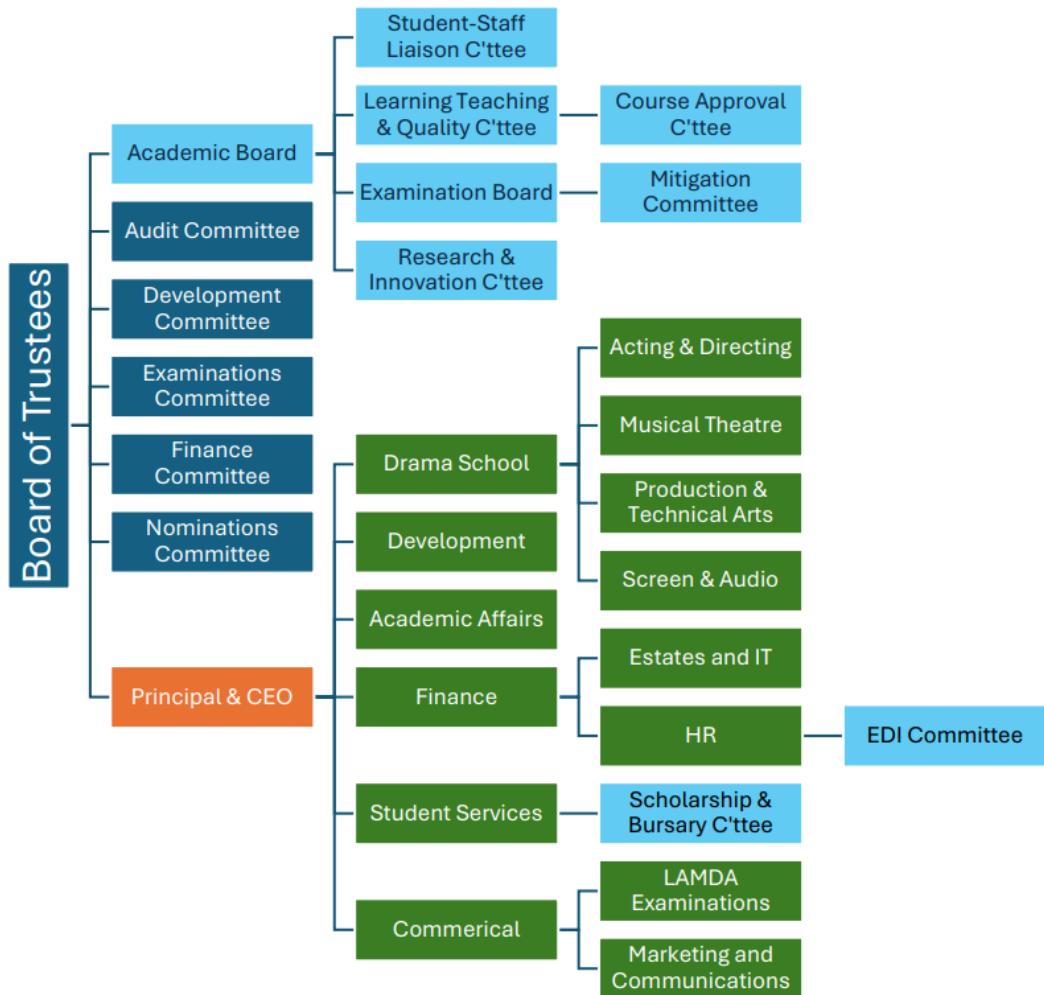
56. The team noted that, in its response to the team's requests for clarification, LAMDA stated that variances in information submitted during the assessment period reflect 'the ongoing evolution of LAMDA's governance framework to better support its Degree Awarding Powers' and that the changes made represent improved alignment of working groups with their parent committees, streamlined reporting lines and strengthened mechanisms for ensuring academic quality and student experience.

57. Following the most recent changes, provided to the team in January 2025, the team determined that LAMDA's academic governance structure consists of the Academic Board, which is the senior academic authority, consists of four subcommittees: Student-Staff Liaison Committee (SSLC); Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee (LTQC); Examination Board and Research and Innovation Committee. LTQC has a further subcommittee: the Course Approval Committee (CAC). The team found that Student Presidents sit on all these committees, except the Examination Board.

58. The SSLC meets no less than three times a year and is chaired by a member of the Student Presidential team. Additional members are comprised from across the Senior Management team including the Principal/CEO, the Director of Actor Training and Drama School, the Head of Student and Academic Services, Course Leaders, the Industry Liaison Associate and a lead practitioner. The committee is responsible for issues relating to student satisfaction and engagement.

59. The LTQC Terms of Reference were revised in June 2024 and this committee is responsible for all matters relating to:

- programme approval and review

- content of curriculum and curriculum development

- annual monitoring and periodic review

- learning and teaching enhancement

- academic quality and standards

- assessment strategy

- library and learning resources.

60. The CAC is a subcommittee of the LTQC and undertakes the responsibility of course validations. The committee is chaired by the Head of Academic Affairs and Research, the Principal is also a member along with other members of the senior management team.

61. The Examination Board reviews the marking of assessed work and ratifies the grades awarded to students and make recommendations for the award of qualifications. The membership and duties of the Boards are clearly detailed in LAMDA's Academic Regulations.

62. The Research and Innovation Committee's Terms of Reference were revised in April 2024. The Committee is co-chaired by Head of Academic Affairs and Research and the Head of Innovation with representation from senior management and postgraduate students. The purpose of the Committee is to support LAMDA's research and innovation strategic objectives; knowledge exchange; impact and public engagement. The Committee also oversees activity related to LAMDA's wider research environment and includes all annual reporting from LAMDA's research and innovation units, including any Research Excellence Framework (REF) submissions.

63. The views of the assessment team, in relation to LAMDA's academic governance, are detailed below.

Reasoning

64. As part of its consideration of the effectiveness of academic governance and to determine whether LAMDA's strategic direction and associated policies are coherent, published and understood, the assessment team considered the detail of LAMDA's 'Performing Our Future' 2023 to 2030 strategy, together with associated sub strategies and policies.

65. As outlined above, during the period in which LAMDA has held time-limited DAPs, it has undergone significant changes to the membership of both its Board and senior leadership team, and consequently there have been several shifts in its strategic direction. LAMDA's current strategic plan is set out in its 'Performing Our Future' 2023 to 2030 strategy document, which was written between November 2022 and November 2023 following the arrival of the new Principal/CEO. The assessment team found the 2023 to 2030 strategy published on LAMDA's website together with its Academic Regulations and several key student-facing policies.

66. Prior to the current strategy, the previous 2015 to 2019 strategic plan was replaced by a Strategy Map (which was approved by trustees in 2018). This Strategy Map focused on key areas such as learning, teaching and assessment, inclusion, research and innovation, international growth and the student experience with several academic substrategies underpinning this overall strategic map. Under each heading, key objectives were listed such as 'to apply for DAPs' and 'to ensure the curriculum is inclusive' and this remained in place until the launch of the current 2023 to 2030 strategy in November 2023. The assessment team found that the current 2023 to 2030 strategy document sets out LAMDA's mission and vision as well as the values and principles underpinning these. The strategy's stated mission is 'to foster exceptional talent through world-leading performing arts training, ensuring inclusive access and empowering students to enrich global culture by excelling on the world stage'. The strategy details ten strategic goals which are supported by three key 'enablers', with each key enabler further underpinned by an action plan.

67. The key enablers underpinning LAMDA's mission serve as the roadmap for LAMDA in achieving its overarching goals and relate to 'successful staff' (how its staff are positioned and supported to deliver the strategy), 'successful students' (how students are nurtured and extended during their training at LAMDA) and 'successful sustainable spaces' (and how these contribute to LAMDA's vision of being a leader in the performing arts sector). Each of these enablers has a substrategy, outlining in more detail key priorities and objectives for the strategic period and how these will be achieved. For example, key enabler two (successful students) relates to the Student Success (Learning and Teaching) Substrategy 2024 to 2030.

68. The team noted that the Student Success Substrategy identifies six priorities for the period, which include 'excellence in its quality and standards infrastructure' and 'development of a fully integrated inclusive curriculum'. The assessment team noted that this substrategy also sets out how it aligns to and supports achievement of LAMDA's overarching 2023-30 strategy. Similarly, the Research and Innovation Substrategy 2024-30 indicates its alignment to the main strategy via several key objectives including the development of student and graduate career opportunities. In addition, the team found that the LAMDA Library and Learning Resources Strategy and Policies 2023 to 2030 also sets out that its role is 'to support LAMDA's Vision, Mission, Values and Strategic Goals' and that this will be achieved by LAMDA providing information and facilities necessary to support world-leading performing arts training. The assessment team therefore formed the view that there is cohesion between the focus of LAMDA's 2023 to 2030 strategy and its substrategies, with key themes around inclusivity, collaboration and partnership and preparing students for a career in performing arts, evident across all strategies.

69. The assessment team also reviewed LAMDA's Academic Regulations, last updated in January 2024 and noted that in terms of curriculum development, the regulations state that

curriculum development proposals should be 'in accordance with and take forward, LAMDA's strategies and policies'. The assessment team found evidence of this in practice through the planning approval submission for the new MA/MFA Musical Theatre award. The documentation submitted to the senior management team (SMT) meeting of 14 February 2023 set out how the proposal aligned to LAMDA's then current Strategy Map (2021-26), specifically strategies around international growth and industry relevance. The assessment team considered that this demonstrated cohesiveness of academic policies with LAMDA's strategic priorities.

70. LAMDA's self-assessment document states that its 2023 to 2030 strategy was 'the result of extensive consultation with staff, students and the Board of Trustees' and the team found that minutes of the November 2023 Academic Board meeting confirm that the launch of the strategy followed a 12-month period of consultation and drafting. Minutes from the Academic Board meeting also showed that all departments were invited to draw up annual plans linked to the overall strategy. In a meeting with teaching staff during the January 2025 visit, the assessment team found that staff were familiar with the strategy, and it was confirmed that staff had taken part in a strategic planning away day during the development stages.

71. The assessment team saw evidence of the strategy being discussed at the weekly SMT meetings. The terms of reference for this group indicate that its responsibilities include ensuring that LAMDA's strategy is delivered on a day-to-day basis and that progress is made against objectives. Discussion items at SMT include organisational restructure, sustainability, student scholarships and funding and implementation of the virtual learning environment (VLE). The assessment team found that in the April 2024 SMT meeting minutes, a requirement was made for SMT members to present their departmental strategic aims and current positions to the Board. Moreover, during its meeting with staff, the team was informed that such strategy focused discussions at SMT are cascaded down to staff via departmental meetings and minutes.

72. In summary, the assessment team found that there is coherency between LAMDA's higher education mission and strategy and its substrategies and policies. The strategy is published, and the assessment team was content that staff are familiar with and understand the strategy and that the strategy is applied consistently.

73. To test whether LAMDA's academic policies support its higher education mission, aims and objectives, the assessment team reviewed several key academic policies including:

    a. Student Non-Academic Misconduct (Disciplinary) Policy and Procedures

    b. Observation of Teaching policy

    c. Professional Work Placement policy

    d. Admissions policy and procedures.[14]

74. The assessment team reviewed LAMDA's Non-academic misconduct policy, which states its purpose is to enable students to identify and achieve acceptable standards of conduct 'so that LAMDA maintains an inclusive, equitable and safe environment for all students….and others',

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[14] See Policies & Procedures | London academy of music & dramatic art.

thus aligning with the 2023 to 2030 strategic values and behaviours around inclusivity and respect. Similarly, the Observation of Teaching Policy sets out the approach to teaching observations with its key aim being an opportunity for LAMDA to evaluate the quality of its teaching and identify areas for improvement. The policy provides guidance on teaching elements to be observed including whether the teaching session accommodates diverse student needs and teaching strategies. This appeared to support a key aim of the strategy's Successful Students Enabler, which is to introduce an integrated inclusive curriculum.

75. The team considered LAMDA's Professional Work Placement policy, which details the work placement scheme that provides students with 'insights into the professional working environment' and 'the opportunity to practice acquired skills within a professional context'. This policy supports the strategic aim around empowering students to have sustainable careers in the arts industry.

76. Furthermore, LAMDA's Admissions policy reflects strategic priorities around inclusivity and developing talent.

77. From its review of these policies, together with consideration of LAMDA's higher education delivery discussed throughout this report, the assessment team was content that LAMDA's academic policies support its higher education mission, aims and objectives.

78. In order to determine whether there is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in the organisation in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its higher education provision, the assessment team reviewed a wide range of documentation including the following:

- LAMDA's DAPs self-assessment documents

- Articles of Association

- Academic Regulations

- LAMDA Governance Review

- Proposal to restructure Education Committee document

- Academic Governance document

- Terms of Reference for the Board of Trustees Academic Board, LTQC

- SSLC Terms of Reference: July 2024.

79. As set out in the Background section of this report, under paragraphs 42 to 63, since it was granted DAPs in 2021, LAMDA has undergone a significant level of change to its governance arrangements as well as its senior leadership team and Board membership. The external governance effectiveness review was commissioned by the trustees in March 2022 and this external review noted that period as a 'critical time of recovery and transition' for LAMDA. The team noted that transitions that occurred at LAMDA in the preceding years to 2022 included the departure of several senior staff and the appointment of interim management and core teaching staff. Furthermore, a new Principal/CEO was appointed just as the external review

was completing, and several longstanding Board members had reached or were due to reach the end of their tenure.

80. The external governance review acknowledged LAMDA's Board as 'a group of high calibre and committed individuals with a diversity and breadth of experience'. It also commented that the Board's commitment together with the hard work of LAMDA staff had helped ensure that during a turbulent period, LAMDA remained 'intact and operational – continuing to deliver high quality students to the theatrical professions.' However, the external review also set out a detailed appraisal of areas for improvement in LAMDA's governance arrangements together with several recommendations for change which included:

    a. The Board to clarify the leadership position of the Principal/CEO and establish, through a clear Scheme of Delegation, the expectations regarding governance and management on the Board, the Executive and key officers.

    b. The Board should separate its current Committee into a Human Resources and Remuneration Committee and a Nominations Committee

    c. The Board should undertake an Academic Governance Review to clarify relationships and functionality of the Academic Board, Education Committee, Examinations Committee and the Board; noting the context of the expectations of its regulators and LAMDA's Taught DAPs.

81. Regarding the recommendation on committee working, the external review suggested that the Education Committee would benefit from greater clarity on its business and responsibility in relation to the Board and the Academic Board. Furthermore, the external review suggested that the interfaces between some committees and the executive and academic structures was 'worth attention'.

82. The team found that LAMDA's DAPs self-assessment document sets out some of the changes it made in response to the external governance review. Changes include the Board's review of the constitution of its committees and the appointment of six new Board members. Changes to the SMT was also in progress at the time of the DAPs assessment. However, the assessment team noted from the minutes of the November 2024 Board of Trustees meeting that senior leadership roles and responsibilities were still being embedded. For instance, the minutes show that trustees requested more clarity around the role of the Vice Principal of Finance and Operations, and an organogram to identify where delegated authority sits in the absence of the Principal/CEO.

83. The latest iteration of the committee structure reflected a decision (proposed in November 2024) to disband the Education Committee. This change also appeared to be in response to a finding in the external governance review that the Education Committee would benefit from greater clarity around its responsibilities. The assessment team found, in documents related to the disbandment of the Education Committee, that this decision was made in part because the core work of the committee in supporting engagement with DAPs, was largely complete. The team noted that the decision to disband was also in recognition of some overlap in the work of the Education Committee and the Academic Board. As part of the decision to disband the Education Committee, the chair of the committee (who is a member of the Board) was appointed to the Academic Board to continue acting as a conduit between the Board and

LAMDA's academic activity (through the Academic Board). The team noted that, prior to this change there had been no trustees appointed to the Academic Board. The assessment team considered this change to be effective as it provided greater clarity around the responsibility and function of the Academic Board and its relationship with the Board. The team considers that this new structure and approach should strengthen communication and oversight between the Board and the Academic Board, leading to greater clarity and a clearer differentiation of functions and responsibilities across all levels of the organisation in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its higher education provision.

84. The team considered that recent enhancements and changes to LAMDA's management and governance arrangements demonstrated a proactive response to the findings of the external governance review. LAMDA advised the assessment team that the ongoing changes to its committee structure reflected 'the ongoing evolution of LAMDA's governance framework to better support its Degree Awarding Powers'. The assessment team formed the view that the changes that had been made, together with the January 2025 updated governance structure submitted by LAMDA, resulted in a clearer articulation of academic governance roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, the team felt that the changes should ensure greater accountability at each level of the committee structure with enhanced oversight of the work of academic governance committees. However, the assessment team did not see a clear audit trail of decision making related specifically to the changes to the governance structure. Furthermore, noting the pace of change to academic governance arrangements in recent years, it was not clear to the assessment team how changes to these academic governance arrangements were being holistically tracked and monitored for effectiveness. The assessment team therefore recommends that LAMDA considers undertaking an effectiveness review of its academic governance structures in its latest iteration to ensure that there is ongoing clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in the organisation in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its higher education provision.

85. The assessment team reviewed the minutes of several Board meetings held over recent years. It found that the Board receives reports on a range of academic matters, including updates on admissions activity, discussion of student experience and National Student Survey (NSS) results and reports from the various Academic Board subcommittees. The assessment team formed the view that the Board appears to have reasonable oversight of the work of the Academic Board. However, this oversight would be strengthened by the addition of a member of the Board sitting on the Academic Board and by clarifying its function following the disbandment of the Education Committee.

86. During the visit to LAMDA in January 2025, the assessment team heard that LAMDA senior teaching staff who report to the SMT were clear on their roles and responsibilities. The assessment team noted from LAMDA's DAPs self-assessment document and from its review of the governance structure and the minutes of key academic governance committees (such as the LTQC and Academic Board minutes) that the work of the Academic Board and its subcommittees is supported by a range of working groups, such as working groups for graduation or the implementation of LAMDA's VLE. However, it was not clear how matters considered by such working groups feed forward to decision-making committees for consideration. Similarly, it was not clear to the assessment team how decision-making committees feedback to such working groups.

87. The assessment team formed the opinion that were some weaknesses in the decision-making audit trail both in regard to the work of committees and changes to the committee structure. Consequently, the team recommends that LAMDA reviews its academic governance procedures to ensure there is clarity and transparency around decision making.

88. The terms of reference of the Academic Board and its key subcommittees are discussed in paragraphs 44 to 46. Through its review of evidence of these committees and the terms of reference and minutes of additional groups such as the SMT, the assessment team was satisfied that LAMDA clearly differentiates and articulates the remit, responsibilities and reporting lines of senior level committees.

89. In summary, having reviewed the evidence of LAMDA's academic governance and management structures, and taking consideration of recent changes to these arrangements, the assessment team was content that the current academic governance structure demonstrates clarity with differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in relation to the management of higher education provision. However, as set out in the background section of this report, under paragraphs 42 to 63, there have been significant changes to the academic governance structure since DAPs was granted in 2021 and the recently revised current governance structure has only been implemented since the 2024-25 academic year, with some elements related to senior leadership roles and responsibilities still being embedded. Furthermore, the assessment team found some weaknesses in the decision-making audit trail. Consequently, the assessment team considers that it cannot confirm that the clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility that is currently evident within the academic governance structure has been in place since DAPs was first authorised. However, the assessment team concluded that there are now clear and appropriate lines of accountability for LAMDA's academic responsibilities and as result evidence of effective academic governance structures in place for now and in the future.

90. To test whether the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority is clearly articulated and consistently applied, the assessment team reviewed a range of documentation including:

- Articles of Association

- Academic Board Terms of Reference

- Minutes from Academic Board

- LAMDA committee structure document

- Academic Regulations

- Recording of Academic Board meeting 27/11/24

- Academic Board meeting papers

- Education Committee Terms of Reference

- Proposal restructure Education Committee

- Annual Course Monitoring Reports 2021-22

- Schedule of quinquennial programme reviews

- Critical evaluation Production and Technical Arts for Stage and Screen (PTASS).

91. The assessment team found that the current committee structure, dated January 2025, confirms that the Academic Board as the senior academic authority at LAMDA and that the Articles of Association clearly articulate the Academic Board's status and role. The Academic Board meets a minimum of three times per year, and its responsibilities include 'general issues relating to the research, scholarship, teaching and courses; academic standards and the validation and review of courses, consideration of the development of academic activities and advising on such other matters as the Board may refer to the Academic Board'. The Academic Board's responsibilities as set out in its terms of reference mirror those set out in the Articles of Association. The terms of reference also clarify that the Academic Board is chaired by the Head of Academic Affairs and Research.

92. However as noted in paragraphs 53 and 54, LAMDA had previously also operated an Education Committee which, until its disbandment in November 2024, had responsibility for ensuring that the Board maintained oversight of LAMDA's academic offerings. The Education Committee's terms of reference defined its purpose as being 'to consider HE matters on behalf of the Board of Trustees'. The assessment team noted that these included issues related to:

   a. any higher education issue

   b. research matters

   c. issues concerning academic quality including the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) visits and any dealings with the OfS.

93. LAMDA explained the rationale for the disbandment of the Education Committee was to remove duplication of effort, because topics discussed by the Education Committee had often been thoroughly discussed by the Academic Board. The assessment team saw evidence of this duplication of effort through its review of meeting minutes for both the Education Committee and the Academic Board. Topics discussed in both arenas included student applications and admissions, NSS results, TEF updates and arrangements and course developments. The assessment team formed the view that during the period that the Education Committee was in operation, the overlap of its terms of reference with those of the Academic Board, meant that the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority was not entirely clear. However, the assessment team considered that the cessation of separate Education Committee meetings from November 2024, has improved the clarity around the function of the Academic Board since that time. Furthermore, the assessment team considered that removing the duplication of effort should result in a more consistent application of function and responsibilities of its senior academic authority.

94. The assessment team determined from its review of Academic Board meeting minutes that the committee undertakes appropriate consideration of academic policies and procedures in line with its terms of reference. For example, meeting minutes evidenced discussion of a number of student-facing policies including the Lateness and Attendance Policy, the Complaints Policy and Procedures, the Student Non-Academic Misconduct (Disciplinary) Policy and a revised Marking and Feedback Policy. Some of the discussion centred on

ensuring such policies are clear for students. Meeting minutes also evidenced discussion of undergraduate and postgraduate marking criteria with consideration of how to take better account of the differences in assessing practical work for acting and technical students. The assessment team also found that a standing item on Academic Board meeting agendas is a review of actions from previous meetings including an update on the progress against actions outstanding. The assessment team noted that, while there is evidence of consistent reporting to the Academic Board from its subcommittees and the Principal, these reports sometimes took the form of verbal updates. This led to a concern regarding the effectiveness and consistency in how the Academic Board clearly articulates and applies its responsibilities, due to the lack of an audit trail for all Academic Board discussions and decisions.

95. The assessment team reviewed the minutes of the July 2023 Academic Board and noted that there was discussion regarding the recent publication of OfS student outcomes data and that LAMDA's completion rates were high when compared to other similar providers, but that the other metrics did not yet have enough data to draw comparisons. However, while the assessment team saw a detailed analysis of student outcomes set out in LAMDA's approved access and participation plan, it did not see evidence in the Academic Board meeting minutes of regular consideration being given to student outcomes data. As noted at paragraph 485, the November 2022 Annual Course Monitoring report for the Production and Technical Arts programmes noted a concern about the recruitment and retention of students, however the team did not see subsequent discussion of this concern at the Academic Board.

96. The team recommends that in addition to discussion and consideration of recruitment and admissions data at the Academic Board, data related to academic outcomes such as OfS student outcomes data should be reviewed as part of the 'Quantitative data' standing item on the Academic Board agenda.

97. As the senior academic authority, the Academic Board has oversight of LAMDA's programme approvals. To consider its role in this capacity the team reviewed evidence related to the development and approval of academic provision by the CAC, specifically for the MFA Classical Acting and the MA/MFA Musical Theatre programmes. Full discussion of the process is discussed under criteria B1 and B2, but in summary, through its review the assessment team found that anomalies in programme approval documentation led to a lack of clarity in the audit trail for course approvals by the Academic Board. For instance, the assessment team noted that approval of the MFA Classical Acting course by the CAC was reported to the Academic Board meeting of 5 April 2023. This appeared to be a verbal confirmation from the Chair of the Academic Board noting that the programme had been approved by the CAC. There was no evidence of the Academic Board having received the documentation related to the development and approval of the programme itself. It was therefore unclear to the assessment team the extent to which the Academic Board had undertaken oversight of this programme development to reassure itself of the maintenance of quality and standards. The team considered that to consistently and clearly articulate its function and responsibility, the Academic Board should review a full record of such documentation related to programme approval. The assessment team therefore recommends that LAMDA review its committee operating procedures to ensure there is clarity and transparency around academic decisions.

98. The Academic Regulations provide specificity related to the Academic Board's responsibilities and the assessment team noted this included 'overseeing arrangements for periodic reviews

and other quality reviews and ensuring the completion of any actions arising from these engagements.' The assessment team found evidence of the Academic Board considering and approving annual course monitoring reports (ACMR) for several programmes including BA (Hons) Production and Technical Arts, MA/MFA Classical Acting and MA Directing. This demonstrated application of the Academic Board's function in this area. However, the team noted that there was not a clear and consistent approach taken by the Academic Board in relation to recommendations made within ACMRs. For example, the minutes of the November 2023 Academic Board meeting, noted recommendations made by external examiners set out in the MA Directing ACMR. It was noted that a response to two of the recommendations had already been actioned, but the minutes do not comment on the progress of the remaining outstanding external examiner recommendations. The team noted that the ACMRs it reviewed did not include action plans, it was therefore not clear how the Academic Board ensures that action is taken in response to matters raised through annual course monitoring activity. This matter is discussed further at paragraph 480, but in summary the team recommends that LAMDA review its committee operating procedures to ensure effective audit trails exist to monitor and follow up on actions arising from quality reviews are addressed. This is to ensure that the function and responsibility of the Academic Board is clearly articulated and consistently applied.

99. Regarding the Academic Board's responsibilities for overseeing arrangements for periodic reviews, the team noted that such reviews are scheduled to take place every five years, as set out in LAMDA's Academic Regulations. However, the assessment team saw that the schedule of quinquennial reviews indicated that some programmes were not scheduled to undergo such a review until beyond this time period. For example, the schedule indicates that the BA (Hons) Production and Technical Theatre Arts programme was reviewed in academic year 2017-18 but that the next review was not due until academic year 2024-25. The November 2022 ACMR for this programme includes an explanation for this, in that LAMDA considered a periodic review was not necessary in 2021-22 due to the ongoing DAPs assessment being undertaken by the OfS and QAA at that time. The team queried this with senior staff at LAMDA who explained that significant validation and revalidation of academic provision had taken place in preceding years which led to a readjustment of the periodic review schedules. LAMDA also explained that other internal and external monitoring and reviews had taken place during similar timeframes, which impacted on the periodic review schedules. LAMDA stated its commitment to addressing overdue periodic reviews and that immediate priority was being given to courses exceeding the threshold, for example, the team saw evidence that the quinquennial review of the BA (Hons) Production and Technical Theatre Arts programme took place in January 2025.

100. While the assessment team agreed that the internal revalidation processes and external assessments LAMDA has undergone provide reasonable mitigation for the delay to the periodic review schedules, the team considered that they do not necessarily replicate the holistic nature of the periodic review process. The team was assured by the evidence it saw of LAMDA's steps to remediate the delays. Further discussion of LAMDA's periodic review processes and monitoring of its academic provision can be found under criterion B2.

101. On balance, the assessment team concluded that the roles and responsibilities of the Academic Board are now clearly articulated and that the Academic Board appears to be fulfilling its responsibilities in line with its terms of reference. Given the previous existence of the Education Committee and its recent disbandment, the team's view is not reflective of the

role of the senior academic authority as it has been in place since DAPs were authorised in 2021. This is due to the previous lack of clarity and differentiation of function of the Education Committee and Academic Board as discussed in paragraphs 54 and 84. While the assessment team considers that the disbandment of the Education Committee has resulted in greater clarity of the role of the Academic Board, the team also considered that there are further enhancements to be made by the Academic Board to strengthen its practices to ensure consistent and robust oversight of the completion of actions arising from quality reviews.

102. As discussed in paragraphs 42 to 63, LAMDA has undergone several changes in its academic leadership structure since it was first awarded DAPs. This includes the appointment of a new Principal/CEO in October 2022 and changes to the Board membership in 2024.To determine if there is appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership, the assessment team reviewed the curriculum vitaes (CVs) of several of LAMDA's current senior leadership team, the staff qualifications and external engagements document and the LAMDA organisational structure chart. It also reviewed the profiles of members of the senior team,[15] and several LAMDA trustees,[16] as set out on the LAMDA website.

103. The review of staff CVs demonstrated that senior leaders have a range of appropriate academic qualifications and experience. For example, several senior leaders are qualified to doctoral level with a range of research specialisms which include theatre, acting techniques, film and musicology. Senior leaders also bring significant senior leadership experience gained in higher education, the creative industries and other sectors such as law and engineering. The assessment team also reviewed a staff qualifications data document that showed several staff hold teaching qualifications and that a number of teaching staff are working towards professional teaching and higher education fellowship. The assessment team found that the LAMDA organisational structure chart indicated there was clarity regarding team structures and leadership with clear reporting lines.

104. The assessment team concluded that within LAMDA there is appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership.

105. To determine whether LAMDA develops, implements and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with staff, students and external stakeholders, the assessment team reviewed a range of evidence including:

- the terms of reference and meeting minutes of several committees including the Academic Board, the LTQC, the SSLC, the CAC, and the Research and Innovation Committee

- a recording of the November 2024 Academic Board meeting

- LAMDA's Articles of Association

- the terms of reference for SMT meetings

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[15] See Meet the Staff | London academy of music & dramatic art.

[16] See Meet the Trustees | London academy of music & dramatic art.

- LAMDA's DAPs self-assessment document

- documentation related to course development and approval.

106. LAMDA's DAPs self-assessment document states that student engagement is integral to the academic governance. The assessment team's review of committee terms of reference demonstrated to the team that students hold positions on several key committees including the Academic Board, the LTQC, the Research and Innovation committee and the SSLC. There is also student representation on the Board of Trustees.

107. A review of Academic Board minutes over recent years indicates that student representative attendance at the Academic Board meetings has historically been quite low with no student representatives in attendance at several meetings. For instance, there was no student attendance at the Academic Board meeting in November 2022 where changes to several student-facing policies were presented. Minutes of other committees such as the LTQC, the Research and Innovation committee and the now disbanded Education Committee also appeared to indicate previously low levels of student representative attendance. However, committee minutes showed that where students had been in attendance, they had contributed to discussions on key areas of academic governance such as curriculum review and development, the restructure of the SMT and LAMDA's NSS results.

108. LAMDA's DAPs self-assessment document sets out that the Student President's report is a standing item on the Academic Board agenda. The assessment team saw evidence of this in its observation of the November 2024 Academic Board meeting where the Student President reported on and led the discussion of student experience matters. The assessment team also saw that student representatives and members of the Student President team consistently attend and chair the SSLC, where discussion items include learning resources and course quality. During the visit, it was confirmed to the assessment team that the number of Student President roles had increased in 2024 from one to five to ensure increased student engagement with academic governance. The assessment team observed increased student representation in other more recent committee meeting minutes, such as the Academic Board and the Research, Knowledge Exchange and Ethics Committee.

109. Moreover, students who met with the assessment team during the visit, advised that they felt that LAMDA has a strong culture of student representation and engagement with student feedback. Furthermore, students considered that there had always been good communication with students, but that the increased number of Student Presidents was further strengthening the student voice in academic governance. There is further discussion of student involvement in academic governance under criterion A1.2 below, which further demonstrates how LAMDA implements and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with staff.

110. The assessment team found evidence demonstrating how LAMDA develops and implements policies and procedures in collaboration with staff. The team considered that this is demonstrated through staff representation at all key academic governance committees which includes the Board of Trustees which has a staff trustee member. The assessment team also noted that the terms for reference for SMT meetings sets out that 'the whole of LAMDA is represented at SMT through the line management structure'. SMT meeting minutes reviewed by the assessment team confirmed that SMT members discuss key policy areas and departmental plans with their teams at departmental away days. Furthermore, staff have roles

in several cross-departmental committees, management groups and working groups such as the Admissions Working Group and the Examinations Management Group. As discussed in paragraph 70, the 2023 to 2030 strategy was developed through extensive consultation with staff and students. During the assessment visit, staff advised the assessment team that communication of the development of policies and procedures happens in various ways such as through the circulation of committee minutes and staff away days.

111. The assessment team formed the view that external reviews commissioned by LAMDA demonstrated LAMDA developing and implementing policies in collaboration with external stakeholders. For example, as discussed in paragraphs 49, 50 and 82, LAMDA engaged the services of an external agency to undertake a governance effectiveness review. Changes to LAMDA's governance structure were developed and implemented in line with the review's recommendations. The assessment team also noted that in August 2020, LAMDA commissioned a panel which included external industry and academic experts, to review various strands of its higher education delivery. The review report, which is further discussed under criterion E, culminated in several recommendations one of which related to the development of partnerships with industry champions. Partnership working became a core strand of the 2023 to 2030 strategy.

112. The assessment team concluded that LAMDA develops, implements and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff and students and external stakeholders.

113. In considering whether LAMDA will manage successfully the responsibilities that would be vested in it were it to be granted the indefinite degree awarding powers it is seeking, the team noted that LAMDA has operated time-limited Taught DAPs since 2021 and, as stated several times in this report, has undergone significant change since that time, particularly in relation to its academic governance structure. As a result, and as set out throughout this section, the team's view is based on new governance and management approaches, some of which were still being embedded at the time of the DAPs assessment.

114. The assessment team recognises that the changes LAMDA has initiated, particularly in response to external and internal reviews, demonstrates a level of maturity and self-reflection. However, given the scope and pace of change since LAMDA was authorised DAPs in 2021, the assessment team is not of the view that it has consistently demonstrated that it has managed successfully its DAPs responsibilities for the whole of the period since it was granted. Subsequently, the team considered that a further review of some of LAMDA's academic governance and management procedures will be necessary to ensure there is a clear audit trail for all decisions and progress against actions outstanding are monitored.

115. On balance, the assessment team considers that the changes LAMDA has undergone reflect its commitment to robust and effective academic governance. The assessment team has seen evidence of the positive effect of these changes, including the operation of the new governance structure, to the extent that it is reassured that DAPs are now being securely exercised and will continue to be in the future.

Conclusions

116. The assessment team concluded that LAMDA meets subcriterion A1.1. This is because, following a period of significant change to the governance arrangements, LAMDA now has a

more effective academic governance structure with clearer reporting lines and accountabilities.

117. There is coherence between LAMDA's strategic missions and aims and its academic policies, as well as appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership. The assessment team was content that the function of the Academic Board as the senior academic authority is now more clearly articulated following the recent revisions to the governance structure.

118. However, due to multiple changes in LAMDA's governance and leadership, as well as ongoing revisions to its academic governance structures occurring both prior to and during this DAPs assessment, the assessment team was unable to fully evaluate the impact of these changes.

119. Furthermore, the team also considered there are weaknesses in the effectiveness of how LAMDA documents academic governance decision making and ensures action is taken following internal quality review. The assessment team recommends that LAMDA strengthen its committee operating procedures and practices to address these issues.

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

120. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA meets subcriterion A1.2 because all aspects of its control and oversight of its higher education provision are conducted in partnership with its students.

121. The assessments team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that LAMDA met the evidence requirements for subcriterion A1.2 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

122. The assessment team reviewed a range of evidence including the terms of reference and meeting minutes of key governance committees, including the Board of Trustees and the Academic Board and its subcommittees, to assess whether LAMDA's academic governance is conducted in partnership with students and students are supported to engage effectively. The team also reviewed the LAMDA Students' Union Constitution, the Student Engagement Officer job description and spoke to students during the visit to LAMDA.

123. The assessment team found that LAMDA's students are an integral part of the constitution of key academic governance committees. As discussed in paragraphs 106 to 107, the assessment team's review of committee terms of reference confirm that Student Presidents are members of the Academic Board and its subcommittees. Furthermore, there is student representation on the Board of Trustees and students chair the SSLC meetings. However as discussed in these paragraphs, the assessment team also noted historically low levels of student attendance at key academic committee meetings.

124. The assessment team saw that the Students' Union Constitution dated August 2020, sets out the framework for student representation and outlines how the students' union works in collaboration with LAMDA. The constitution states that the students' union Presidential Team consists of five Student Presidents, who each manage a strand of activity within LAMDA including institutional governance and academic matters (assessment teaching and learning). The constitution also sets out that each year, a set of specialist student representatives may be appointed to help provide a student voice in relation to specific institutional areas.

125. As discussed in paragraph 100, students informed the assessment team during the visit that prior to the 2024-25 academic year, LAMDA had a single Student President role. This changed with effect from 2024-25, when LAMDA expanded the student presidential team from one to five. This change was intended to ensure increased student engagement with academic governance. The assessment team considered that, at the time of the DAPs assessment, it was too soon after the expansion to the student presidential team to fully assess whether it was working effectively. However, student representatives who met with the assessment team during the visit, were positive about their roles and commented that they didn't know how previous presidents had executed the role as each individual role is challenging. The assessment team formed the opinion that the increased capacity within the student presidential team should help ensure students individually and collectively are engaged in the governance and management of the organisation and its higher education provision.

126. As discussed under subcriterion A1.1, the assessment team's review of minutes from a range of key academic governance committee meetings indicated previous low levels of student representative attendance at some meetings. However, the assessment team did find several instances of students individually and collectively engaging with the governance and management of the organisation and its higher education provision. For instance, the November 2024 Board of Trustee meeting minutes evidence the attendance of the student trustee. Student representatives also attended meetings of the Academic Board and its subcommittees where discussions included programme monitoring and resourcing, curriculum development and quality, and NSS results. Examples include the May 2024 Academic Board meeting and the November 2022 LTQC meeting.

127. SSLC meetings also provide evidence of how students individually and collectively are engaged in the governance and management of LAMDA and its higher education provision. Student representatives and members of the Student President team consistently attend and chair SSLC meetings. SSLC meeting agendas include a standing discussion item around course quality and curriculum, wherein students provide feedback on what is working well and what needs to change. Meeting minutes reviewed by the assessment team confirmed discussion of student feedback across a range of areas including course content, learning resources and physical spaces. A report from SSLC meetings is then presented at each Academic Board meeting. In summary, the assessment team determined that, while the Students' Union Constitution had not previously been fully deployed, the recent expansion of the Student President team and evidence of effective engagement in meetings of SSLC and Academic Board demonstrated that student representation at academic governance meetings was now more consistent and widespread.

128. In addition, the assessment team saw evidence of a range of mechanisms implemented to seek and collate student views to inform the management of higher education provision. For

example, students complete a mid-term module evaluation form, the results of which are often used to inform future curriculum development. Other student surveys gather targeted feedback on areas of delivery such as IT and the library resource. During the visit to LAMDA, the assessment team heard evidence from staff and students of student consultation on curriculum development.

129. LAMDA also confirmed to the assessment team that while there hadn't previously been student representation on course validation panels, it is currently 'looking to provide training for students that would enable them to actively contribute to a range of organisational processes, including course validation'. The assessment team welcomed this plan as a positive opportunity for further student engagement in the development of LAMDA's higher education provision. The assessment team also saw in the ACMR for the MFA Professional Acting that the course leader meets regularly with student representatives from relevant year groups to hear feedback on the student experience and that feedback is then documented, actioned and disseminated to relevant stakeholders as appropriate. Moreover, the assessment team saw examples of course development in response to student feedback collected through surveys and SSLC meetings. This included revisions to some module assessment in the MA Directing course.

130. The assessment team noted that the Students' Union Constitution makes provision for ensuring that new student representatives are supported and enabled to fulfil the role to which they have been elected. It sets out that training and support is undertaken by the Student Engagement Officer. The assessment team saw from the Student Engagement Officer job description, that this is a full-time permanent role that reports to the Head of Student and Academic Services. Included in the role responsibilities is a requirement to support students' engagement with student-facing policies and procedures. LAMDA also advised that the role of the Student Engagement Officer was introduced to 'strengthen communication between students and staff, fostering a culture of collaboration and inclusion'. The assessment team did not see evidence of the training or practical support that student representatives receive to enable them to engage effectively. The assessment team therefore recommends that LAMDA monitor the effectiveness of training for student representatives to ensure they are being supported to engage fully and effectively.

Conclusions

131. The assessment team concluded that LAMDA meets subcriterion A1.2. This is because academic governance at LAMDA, including oversight of its higher education, is generally conducted in partnership with students, despite weaknesses in the provisions of the Students' Union Constitution being fully implemented since LAMDA was granted DAPs in 2021.

132. The team concluded that, while the recent expansion of the Student Presidential Team provided reassurance, the team considered it premature to fully assess its effectiveness. Nevertheless, the assessment team's review of evidence, including discussions with students during the visit, demonstrated LAMDA's clear commitment to ensuring that students play an integral role in the implementation of academic governance.

133. The assessment team therefore concluded that there is a sound level of student involvement in academic governance such that this criterion is met, but the assessment team recommends that LAMDA monitor the effectiveness of training for student representatives to ensure they are being supported to engage fully and effectively.

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

134. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA meets subcriterion A1.3 because where LAMDA 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.

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

Reasoning

136. To assess LAMDA's approach to working with other organisations in the delivery of learning opportunities, the assessment team considered a range of evidence including the General Work Placement Principles document, the work placement risk assessment document, the template letter to the placement host and the Partnership Approval Process document. The assessment team also noted the details of current partnerships in the partnership register and considered further details on partnership working provided by LAMDA.

137. LAMDA does not currently deliver higher education provision either through franchise or validation arrangements with other providers. However, in its DAPs self-assessment document, LAMDA makes clear that partnership working is core to its strategy and that the nurturing of strategic partnerships with industry leaders ensures its graduates are industry ready. LAMDA also clarified to the assessment team that it uses the term 'partnership' in relation to placement provision for students, institutional scholarship providers and other organisations with which it works towards mutual objectives, such as the Arts Council.

138. All partnership proposals are subject to LAMDA's Partnership Approval Process, which includes undertaking due diligence checks. Furthermore, partnership proposals must align with LAMDA's strategic priorities and can only be developed in areas where LAMDA has academic and pedagogic expertise. The assessment team noted from LAMDA's partnership register, that current partnerships were with organisations in the creative arts industries thereby aligning with LAMDA's strategic focus. SMT and Board approval is required for new partnerships, and a partnership agreement is drafted and signed by all parties. Where provision is delivered through partnership, such as through placement opportunities, LAMDA advised the assessment team that all partners 'agree, understand, communicate and take responsibility for the maintenance of academic standards and enhancement of quality'. It further advised that all academic partnerships are subject to regular monitoring and evaluation to 'assure quality and facilitate enhancement'.

139. The team noted that LAMDA's DAPs self-assessment document advises that work placements are an important part of the curriculum for Production and Technical Arts

students. The assessment team found that the Professional Placement module for the Production and Technical Arts programme sets out the requirements for students to secure a work placement opportunity with an established company within the entertainment industry. The placement is expected to be of at least five weeks duration and enable the student to develop relevant graduate level industry skills. In addition, students in the final year of the BA or MFA Professional Acting courses can be assessed for work-based learning in a paid professional setting in lieu of completion of the standard public performance assessment.

140. The assessment team did not have an opportunity to review any completed placement agreement documentation. However, from its review of the Work Placement Principles and Partnership Approvals Process documents, the assessment team was assured that LAMDA has good oversight of placement arrangements. Furthermore, in the assessment team's meeting with students, it was confirmed that placement arrangements were made clear to students and that suitable support is in place while students undertake their placements. The assessment team recommends that LAMDA monitors the application of placement working principles and processes to ensure they are effective in practice.

141. Overall, the assessment team was assured that because of the progress LAMDA has made in developing effective and robust governance and management structures as noted under A1.1 and A1.2, should it decide to work with other organisations, LAMDA would adopt a strategic approach to ensure arrangements are robust and effective after due consideration of risk.

Conclusions

142. The assessment team concluded that LAMDA meets subcriterion A1.3 because where LAMDA works with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, such as placements, it undertakes appropriate due diligence checks and ensures that the governance and management of such opportunities is robust and effective. Furthermore, the evidence shows that decisions to work with other organisations are the result of a strategic approach rather than opportunism.

143. The assessment team also concluded that LAMDA meets criterion A1 overall. This is because LAMDA now has effective academic governance with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities, which is conducted in partnership with students.

144. However, the team considers there to be weaknesses in the effectiveness of how LAMDA documents academic governance decision making and therefore recommends that LAMDA improve its processes in this area.

145. Since DAPs were first awarded, LAMDA has undergone significant change to the membership of its Board and SMT and its academic governance structure. The assessment team considers that on balance, the changes LAMDA has undergone reflect its commitment to robust and effective academic governance. The assessment team has seen evidence of the positive effect of these changes including the operation of the new governance structure. Consequently, the assessment team concluded that as a result of these changes, LAMDA's DAPs authorisation is now being securely exercised and will continue to be in the future.

Assessment of DAPs criterion B: Academic standards and quality assurance

Criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks

Advice to the OfS

146. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA meets Criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks because it meets subcriteria B1.1 and B1.2.

147. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows in summary that LAMDA has in place transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit. LAMDA has also demonstrated that it 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.

148. While the team identified some inconsistencies in audit trails relating to evidence of subsequent changes to programmes, overall, it determined that LAMDA follows its processes for maintaining and updating records of programmes and qualifications, and that LAMDA has been refining these practices during the period in which it has held time-limited DAPs.

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

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

150. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA meets subcriterion B1.1 because it has in place transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications.

151. The assessments team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that LAMDA has met the evidence requirements for B1.1 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

152. In order to test whether the Academic Regulations and frameworks governing LAMDA's higher education provision are appropriate to its current status and implemented fully and consistently, the team reviewed LAMDA's Academic Regulations and Credit Framework, which set out the overall approach to governance and the awarding of academic credit and qualifications.

153. The team found that LAMDA developed a robust set of frameworks and regulations in 2019 prior to the OfS granting it time-limited Taught DAPs in 2021. These frameworks and regulations apply to all students who commenced their programmes after the award of time-limited DAPs in August 2021. As set out under criterion A1, LAMDA's Academic Board has oversight of the academic framework and regulations.

154. The assessment team's review of LAMDA's Academic Regulations and Credit Framework showed they encompass all stages of the academic life cycle. LAMDA's Credit Framework provides detail regarding progression criteria, assessment, the awarding of credit and recognition of prior learning. The Academic Regulations clearly define how credit is to be awarded how credit is accumulated for the award of a degree to be made and defines the process by which marks are considered and ratified.

155. The Academic Regulations cover further policies and procedures in areas including curriculum development, validation, approval and review of courses, student evaluation and engagement, placement learning and academic appeals. The team considered that the regulations are comprehensive, appropriate to its status and that they transparently articulate the mechanisms for awarding academic credit and qualifications.

156. To test if LAMDA's regulations and frameworks are implemented fully and consistently, the team reviewed documents including:

- a sample of Exam Board minutes (dated 2 September 2022)

- nine external examiner reports (for the academic years 2021-22 and 2022-23)

- fifteen module specifications across various programmes from Levels 4-7

- two programme specifications (one undergraduate and one postgraduate)

- minutes of CAC meetings (dated 28 November 2022, 20 January 2023 and 10 May 2023)

- minutes of LTQC (dated 9 November 2022, 30 March 2023, 6 December 2023, 19 June 2024 and 30 October 2024 (unconfirmed))

- minutes of Academic Board meetings (dated 23 November 2022, 5 April 2023, 31 July 2023, 29 August 2023, 22 November 2023 and 1 May 2024)

- a sample student record from LAMDA's student records system with a sample transcript and certificate

- a summary of appeals and complaints.

157. On its review of a sample of nine external examiner reports from the academic years 2021-22 and 2022-23, the team found that external examiners support the assessment team's findings that LAMDA consistently implements its academic standards and Credit Framework across programmes and adheres to its own quality assurance processes. Minutes of the Board of Examiners from September 2022, evidence a robust process when considering and ratifying the awarding of grades. The Board of Examiners considers any mitigating circumstances for students, providing opportunity for the external examiners to comment, and operating overall as set out in the Academic Regulations.

158. Minutes from the CAC (28 November 2022, 20 January 2023 and 10 May 2023), a subcommittee of the LTQC, provided evidence that this committee operates effectively and in line with the terms of reference set out in the Academic Regulations, demonstrating to the assessment team that LAMDA is following its own regulations. Further discussion of LAMDA's approach to course approval and validation is discussed under criteria B2 and B3.

159. The LTQC minutes reviewed by the assessment team evidenced that it is operating effectively within its remit, providing opportunities for the presentation of amendments, updates and discussion on a range of areas. For example, the 19 June 2024 meeting included discussion of:

- course development and approval

- curriculum content and development

- programme monitoring and review

- student feedback

- learning and teaching enhancement

- library and learning resources

- professional development and academic quality.

160. The team considered that the Academic Board has, overall, demonstrated that it has effectively exercised its responsibilities in relation to oversight of academic frameworks and policies since LAMDA was granted time-limited Taught DAPs. This is evidenced in the minutes scrutinised by the assessment team, demonstrating reflection on, and amendments to, policies and procedures. As set out under criterion A1, the Academic Board meets a minimum of three times a year and is the senior academic authority and therefore is the point of final sign-off on LAMDA's Academic Regulations and policies. The minutes of the Academic Board meeting held on 31 July 2023 show several items related to academic frameworks and policies presented to the Academic Board for approval, including grade descriptors, marking criteria and the student concern process. Furthermore, the Academic Board is responsible for the approval of new programmes and changes to existing programmes, as set out in the Academic Regulations. The team found evidence of this in practice during the meeting held on 1 May 2024, where the Board approved minor amendments to several modules. During the same meeting, the team saw evidence of the Board reviewing the Academic Regulations and Credit Framework, and the policy for visiting fellows and professors was presented ready for implementation. This provided further assurance that the Academic Board has oversight to ensure that LAMDA's academic frameworks and regulations governing its higher education provision are appropriate to its current status and are implemented fully and consistently.

161. In a review of academic appeals and complaints the assessment team determined that LAMDA's regulations for dealing with these are appropriate for its context. Furthermore, upon reviewing evidence in relation to academic appeal and complaints cases, the evidence reviewed assured the team that the regulations are appropriately applied in practice. This is discussed further under criterion B3.

162. The assessment team concluded that LAMDA's academic frameworks and regulations governing its higher education provision are appropriate and are implemented fully, as demonstrated through the operation of various committees in line with these regulations and through the continued management of its higher education provision throughout the period in which it has held time-limited DAPs.

163. The assessment team found that the Credit Framework and regulations have been maintained and subsequently updated through the oversight and remit of the Academic Board. The team noted that the Credit Framework has been updated in the period since LAMDA was granted Full DAPs. These updates occurred in June 2021 when job titles and functions were updated by Chair's action in the Academic Board. In May 2024, there was a discussion at the Academic Board regarding LAMDA's guidance on marking. It was confirmed that guidance on marking in Annex 6 of the Credit Framework was accurate and that marking regulations on the VLE would be updated to provide clarity for students. This assured the team that the Credit Framework is being reviewed and maintained.

164. The team found that the Academic Regulations have also been updated twice during the period that LAMDA has held DAPs. First in June 2021, where the course approval process and roles and responsibilities of the Head of Department were updated and again in May 2024 where role titles and responsibilities were updated to reflect the changes in leadership structure. In both cases, changes were discussed and approved by the Academic Board. The team considered that, while these changes were minimal, it demonstrates LAMDA's effective oversight and ongoing development of its academic frameworks and regulations, which the assessment team considers appropriate for continuing to award higher education qualifications.

165. The assessment team was therefore satisfied that LAMDA has academic frameworks and regulations which will continue to be appropriate for the granting of its own higher education qualifications.

Conclusions

166. The team concluded that LAMDA meets subcriterion B1.1 as the evidence demonstrates that it has transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations, which govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications.

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

167. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA meets subcriterion B1.2 because it maintains a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves (and of subsequent changes), 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.

168. The assessments team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows that LAMDA has met the evidence requirements for B1.2 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

169. To inform the assessment team's consideration of whether LAMDA maintains a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves (and of subsequent changes to it), the assessment team considered the evidence LAMDA provided to demonstrate its approach to records and qualifications. The team reviewed:

- a sample student record (from LAMDA's student records system, Quercus)

- a sample transcript and certificate

- screenshots of LAMDA World (where definitive documents are stored and accessed)

- a sample of Academic Board minutes

- a sample of three Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee minutes from the academic year 2022-23.

The team was also given access to a sample of four modules (Levels 4-7) on LAMDA's VLE.

170. LAMDA has in place a document sharing site (LAMDA World) that is used as a repository and access point by staff and students for definitive programme documentation, policies and procedures. The assessment team noted that LAMDA maintains records of its programmes through dated templates for module specifications and course specifications and retains these definitive documents within the LAMDA World portal.

171. In addition to LAMDA World, LAMDA has in place a VLE which the assessment team acknowledged is a recent addition for LAMDA, having been introduced in the 2023-24 academic year, and is in early stages of implementation. The VLE is discussed further in relation to criterion B3. At the time of the assessment, the team found that it is serving as an important portal for programme-based information and that it enables students to monitor their progress through the grading function as well as allowing them to access feedback using the assessment rubrics. During the assessment team's site visit in January 2025, students confirmed that prior to rolling out the VLE, their materials were accessed via a document sharing site and LAMDA World. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA's use of its VLE is more aligned with sector best practice with regard to the sharing of records of qualification and programmes with students, based on the experiences of the assessment team. The team also noted the benefit for flexibility for LAMDA to develop it, as required, in the future. For example, in meetings with the assessment team, students described a forum that had been setup on the VLE to enable students to 'reach out' for support; staff and students spoke extremely positively about the impact the VLE has had in practice. The assessment team concluded this was a welcome addition to LAMDA's provision.

172. The team found that LAMDA has in place a robust four-step process (described in detail in under criterion B2, paragraph 197) for course approval, as set out in the Academic

Regulations. The regulations also set out the process for amendments to approved courses. For minor changes, where there is no revision to the course aims and intended learning outcomes, a proposal is submitted to the Head of Academic Affairs and Research in the form of a revised course specification and a brief account of the changes made. The Head of Academic Affairs and Research then liaises with the Director of Actor Training and Drama School who is authorised to approve such changes. For substantial changes, the Head of Department or Course Leader consults both the Director of Actor Training and Drama School and the Head of Academic Affairs and Research with an outline of the proposed changes; should both senior academics be satisfied, a recommendation is made to revise the course specification, the drafting of any proposed new modules and, where necessary, an amended mapping document. A rationale for changes, and evidence of discussions with students regarding the proposed changes is also needed. This is then referred to the CAC for approval. Any necessary changes to programmes are then documented within the minutes of the Academic Board and, following changes to LAMDA's processes, changes are also considered at the LTQC prior to reaching the Academic Board (see paragraph 176). These processes for course approval and consequent updates to programme specifications evidence that definitive records are used as the basis for delivery and assessment.

173. The assessment team reviewed a sample of two programme specifications in which it was evident that the template (dated November 2022) now requires a date of approval by both LAMDA's CAC and the Academic Board, to demonstrate that the programmes are being maintained appropriately. The course specification for BA Professional Acting was revised in March 2016 with changes taking effect in September 2016, with evidence of further modification and updates to Levels 4, 5 and 6 approved in Academic Board minutes dated 1 May 2024. In this case, the changes to the programme that were made prior to the awarding of DAPs and therefore would not have been subject to the approval of LAMDA's CAC or the Academic Board as it is currently operated, as a result the assessment team would not necessarily have expected to have seen sign-off on this document. When the document was transferred to the newer November 2022 template, it may be that LAMDA had not made any material changes requiring a sign-off or it may have missed an opportunity to review the document to include the sign-off.

174. The assessment team also reviewed the course specification for MFA Classical Acting, which was created in November 2022 and commenced in September 2023 having passed through a CAC in January 2023. The information at the end of the specification document articulates this clearly, although the assessment team observed that in the case of the MFA Classical Acting, the contextual information does not state when the specification was approved at the Academic Board. The detail missing suggests an anomaly within the audit trail, however the team found evidence of the CAC reporting the approval of the programme to the Academic Board, via the minutes of the Academic Board meeting of 5 April 2023. The team therefore noted that appropriate approval of the programme had taken place, with evidence of this found, but the specification was not fully updated to reflect this. The team therefore recommends that LAMDA ensures all stages of reviewing and updating programme specifications take place consistently to continue to ensure that it demonstrates maintenance of definitive and up-to-date records of each qualification to be awarded and each programme being offered by the organisation.

175. The assessment team also reviewed fifteen module specifications (ten from undergraduate modules and five from postgraduate modules) and found that the specification templates

differed slightly. However, it is evident that the most recent template (November 2022) requires the approval from both the Head of Academic Affairs and Research and the Director of Actor Training and Drama School. The team determined that any amendments to modules are tracked in a table at the end of the template, and the team found evidence of a number of modules that have been recently amended or approved and have been appropriately signed off with the changes documented with time stamps. For example, the module specification for SNA006C: Screen and Audio 3 (a 15-credit Level 6 module for the BA Professional Acting course) underwent a minor revision in March 2024 to reflect minor curriculum changes and the impact of the newly introduced VLE on how students access assignment briefs and feedback. The team considered that this approach facilitates effective tracking of amendments and updates to the documents, while also evidencing to the assessment team that LAMDA is reviewing and maintaining records of qualifications on an ongoing basis.

176. The team found, however, that there are several modules that appear not to have undergone the same review process, nor have documented this on the module specifications, due to being presented on module specification templates that pre-date the new template introduced in November 2022. The team anticipated that as programmes move through LAMDA's schedule of periodic reviews, all modules would eventually move to the new template and this process would lead to consistent documentation of reviews and approvals and clear audit trails of when these took place. The assessment team's view is that the evolution of the process provides evidence of the way in which LAMDA has been developing and strengthening its process of how it maintains and updates records of programmes during the period in which it has held time-limited DAPs. For example, in additional evidence received in December 2024, LAMDA confirmed that from October 2024 it has introduced a refined workflow providing an additional layer of governance for module and course amendments. The change means that module and course amendments will now be required to also pass through the LTQC before progressing to the Academic Board.

177. To determine if there is evidence that students and alumni are provided with records of study, the assessment team reviewed the VLE, where grades are released to students pending ratification by the Board of Examiners together with a set of minutes of the Board of Examiners (dated 2 September 2022) where grades are formally discussed and confirmed. The team also reviewed a sample student record from LAMDA's student records system, a sample transcript and certificate, and screenshots of LAMDA World where definitive documents are stored and accessed.

178. The team found that the evidence shows how LAMDA utilises software (Quercus) to track student records and progress and generates suitable certificates and transcripts for students on completion of a programme. The assessment team was satisfied that the content of the certificate, transcript and associated processes provide sufficient evidence that students and alumni are provided with records of study.

179. The assessment team concluded that LAMDA 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. However, the team noted some instances where these definitive records did not consistently fully reflect the approval points for changes made and recommends that LAMDA ensures there is a

consistent approach for all changes to module and programme specifications to comply with the latest templates in place.

Conclusions

180. The assessment team concluded that LAMDA meets criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks. This is because the evidence shows LAMDA has in place appropriate frameworks and regulations, and effective monitoring mechanisms to meet the requirements of subcriterion B1.1.

181. Furthermore, the team concluded that LAMDA effectively maintains a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves (and subsequent changes to it), which are used as the basis for the delivery and assessment of its programmes, its monitoring and review, and the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

182. The team found that LAMDA has been refining its practices with regard to programme and module amendments and approvals, and these practices and processes are being carried out effectively. However, the team noted some inconsistencies in how LAMDA records approvals for changes and therefore recommend that LAMDA ensures there is a consistent approach in the future.

183. Therefore, the team concluded that LAMDA meets criterion B1.

Criterion B2: Academic standards

Advice to the OfS

184. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA meets criterion B2: Academic standards because it meets subcriteria B2.1 and B2.2.

185. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows in summary that LAMDA has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications.

186. Furthermore, LAMDA has demonstrated that it is able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that correspond to the threshold academic standards specified within the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). The standards it sets and maintains above the threshold are reliable over time and reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.

187. 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

188. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA meets subcriterion B2.1 because it has clear mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications, and these are consistently applied.

189. The assessments team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that LAMDA has met the evidence requirements for B2.1 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

190. To determine whether LAMDA's higher education qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ set out in the sector-recognised standards, the assessment team reviewed:

- LAMDA's current Academic Regulations

- Credit Framework for Taught Programmes

- Curriculum Development Policy

- Validation Procedures

- Approval and Withdrawal of Courses procedures contained therein

- two course specifications

- 15 module specifications across a range of levels and programmes.

191. As discussed under criterion B1, the team found that LAMDA's Academic Regulations and its Credit Framework for Taught Programmes set out the overall approach to the design, approval, monitoring and review of its programmes. The assessment team noted that LAMDA's Curriculum Development Policy states that programmes should be 'informed as appropriate by the requirements of external agencies such as Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs), the Office for Students (OfS), the current Designated Quality Board, and QAA Benchmark Statements'.

192. To test whether mechanisms for ensuring higher education qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ and are consistently applied, the assessment team reviewed:

- course specifications for BA Professional Acting and MFA Classical Acting

- fifteen module specifications (for Levels 4 to 7 across a range of courses)

- a sample of nine external examiner reports and five of LAMDA's responses to these

- the Curriculum Development Policy and approval procedures

- a sample course approval report, dated May 2023.

193. The assessment team noted from the sample of course and module specifications that course level learning outcomes and module level learning outcomes aligned appropriately with the relevant external benchmarks such as the qualification descriptors of the FHEQ, and Subject Benchmark Statements (a framework LAMDA has opted to use as per its Academic Regulations). For example, a generic learning outcome for the Level 6 module PTASS302PM: Production Management – Specialist Production Role 2 (a 25-credit module for the BA Production and Technical Arts: Stage and Screen course) requires students to 'evidence decision making in complex and unpredictable contexts' and 'show ability to work independently, setting goals and managing their own workload'. This corresponds with the FHEQ descriptors for Level 6 qualifications, which state that holders of such qualifications will have 'decision making in complex and unpredictable contexts' and 'the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility'. External examiners' reports covering academic years, 2020-21 and 2022-23 reviewed by the assessment team also confirmed that courses are delivered and assessed in line with sector-recognised standards.

194. This evidence demonstrated to the team therefore that LAMDA's higher education qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ.

195. The assessment team found that LAMDA's Academic Regulations and its Credit Framework for Taught Programmes identify external reference points and independent points of expertise that must be considered in the setting and maintaining of academic standards. The assessment team found that these reference points include external regulatory provisions, such as the OfS's sector-recognised standards, relevant PSRB requirements as well as the views of external academic experts, students and the industry, as quoted in the Curriculum Development Policy. The assessment team reviewed an example of this in practice in the minutes of the CAC meeting held in May 2023 where the MA/MFA for Musical Theatre course

was considered. On this panel, there was an external expert who was consulted and posed some things for the panel to consider. Furthermore, the assessment team noted that when submitting a business case to senior management for the development of any new courses, course development teams are required to provide evidence to support the academic case and sector demand for such development.

196. The team found that, although only four new courses have been proposed and validated, or revalidated following amendments since the awarding of DAPs, the assessment team found evidence of the application of LAMDA's course approval procedures and the setting and maintaining of academic standards within a sample of business cases, such as evidence of the development of a Certificate of Higher Education (CertHE) Foundation in Stage and Screen programme (dated 1 December 2023) and MA/MFA Musical Theatre programme.

197. LAMDA operates a four-step process for course approval. Its Validation Procedures (set out in the Academic Regulations) begin with the presentation of a business case to the SMT as step one. Membership of a CAC (step two) of the validation procedure must include at least one external academic subject expert, and may include students, and external advisers from academia or industry as determined by the Principal of LAMDA. At step three, the Validation Panel should include input from at least one external expert, preferably two (one with academic expertise and one from a relevant industry background), and should normally include one student representative. The assessment team noted that the Academic Regulations articulate that the Validation Panel (step three) applies only to the validation of courses delivered by external partners. Step four is approval by the Academic Board.

198. The sample CAC reports reviewed by the assessment team demonstrated that LAMDA has applied its procedures effectively. For example, the evidence shows that there was independent and external membership of the approval panel with senior academics from external higher education providers involved in the process, and that there was evidence of their input into the decision-making process. Although the panel did not include students, as noted in paragraph 129, LAMDA has stated its intention to provide training for students that would enable them to actively contribute to a range of organisational processes, including course validation, in the future. Furthermore, the assessment team noted student involvement and the inclusion of a student panel member for the review of the BA Production and Technical Arts: Stage and Screen course, which took place in January 2025 as part of the schedule of course reviews.

199. In the case of the MA/MFA Musical Theatre, the assessment team was unable to ascertain if any recommendations from the CAC (including those from external points of expertise) were enacted and sought further clarification from LAMDA on this. LAMDA provided further evidence to show that all recommendations had been considered and implemented where appropriate, for example through evidence of a module specification for the New Classics Project (MFAC820 / MFMT820), noting changes were signed off in February 2024 in relation to the recommendations outlined in the CAC minutes dated 10 May 2023. These recommendations included the articulation of more musical theatre content in the MFA modules and an updated reading list and subsequent check on library resources. The assessment team was content that LAMDA took action in response to these recommendations, though found that it was difficult to track the audit trail of actions being assigned in response to external views and expertise in relation to this case. The team noted further weakness in the audit trail and therefore, it is the view of the team that LAMDA would

benefit from a more effective audit trail to consolidate the programme approval process, facilitating transparency for both internal and external purposes.

200. To test whether external reference points and independent points of expertise had in practice been considered in the setting and maintaining of academic standards, the assessment team reviewed nine external examiner reports and five LAMDA responses for the academic year 2020-21 to 2022-23. The external examiner reports confirm that LAMDA's standards are appropriate for qualifications at this level and in this subject, and that standards of student performance are comparable with similar courses or subjects in other UK institutions. Furthermore, the assessment team reviewed samples of assessed student work at undergraduate and postgraduate level, which evidenced rigorous practice in assessment design, marking and moderation, thus confirming the views of LAMDA's external examiners (for further discussion, see subcriterion B2.2, paragraph 216).

201. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications and that these mechanisms are consistently applied and take appropriate account of relevant external reference points. However, as outlined in paragraph 199, the team recommends that LAMDA continues to refine its document reporting processes to ensure there is effective and accurate records of how it responds and incorporates feedback from external and independent points of reference.

Conclusion

202. The team therefore concluded that LAMDA meets criterion B2.1 as overall the evidence demonstrates that that LAMDA has clear mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications, and that these are consistently applied.

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

203. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA meets subcriterion B2.2 because it demonstrates that it designs and delivers courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ.

204. The team's view is that these are reliable over time and reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies. Furthermore, the team found that its programme approval arrangements are robust and ensure that academic standards are set at a level that meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with its own Credit Framework and Academic Regulations.

205. However, the team identified some inconsistencies regarding how LAMDA captures and records evidence of programme approval and subsequent actions. The team also identified concerns surrounding the scheduling of periodic reviews. On balance, the team was assured that the mechanisms exist for consistent application of programme approval arrangements and that LAMDA has in place mechanisms to ensure it monitors standards set and that these are maintained.

206. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that LAMDA meets the evidence requirements for B2.2 and any other relevant evidence requirements.

Reasoning

207. To test whether LAMDA's programme approval arrangements are robust, applied consistently, and ensure that academic standards meet UK threshold standards as well as LAMDA's own academic frameworks and regulations, the assessment team considered the following:

- course design and approval documentation provided in minutes of a SMT meeting from February 2023 in which a business case was made for an MA/MFA Musical Theatre programme

- subsequent minutes of a CAC meeting for the same programme, dated May 2023.

208. This evidence demonstrated a rigorous course development process managed in line with the Curriculum Development Policy contained in LAMDA's Academic Regulations. Since DAPs were granted in 2021, LAMDA has designed, developed and approved one new programme,

the MA/MFA Musical Theatre. Though the team noted that it has undertaken further curriculum development and amendments to existing courses, which includes an extension to the MA Classical Acting to include an MFA (in January 2023) and a BA Production and Technical Arts to replace a previous foundation degree and top-up programme. Through its review of evidence of the programme development and approval procedures, and evidence of changes made to existing programmes, the team considered that these arrangements are robust and reflect that LAMDA operates consistently with its own academic frameworks and regulations.

209. The assessment team reviewed course specifications for the BA Professional Acting and MFA Classical Acting programmes and found that learning outcomes are informed by Subject Benchmark Statements (a framework that LAMDA has opted to use), and that a table showing how course learning outcomes map across modules is evident within each course specification.

210. Under subcriterion B2.1, LAMDA's Validation Procedures, as set out in the Academic Regulations, state that membership of a CAC (Step 2 of the validation procedure) must include at least one external academic subject expert, and may include students, and external advisers from academia or industry as determined by the Principal of LAMDA. The team reviewed evidence of the course approval of the MA/MFA Musical Theatre (May 2023) and found that the process had been applied consistently, with evidence of an external academic subject expert as a member of the panel, with subsequent evidence of their input. The minutes of the CAC demonstrated rigorous consideration of the programme with opportunities for input by all panellists. No conditions of approval were required, but some recommendations were made, and a timeframe for consideration and response provided. As discussed earlier in this report, the assessment team was initially unable to follow the audit trail to evidence how these recommendations had been acted upon, however following additional evidence and clarification from LAMDA, the team was assured that these recommendations were considered and implemented (see paragraph 199). The assessment team's view is that LAMDA has a robust course approval procedure and that in this case, it has evidenced how it followed the processes set out within the Curriculum Development Policy in its Academic Regulations.

211. Furthermore, the team considered that evidence of external examiner reports for current programmes at LAMDA over the academic years 2020-21 to 2022-23, provide a further external perspective that supports the view that its academic standards are set at a level that meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification. Therefore, the assessment team concluded that LAMDA's programme approval arrangements are robust, it has mechanisms in place to ensure that they are applied consistently, and that LAMDA is able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ. As mentioned previously in this report, the assessment team recommends that LAMDA strengthens its audit trails in relation to the design, approval and maintenance of programmes.

212. As set out under criterion B1, the team found that LAMDA's Academic Regulations and Credit Framework set out its approach to the award of credit and qualifications. These documents, along with the revised Marking and Feedback Policy approved at the LTQC meeting 6 December 2023, provide guidance on LAMDA's approach to assessment, marking and feedback.

213. The team considered that minutes of the LTQC meeting in December 2023 set out that the revised Marking and Feedback Policy will be the guideline and that subsequently all modules would contain specific assessment criteria aligned to the module learning outcomes, which are supplementary to the procedure presented in the Credit Framework. The assessment team discussed LAMDA's new approach to assessment marking and feedback during its visit where LAMDA staff assured the team that the revised policy enabled it to provide further clarity within course and module handbooks beyond the detail in the Credit Framework, enhancing its practices. The assessment team found that this demonstrates LAMDA using the period it has held time-limited DAPs to review its practices and make changes as necessary.

214. The team found that LAMDA's approach for marking and moderation is set out in Annex 6 of the Credit Framework, and states that 'marking arrangements shall be made explicit in course handbooks'. Annex 2, within the Credit Framework, details the level descriptors adopted by LAMDA which the team noted align to the qualification descriptors of the FHEQ. The descriptors are used in the development of course and module learning outcomes and assessment to ensure that both the UK threshold standards and LAMDA's academic standards above threshold are fully accounted for. Each module specification (section 16) includes mapping of module learning outcomes to learning and teaching methods and methods of assessment. This articulates how and where learning outcomes will be taught and assessed in the module. Marking and moderation is discussed further in relation to criterion B3.

215. The assessment team formed the view that LAMDA's assessment moderation procedures act as a further check in assuring the maintenance of standards. Annex 6, section 6 of the Credit Framework states that 'at least 80 per cent of the work required for assessment must be marked either by two Internal Examiners or by one Internal Examiner subject to moderation by a second Internal Examiner'. Therefore, a process of double marking or moderation is employed, and the processes are clearly articulated within the framework.

216. The assessment team reviewed a sample of assessed work including that of two students at Level 7, four dissertations at Level 6 and audio-visual recordings of four performances selected as representative samples across various levels of LAMDA's programmes. Through its review of these samples the assessment team observed a consistent approach to assessment and evidence of appropriate marking and moderation to demonstrate that the credit is being awarded fairly, in line with relevant learning outcomes, across different levels and programmes. In the view of the team, the review of the sample confirmed that marks awarded reflect the standards achieved in the student's work and therefore the assessment team concluded that LAMDA's assessment procedures and practices ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated and where academic standards have been satisfied. The team was assured that both UK threshold standards and LAMDA's own academic standards are satisfied.

217. Moreover, the team considered that LAMDA's Board of Examiners further ensures that credit and qualifications will be awarded only where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment. The Board of Examiners is a committee that reports to the Academic Board, the responsibilities of which are detailed in the Academic Regulations. These state that the Board of Examiners are responsible for 'reviewing the

marking of assessed work and confirming the marks awarded to students; making recommendations for the award of qualifications; making recommendations with regard to progression, re-sit examinations and termination of registration.' Therefore, the Examination Board has responsibility for ensuring the maintenance of appropriate academic standards at module and award level by taking decisions on the award of credit, student progression and achievement of higher education qualifications. According to the Academic Regulations, each Board of Examiners 'shall include one or more External Examiner', the 'other members are appointed by Academic Board' and will 'include an internal marker for each module for which the Board of Examiners holds responsibility'. The Academic Board will 'appoint one of these members as Chair of the Board of Examiners' (Academic Regulations, section 11).

218. The assessment team reviewed minutes from an Examination Board held on 20 September 2023 in which it is evident that detailed consideration had been given to student grades and the award of credit. External examiners are also provided with opportunities to make comment and report on their scrutiny during the Board of Examiners meeting. In the Examination Board held on the 20 September 2023, external examiners for the MFA Professional Acting, MA Classical Acting and the MA Directing gave comment, and each provided suggestions for development (see further discussion in criterion B3). The assessment team formed the view that the discussion was robust within the Board of Examiners demonstrating LAMDA's commitment to ensuring credit and qualifications are only awarded where relevant learning outcomes have been achieved.

219. The assessment team concluded that LAMDA only awards credit and qualifications where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment, and that both the UK threshold standards and the academic standards of the relevant degree awarding body have been satisfied.

220. LAMDA's Academic Regulations sets out guidance and direction regarding the approach to the monitoring and review of all higher education provision. The approach includes provision for the annual review (section 8) and monitoring of all courses and modules, periodic review (section 9), and revalidation of all courses (section 3, Validation Procedures).

221. LAMDA's Annual Course Monitoring Review 'is the formal reporting of, and response to, actions taken as a result of the ongoing review and evaluation of course provision, aimed at enhancing the student learning experience' (Academic Regulations, section 8). Course leaders and course teams undertake this process with support from Student Services and Academic Affairs. It is designed to capture and review feedback as well as comment on all aspects of course content and delivery. Student feedback and comment is captured via internal questionnaires, the NSS and Staff-Student Liaison Committees. External examiners' views are also considered in this process through inclusion of the external examiner annual report which asks for explicit comment on whether academic standards are being achieved and maintained.

222. Course teams complete an ACMR, which should highlight any significant issues identified in module or subject area reports, particularly those that affect multiple modules or suggest that academic standards are not being met. The report should also outline any actions taken or planned in response to these issues. Additionally, it must include details of any updates made to course specifications due to changes in compulsory modules or subject areas and confirm

that revised course specifications have been submitted for re-approval where necessary (as per Academic Regulations, section 8).

223. The Academic Regulations set out that ACMRs are considered at the LTQC (normally in the Autumn Term) and subsequently progress to the Academic Board which has responsibility for the entirety of LAMDA's higher education provision. However, through its review of ACMR documentation, the team found that the latter element of the regulation was not followed in practice in the 2022-23 academic year because LAMDA did not present ACMR documents within the LTQ Committee before progressing to the Academic Board for final approval. The team queried this with LAMDA and it was confirmed to the assessment team that a decision was made that, given its small number of programmes, it considered it was not necessary to scrutinise ACMRs at both the LTQC and at the Academic Board and therefore it was decided that ACMR documents would be reviewed at the Academic Board only. The team saw evidence of the Academic Board's consideration of the 2022-23 ACMRs which provided further assurance that there was appropriate discussion and consideration, despite the ACMRs not having been presented to LTQC. LAMDA also reported that it had plans to review its annual reporting cycle over summer 2024 and intended to develop a solution that is more appropriate for an institution of its size. While the assessment team considered that LAMDA could have undertaken a review of its annual reporting cycle and the steps set out in the Academic Regulations prior to instigating a differing system for ACMR review and approval in the 2022-23 academic year, it determined that the decision to streamline the review and approval process was a practical and sensible step to take given the size of the organisation.

224. The team considered that this anomaly and change in approach to how LAMDA records the consideration of approval and monitoring of programmes raises a similar point as previously discussed by the team under subcriterion B1.2 (paragraph 174).The team therefore recommend that LAMDA ensures there is a consistent approach taken to ensure a clear record of the discussion and approvals of ACMR, and that these reflect the Academic Regulations and responsibilities of each committee.

225. To determine whether LAMDA's course monitoring and review arrangements explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and maintained, the assessment team considered a range of course review documentation including nine external examiner reports and five of LAMDA's responses to these from the 2020-21 and 2022-23 academic years, as well as ACMRs from 2021-22 and 2022-23. The team found that the documentation showed that feedback from students, from various sources such as via SSLC meetings, the NSS data and informal feedback from the cohort is fully and consistently evaluated to ensure that subsequent course amendments enhance the quality and effectiveness of teaching, learning, and assessment. Additionally, student performance and progression and completion data is considered as part of the review. Furthermore, annual reports explicitly address external examiner comments, particularly those relating to academic standards, and set out if and how external examiner comments have informed course enhancement. All external examiner reports made available to the assessment team endorse LAMDA's approach to setting and maintaining academic standards, and the responses, as well as the annual course monitoring review documents, provide LAMDA opportunity to incorporate this into its reporting lines within the wider governance structure.

226. The assessment team was provided with minutes from the Academic Board held on the 23 November 2022 in which ACMRs for all courses for the 2021-22 academic year were

received, though the team noted the minutes state two reports remained outstanding at that point. Similarly in November 2023, one report remained outstanding. A further evidence request revealed that clerical errors accounted for missing ACMR documents in the minutes of the November 2022 Academic Board, and that in November 2023, the missing ACMR was subsequently approved as a Chair's Action in December 2023. The amendments were scheduled to be presented as an addendum to the minutes in each case at the Academic Board in March 2025. The assessment team's view is that this was a clerical anomaly and not indicative of a wider procedural issue.

227. LAMDA's Academic Regulations state that each subject area is subject to periodic review every five years and that normally, there will be a single periodic review covering all courses for a subject area. The schedule for such reviews is organised by Academic Affairs. The Academic Regulations describe periodic review as 'an external process which provides an opportunity for in-depth scrutiny and quality enhancement of all aspects of the relevant provision. This includes addressing whether UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether LAMDA's academic standards are being maintained', before outlining the composition of a review panel and the areas that are the focus of the review as follows:

- course design and delivery (including the curriculum, methods of delivery and assessment of courses)

- student support and guidance

- learning opportunities (including learning environments and resources)

- maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards

- managing higher education with other partnerships (where appropriate).

228. As discussed under criterion A1, the assessment team found that there were some programmes within the schedule of periodic reviews that had considerable periods of time between the previous review and the next scheduled review, such as the BA (Hons) Professional Acting that was reviewed in the 2017-18 academic year with the next review scheduled for 2025-26. The team queried this with LAMDA and it was explained that the periodic review schedule for some programmes had been reconsidered/amended to take account for the various extraordinary levels of scrutiny over the past few years that have acted as an equivalent to a periodic review. LAMDA explained that internal and external reviews had taken place when some periodic reviews were due to fall and, taking into consideration the size of LAMDA's provision, a decision was made that these warranted a similar level of assurance. For example, a review by the QAA that took place in 2017, the initial Taught DAPs assessment took place in 2020 and the creation of the LAMDA 2023 to 2030 Strategy entailed extensive internal review of its programmes.

229. To consider LAMDA's response to this query, the team reviewed LAMDA's Academic Regulations that set out that periodic review panels (Academic Regulations, section 9) should consist of academic staff from LAMDA, though not from the subject area under review (one of whom would act as chair), a student from outside of the area under review, two external experts in the area under review, and a secretary. The regulations further state that outcomes from the annual course monitoring process should feed into the periodic review process and the outcome of the periodic review process is a formal report to structure its feedback. This

then undergoes a review process, culminating in consideration by the LTQC that presents final recommendations to the Academic Board. While the assessment team agreed that the internal reviews and external assessments provided a reasonable mitigation for the delay to the periodic review schedules, the team considered that they do not necessarily replicate the holistic nature of the periodic review process. The team considered that this resulted in some courses having not undergone a periodic review scrutiny for long periods of time. For example, the BA (Hons) Professional Acting programme will have run for a period of eight years, rather than the five years set out in the Academic Regulations.

230. LAMDA also informed the team that it has since reviewed its schedule of periodic reviews with one review taking place each academic year. For example, the BA Professional Acting programme is scheduled to be reviewed in the 2025-26 academic year and the MA Directing programme is scheduled to be reviewed in the 2027-28 academic year (having last been reviewed in the 2018-19 academic year). The team considered the amended periodic review schedule and was assured that LAMDA has plans to remedy the delays and ensure periodic reviews for all programmes are scheduled in accordance with LAMDA's Academic Regulations.

231. Programme approval arrangements are discussed above in paragraphs 207 to 211 but in summary, the team's view is that LAMDA's programme approval arrangements are robust, it has mechanisms in place to ensure that they are applied consistently, and that it has the ability to maintain academic standards.

232. The assessment team therefore concluded that while there were some concerns surrounding the large period of time that had fallen in between periodic reviews for some of its courses, the evidence shows that LAMDAs programme monitoring and review procedures are robust. Further, the assessment team found a change of process with the ACMR audit trail in the 2022-23 academic year, and while the team considered that a review should have been completed prior to implementing changes, LAMDA has used its time-limited DAPs to review its practices for the future. Overall, the team's view is that LAMDA's programme approval, monitoring and review arrangements are robust, and mechanisms are in place to ensure they are applied consistently. These arrangements 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.

233. As discussed throughout this section, the assessment team saw evidence that LAMDA uses external examiners as a vital source of independent external expertise and references them in the maintenance of its academic standards. The role of external examiners is discussed further under criterion B3, but in summary the team found that nominations for external examiners are made to the Head of Academic Affairs and Research based on their knowledge and expertise. The Academic Regulations state that nominees should be of sufficient seniority, normally holding a post of Senior Lecturer or above, though may also be appointed from outside the higher education system on the basis of demonstrable professional qualifications and experience, particularly in the case of vocational awards (Academic Regulations, section 12). The assessment team reviewed a list of external examiners that LAMDA appointed between 2022 and 2024 and found that each individual met this requirement and held the post of Senior Lecturer, Programme Leader or above at their respective institutions. On appointment, external examiners are full members of the relevant Board of Examiners and are responsible to the Academic Board.

234. LAMDA sets out that external examiners are appointed with responsibility for a particular area of provision in line with their expertise. They undertake 'review and comment, in advance, on examination question papers', partake in the assessment moderation process, and 'participate as full members of the Board(s) of Examiners of which they are members' (Academic Regulations, section 12). External examiners are required to submit an annual report on the provision for which they are responsible, to include discussion of any issues or concerns as well as areas of good practice. LAMDA's report template (section 1) asks external examiners to include specific comment on the maintenance of threshold academic standards and the comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications. These reports are reviewed and responded to by course leaders and key themes and actions from external examiner reports feed into the ACMRs, which are presented to the LTQC then progress to the Academic Board for approval.

235. The assessment team reviewed nine external examiner reports alongside a sample of LAMDA's responses to the external examiner reports from the academic years 2021-22 and 2022-23 in relation to its undergraduate and postgraduate provision. The assessment team found that external examiners provided consistent and valuable feedback on academic standards, confirmed that appropriate standards had been set for qualifications and commented effectively on the comparability of standards with similar providers. External examiner reports sampled by the assessment team across a three-year period confirmed the reliability of academic standards at LAMDA over time.

236. The team also found that LAMDA's staffing structure utilises large numbers of external staff beyond the contracted core staff base that are drawn directly from the profession, ensuring that LAMDA's work is relevant, up-to-date and embedded in industry practices. This strengthens its networks to invite visiting artists and practitioners, as well as creating opportunities for students to develop their own networks. Consistent direct engagement with industry feeds through the curriculum and across programmes. For example, LAMDA's Industry Liaison tutors run a programme across courses that bring external speakers to the institution. LAMDA is also developing a scheme to support Visiting Professors and Creative Fellows for the institution that will run a series of workshops with students.

237. The team noted that within the BA (Hons) PTASS programme placements, external and independent industry professionals supervise students while on their industry placements. The team considered that both students and staff at LAMDA benefit from this direct interaction that connects LAMDA directly to industry requirements and expectations, ensuring the currency of its offering. In that context, and as confirmed in the assessment team's meeting with support staff, LAMDA's students and staff are benefiting from current industry expertise in setting and maintaining academic standards. Furthermore, as discussed in paragraph 210, external academic staff sit on course approval panels which demonstrates that LAMDA makes use of appropriate external and independent expertise in establishing academic standards.

238. The assessment team concluded that LAMDA 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.

Conclusions

239. The assessment team concluded that LAMDA offers higher education qualifications at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ, and it has mechanisms in place for setting and maintaining the academic standards through course approval, periodic review and qualification award procedures. It designs and delivers courses and qualifications that meet sector-recognised standards and the FHEQ. The samples of assessed student work reviewed by the assessment team confirmed that LAMDA only awards credit and qualifications where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated and where academic standards have been satisfied.

240. LAMDA has followed its own processes for course approval in the small number of course approvals undertaken during the period it has held time-limited DAPs, however the team identified weakness in the consistent tracking of decisions and approvals through its documentation. The team recommends that LAMDA ensures its documentation and audit trails continue to meet the DAPs criteria into the future. On balance, the team found that LAMDA's course approval arrangements are robust and mechanisms are in place to ensure consistency. The assessment team concluded that the procedures demonstrated that LAMDA is able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ.

241. While the team identified some anomalies in the application of LAMDA's periodic review and ACMR processes, the team was assured that action had already been taken to address these, and the assessment team did not feel that these were substantive issues given that LAMDA has mechanisms and structures in place for the future. Therefore, the team was assured that LAMDA's 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 being maintained.

242. Through scrutiny of course design and approval documentation, including external examiner reports, the assessment team concluded that LAMDA makes use of appropriate external and independent expertise to establish and maintain threshold academic standards. Furthermore, the team concluded that the robust use of external and independent expertise has ensured the comparability of academic standards at LAMDA are reliable over time and reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.

243. In summary, the team concluded that LAMDA meets criterion B2. The team was reassured by the changes LAMDA has made during the period in which it has held time-limited DAPs and considered that these will be effective to ensure that LAMDA continues to have clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications.

Criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience

Advice to the OfS

244. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA meets the requirements for criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience.

245. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows in summary that LAMDA demonstrated that it is able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience to all students from all backgrounds, irrespective of their location, mode of study, academic subject, protected characteristics, previous educational background or nationality.

246. Furthermore, LAMDA demonstrated that its learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured.

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

Criterion B3.1

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

Reasoning

Design and approval of programmes

248. To determine whether LAMDA operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes, the assessment team viewed the Curriculum Development Policy and Validation Procedures in its Academic Regulations, which articulate procedures for the design, development and approval of programmes.

249. LAMDA's four-step validation procedure (see paragraph 197) clearly lays out the process for the design and approval of courses from the business case (step one) through to final approval by the Academic Board (step four). The CAC is a subcommittee of the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee. In a meeting with the assessment team in June 2024, staff at LAMDA confirmed that the CAC meets ad hoc for the purposes of curriculum development. The minutes of the meetings note the context of the proposed programme, and evidence a thorough and robust discussion before specifying the outcome and any necessary conditions or recommendations.

250. The assessment team scrutinised both the business case for a new MA/MFA Musical Theatre programme presented to the SMT on 14 February 2023, and the subsequent minutes of the CAC held on 10 May 2023. The team noted that a rigorous business case was presented, and that the CAC demonstrated careful consideration of the programme, evidencing

LAMDA's adherence to its own Curriculum Development Policy. Minutes from the CAC meeting held on 10 May 2023 demonstrate rigorous consideration of elements including module design, curriculum content, and credit weighting for example, with the then lead practitioner and Executive Dean responding to questions posed by the panel members. The assessment team concluded that LAMDA operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes.

251. LAMDA's Curriculum Development Policy (as part of its Academic Regulations) articulates clearly to staff how its approach to curriculum design will take forward LAMDA's strategies and policies. The Validation Procedures clearly express the roles and responsibilities of the committees at each of the four stages of the process and set out the composition of the committees, including details of external membership as well as student involvement (see paragraphs 197, 210 above and 254 below).

252. Minutes of the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee held on 30 March 2023 describe the production of a 'Guide to Course Development and Approval' by the Quality Manager, and there was a plan for this to be referred to the Academic Board for approval. The assessment team was unable to view this guide, since LAMDA paused its development pending the release of an updated version of the QAA UK Quality Code (released 27 June 2024). LAMDA subsequently confirmed that it had decided not to proceed with this guide due to the small number of courses introduced and the ability of LAMDA's senior staff, Quality Manager, and Head of Academic Affairs and Research to guide course proposers through the process. In a meeting with the assessment team staff demonstrated that they understood the procedures and were aware of the guidance and support available to them through LAMDA's senior staff. However, in the view of the assessment team, LAMDA might find it valuable to have a guide or handbook, which could be particularly useful in times where staff may not be available or there is a turnover in the senior staff team.

253. LAMDA's Academic Regulations clearly set out the roles and responsibilities of staff within the programme approval process and it has in place a team of senior staff able to offer guidance and support to relevant staff through the process of design and approval of programmes. The assessment team's exploration during its site visit in January 2025 confirmed the support that is in place. The team concluded that relevant staff are provided with guidance and support on these procedures for the design, development and approval of programmes and their roles and responsibilities in relation to them.

254. To determine whether responsibility for approving new programme proposals is clearly assigned the assessment team scrutinised the Validation Procedures within the Academic Regulations. These procedures make explicit the responsibility of certain role holders for each element of the process, beginning with the role of the 'academic sponsor' who has responsibility for 'where appropriate, putting together and co-ordinating a course/module development team of suitable academic and support staff to develop the proposal; presenting the case for the proposal throughout the process(es) [....], including ensuring that all documentation is compiled and submitted as required and external experts are identified and briefed appropriately.'

255. According to the procedures, the academic sponsor submits a business case to the SMT at step one of the process. At step two, the Curriculum Development Committee, chaired by the Principal of LAMDA or their nominee, will consider all relevant documentation as appropriate.

The process states that for new course approval 'this will normally include the Business Case and Course Specification; for course revalidation, the Course Specification. Where new modules are proposed, module specification(s) must be provided.'

256. If the course approval or revalidation involves an external partner a Validation Panel would take place, forming step three of the Validation Procedures. Formal approval by the Academic Board is the final stage of the process (step four). The Academic Board 'will receive and consider a recommendation from the CAC (or Validation Panel) before deciding whether to approve the proposal or not'.

257. The Academic Regulations clearly set out steps one to four alongside a diagram demonstrating the workflow. The assessment team concluded that LAMDA's four-step validation procedure is appropriate for an institution of its size and type. The assessment team determine from the procedure above that LAMDA makes explicitly clear the roles and responsibilities for approving new programme proposals. Furthermore, minutes from the SMT meeting held on 14 February 2023 show that the business case for a MA/MFA Musical Theatre programme was presented in accordance with the process outlined in the validation procedure. Minutes of three CAC meetings (in the 2022-23 academic year) evidence that the composition of the panel is as described in the regulations with the Principal as chair.

258. Minutes from the CAC for the MA/MFA Musical Theatre (10 May 2023) show that LAMDA sought appropriate external expertise through experts drawn from other higher education institutions during the course approval process for the new course. LAMDA had a limited number of course approvals available for scrutiny over the period in which it held time-limited DAPs, with the MA/MFA Musical Theatre its only wholly new programme. Its other course approvals have extended or directly replaced pre-existing courses.

259. To determine whether subsequent action is carefully monitored in approving new programme proposals, the assessment team drew on the minutes from three CAC meetings. The minutes demonstrate that the committee had not approved any programmes subject to conditions but had made recommendations. The assessment team was unable to establish an audit trail to demonstrate that the recommendations had been considered and signed off by the chair of the committee or at a subsequent LTQ Committee or the Academic Board. In an additional evidence request made in July 2024, LAMDA provided a module specification for the 30-credit New Classics Project module evidencing that musical theatre content and reading lists had been updated as per recommendations from the CAC meeting on 10 May 2023. The assessment team is content that actions are followed up, but as stated in relation to subcriterion B2.1 (paragraph 199), LAMDA would benefit from a more effective audit trail to consolidate the programme approval process.

260. The assessment team's view is that responsibility for approving new programme proposals is clearly assigned, including the involvement of external expertise, where appropriate, and though subsequent action on the recommendations was unclear in the audit trail for the MA/MFA Musical Theatre programme recommendations, they were actioned and therefore reassured the team LAMDA monitors these.

261. The team established that LAMDA does not currently offer programmes with multiple pathways and therefore did not assess the coherence of programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways. At postgraduate level, two programmes (MFA Classical Acting:

Performance and Practice and MA Musical Theatre) share two common modules, but these are not pathways within a single degree. LAMDA supplied the assessment team with additional commentary explaining that it currently offers 'only three undergraduate degrees and four postgraduate degrees, each serving very different markets, so there is no space for shared modules.'.

262. LAMDA successfully maintains the coherence of its programmes through a robust course approval process, as evidenced in the business case presented to the SMT on 14 February 2023. In particular, the business case (step one) stage of the validation procedure tests each programme, the market, and how it aligns to LAMDA's strategy. Given that LAMDA assures the coherence of all its programmes, the assessment team advises that if LAMDA decides to offer programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways in the future, it has structures in place to ensure their coherence.

263. To test whether close links are maintained between learning support services and the organisation's programme planning and approval arrangements, the assessment team scrutinised course proposals for the MA/MFA Musical Theatre and CertHE Stage and Screen programmes and three sets of CAC minutes. The assessment team held a meeting with LAMDA in which the link between learning support services and the programme planning and approval arrangements was explored. The LAMDA team articulated the strength of the developing learning support team and of the bespoke support available to LAMDA students in a meeting with the assessment team on 27 June 2024.

264. CAC meetings do not involve learning support services, but LAMDA's meeting structure provides other opportunities for a larger pool of staff to hear of curriculum developments, enabling teams to feed into the process. Minutes of the LTQC evidence a discussion of course developments led by the chair, demonstrating its importance as a forum. Given that the LTQC has a larger membership than its Course Approval Subcommittee, and that minutes show Student Services staff members were present, the assessment team considers there is some opportunity for (and evidence of) constructive dialogue relating to programme planning and approval arrangements taking place within the wider organisational structure. However, LAMDA should enhance its activity in this area to ensure that it develops its practices and to enable it to more fully meet this aspect of the criteria. It would be beneficial to be able to identify this for audit purposes both internally and externally.

265. LAMDA's library operates its own annual survey to monitor usage and students' requirements, though it appears it has only conducted two surveys since 2021, and the surveys undertaken have low response rates. However, there is evidence that the needs of students are monitored, that the library resources are enhanced on an ongoing basis, and that information is shared with students (via the students' union for example). It is evident in Section E of LAMDA's Course Proposal template that there is consideration of library resources, but there is a lack of opportunity to formally record the consideration of wider learning support services and therefore the learning support needs of students in that document.

266. The assessment team therefore concludes that some links to learning support services are evident and there is satisfactory interaction with learning support services, and the organisation's programme planning and approval arrangements. This could be strengthened

further, formalised and monitored more effectively by embedding it formally into processes or documents.

Learning and teaching

267. The LAMDA 2023-2030 Strategy, launched in November 2023, provides further insight into priority themes, key enablers and strategic goals, with a range of substrategies it plans to launch across the 2024-25 academic year to realise the ambitions it sets out by 2030. LAMDA informed the assessment team it is devising a 'Student Success Substrategy, which encompasses the areas of Learning, Teaching and Assessment, as well as initiatives to support student engagement, employability and graduate outcomes.' The assessment team welcomed this as a way of making explicit LAMDA's Learning and Teaching Strategy for the future, given that its previous Learning and Teaching Strategy expired in 2019.

268. During its visit, the assessment team explored the Learning and Teaching Strategy in more depth, specifically the expiry of the previous strategy and significant gap before the new Student Success Strategy was created. Staff at LAMDA explained that the former Learning and Teaching Strategy remained in place during the period between its printed expiry in 2019 and the introduction of its replacement (Student Success (Learning and Teaching) Substrategy 2024 to 2030).

269. It is the assessment team's view that LAMDA articulates and implements a strategic approach to learning and teaching that is consistent with its stated academic objectives, evidenced through robust procedures for design and approval of programmes. The Business Case (step one) stage of the Validation Procedures as set out in the Academic Regulations (section three) tests each programme, the market and how it aligns to LAMDA's strategy. The business case is presented to the SMT via a proforma requiring explicit reference to the proposal's alignment with LAMDA's strategic objectives. Evidence provided demonstrated that the proposal for the MA/MFA Musical Theatre programme specifically addressed LAMDA's 2021 to 2026 Strategy Map. The later proposal for the CertHE Stage and Screen explicitly references priority themes from the more recent 2023 to 2030 strategic plan.

270. LAMDA's course specifications, as well as its module specifications, demonstrate an industry-centred approach to learning and teaching which is reported as appropriate for its educational context and meeting sector benchmarks by its external examiners. The assessment team's review of samples of student work evidence vocationally orientated practice using active practitioners to form creative teams with up-to-date knowledge and skills brought directly from the industry. Assessment strategies observed in assessment briefs that the assessment team reviewed with the sample of student work demonstrate industry-centred tasks appropriate to the subject areas. The LAMDA Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2015-2019 aligns with LAMDA's practices, such as Pedagogy (section 2.2) and Assessment (Section 5), that can be observed within the module specifications, programme specifications and within the sample of student work that the assessment team reviewed. For example, the pedagogy section of the strategy emphasises a focus on experiential learning and the course specification for BA (Hons) Professional Acting outlines the learning and teaching methods utilised in the course, including experiential learning that includes scene studies, workshops, rehearsals and public performances. This will help support students in the professional working environment. Furthermore, in a meeting with the assessment team, students spoke

positively about their experiences at LAMDA, emphasising that they felt their training really was preparing them for the industry.

271. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA articulates and implements a strategic approach to learning and teaching which is consistent with its stated academic objectives.

272. To assess whether LAMDA maintains physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use, LAMDA provided the assessment team with access to the VLE, screenshots of the LAMDA World portal, met with LAMDA staff on 27 June 2024, attended a site visit on 27 January 2025, and viewed a selection of Staff Student Liaison Committee minutes.

273. Through the VLE, the assessment team accessed documentation from four modules across Levels 4 to 7. The assessment team found that the VLE serves as an accessible repository for module documentation, learning resources, feedback and grades. LAMDA also uses a document sharing portal (LAMDA World) where definitive documents, policies and procedures are stored and made accessible to students and staff. The assessment team did not have access to LAMDA World directly but viewed screenshots providing an overview of its content and use.

274. The assessment team engaged in a discussion with LAMDA staff on 27 June 2024 regarding the learning support services available to students, and was told that LAMDA has various elements of student support which includes the Student Services Manager who also acts as Admissions Manager, a Wellbeing Manager with a network of external specialists that students can access, and a Student Adviser available for more generalist assistance. In the meeting the staff told the assessment team that LAMDA plans to recruit an additional full-time Disability Adviser for the 2024-25 academic year, which would bolster the team further. The assessment team found that LAMDA operates a system of 'Learning Agreements' to support students with a variety of additional needs, health problems or disabilities. The Student Services team manages these agreements and they are shared with appropriate staff when 'permission to share' is granted. The agreement explains to staff what kind of support the student needs and adjustments can be made to facilitate an inclusive and equitable approach to teaching and learning. For further discussion of learning agreements, see criterion D.

275. The team found that LAMDA's 2023-24 Student Handbook refers to room and work etiquette with specific reference to its spaces in sections 'Room and work etiquette' and 'Taking care of our space'. It also addresses such issues as online lessons, ensuring that it clearly articulates expectations for student conduct from the outset. During the site visit to LAMDA, the assessment team also observed signage about proper, safe and respectful room usage in various spaces.

276. The assessment team accessed five sets of minutes of the Staff Student Liaison Committee held between October 2022 and March 2024. The agenda has learning resources and facilities issues as standing items providing opportunity for members to raise any concerns. Minutes suggest students raise issues, such as those relating to their safety and security, with the LAMDA leadership team. In the meeting on 25 October 2022, students raised concerns about safety and security, and LAMDA in response had recently invested in the installation of new security cameras as well as requiring swipe cards to access various parts of the building. A further meeting on 24 May 2024 confirms that security guards are now 'on site during

evenings and weekends, to deal with any fire issues and security.' Minutes of the SSLC meetings demonstrate that LAMDA is receptive to and responds to student feedback. During its visit in January 2025, the assessment team met with students who confirmed that LAMDA welcomes and is responsive to all feedback across its hierarchical structure.

277. To test whether LAMDA's physical, virtual and social learning environments promote dignity, courtesy and respect in their use, the assessment team reviewed five sets of minutes from Staff Student Liaison Committee meetings between October 2022 and March 2024, an updated LAMDA Structure chart dated 26 April 2024 detailing the Equality, Diversity, Inclusion (EDI) Committee from HR, and considered information provided regarding student complaints and appeals. EDI-related discussion and consideration is evident within LAMDA at a number of levels from course proposal, curriculum design (evident within ACMRs) and within feedback mechanisms.

278. Staff Student Liaison Committee meetings show a standing agenda item on providing an EDI update at each meeting. A number of areas are covered and evidence of consideration of many issues is clear across the sample of minutes. Positive developments are noted such as engagement with specific EDI training and other training opportunities, 'Inclusion Days', diversity events listings, establishing working groups for activities including Black History Month and establishing an LGBTQIA+ network for students and staff. In the Annual Course Monitoring Review for the BA (Hons) Professional Acting programme dated 23 November 2022, there is evidence of consideration of EDI within programme delivery and particular sessions delivered as part of this course in aspects including 'Consent, Unconscious Bias, Resilience, Inclusive Practice, Introduction to Intimacy, Intimacy and Power, Sexism and Misogyny and Disability Awareness' (section three). One external examiner's report notes as good practice LAMDA's inclusive programming of plays featuring diverse casts. In the view of the assessment team, this demonstrates LAMDA's maintenance of social environments that are safe for every student and its promotion of dignity, courtesy and respect within these environments.

279. The assessment team concluded that LAMDA maintains physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use.

280. To assess whether robust arrangements exist for ensuring that the learning opportunities provided to those of its students who may be studying at a distance from the organisation are effective, the assessment team referred to LAMDA's Self-Assessment Document, dated January 2019, which was submitted as part of its original application for DAPs. This document states that 'all of our current programmes are offered in face-to-face mode, and we do not anticipate offering any programmes by distance learning in the near future'. LAMDA's students who are involved in vocational placement activity within the various stage-related industries learn away from campus. The assessment team reviewed LAMDA's 'General Placement Principles', which outline the agreement between LAMDA, the placement provider and the student in relation to the placement, as well as a template for a 'General Work Placement Risk Assessment' and a 'Letter to Placement host template 2024'. The documents, if used, are fit for purpose because they set out the nature of the agreement and ensure that health and safety measures are in place. Furthermore, in the assessment team's meeting with students, it was confirmed that placement arrangements were made clear to students and that suitable support is in place while students undertake their placements.

281. The assessment team therefore concluded that robust arrangements exist for ensuring that the learning opportunities provided to those of its students who may be studying at a distance from the organisation are effective.

282. To determine if every student is enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development, the assessment team reviewed a sample of documentation from four modules on LAMDA's VLE, a sample of assessed student work, an anonymised example of a postgraduate student record from its student record system and details of the Marking and Feedback Policy.

283. Through the VLE, LAMDA provides students with access to grading and feedback for all assessments that enables them to develop in their studies. Students who met with the assessment team from across programmes and levels of study were positive about their experience of written feedback on their assignments shared through the VLE before the marks become visible. They also discussed how they receive valuable feedback tutorials in person and shared how they have developed personal goals for future assessment and training based on past evaluation. They also spoke about how they could work towards these goals in partnership with tutors.

284. The assessment team reviewed a sample of assessed work including work from two students at Level 7, four dissertations at Level 6 and audio-visual recordings of four performances. The assessment team found a consistent approach to assessment, marking and appropriate feedback that facilitates academic development. LAMDA has clear and concise records of study that are accessible to students and contained within the student system. These help students develop an overview of their progress. The assessment team concluded therefore that every student is enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development.

Assessment

285. To test whether LAMDA operates valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, the assessment team reviewed the Academic Regulations, Credit Framework, a sample of fifteen module specifications including four within the VLE, the Marking and Feedback Policy, a sample Course Handbook for BA Hons Professional Acting 2023-24, a sample of eight external examiner reports for the 2021-22 and 2022-23 academic years, and considered LAMDA's response to a request for further information regarding moderation.

286. Section 15 of each module specification sets out the assessment methods and details the weighting of summative elements. The module specification clearly maps the assessment methods, along with the learning and teaching methods, against module learning outcomes in section 16. The Course Handbook provides clarity around assessment across the programme including the assessment criteria used. Annex 6 of the Credit Framework sets out the formal marking and moderation procedures, and section 12 of the Academic Regulations outlines the role of the external examiner. Through examination of these documents and scrutiny of a sample of assessed student work, the assessment team confirmed the validity and appropriateness of assessment tasks, that LAMDA operates reliable assessment and that LAMDA's practices enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes.

287. The assessment team reviewed section 16 of the Academic Regulations, which sets out LAMDA's processes for the recognition of prior learning. LAMDA told the assessment team that it had received no requests from potential applicants or from existing students since it was authorised to have DAPs. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA has an appropriate policy and procedure in place for the recognition of prior learning (section 16, Academic Regulations) should it need to use it in the future.

288. Therefore, the assessment team concluded that LAMDA operates valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enables every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.

289. To inform the assessment team's view of whether staff and students engage in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made, the team sampled a 2023-24 Course Handbook (for the BA (Hons) Professional Acting programme), the Marking and Feedback Policy, and accessed four modules on the VLE.

290. The assessment team noted the consistency of assessment practices across programmes and modules, the use of the Marking and Assessment Policy, and the employment of the VLE for providing grades and feedback to students, evidencing that LAMDA clearly sets out assessment practices and operates them robustly. In the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee minutes, dated 6 December 2023, the Head of Actor Training noted that 'oral feedback is given within three weeks, and written feedback with marks is delivered after oral feedback'. This practice facilitates two layers of dialogue in feeding back to students on assessed work, enabling students to develop a comprehensive understanding of individual developmental needs, as well as a better understanding of the level of attainment within the assessment and associated grades. During the site visit in January 2025, students spoke positively about the feedback they receive from LAMDA and how the VLE benefits their learning. Assessed work sampled by the assessment team provides evidence of appropriate marking and moderation with feedback that is both constructive and rigorous. LAMDA also operates informal processes for feeding back to students, including weekly year-group meetings for every programme.

291. As such, the assessment team formed the view that staff and students engage in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made.

292. To inform the assessment team's view of whether students are provided with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice, the assessment team requested additional information on LAMDA's approach. A statement was presented that told the assessment team that 'all students receive training on good academic practice during their induction to LAMDA, which is delivered by the Quality Manager and the LAMDA librarian.' Furthermore, the Quality Manager and Librarian provide 'refreshers at the beginning of each year' alongside 'bespoke sessions' that may focus on particular assessment tasks.

293. The team considered a sample induction programme with scheduled library and IT sessions, and reviewed the guidance provided to students on referencing, plagiarism and study skills in the Student Handbook. The team found that LAMDA offers opportunities for students to develop skills in a range of areas. For example, Level 7 students writing dissertations receive

sessions in the basic principles of referencing and can also request specialist support and further resources from the librarian. The computers in the library have assistive technology for students with specific learning differences.

294. LAMDA has very low levels of academic misconduct (see paragraphs 297-298), which suggests that it has effective measures that facilitate the development of good academic practice skills. LAMDA confirmed, following the assessment team's request for additional information, that it has only identified two cases of academic misconduct requiring it to convene a disciplinary committee in the last two years. However, some external examiners have raised some issues regarding the quality of referencing in some of the assessments they scrutinised, for example one report describes referencing as 'uneven', and the examiner confirms they raised this in a previous report. LAMDA's response to this external examiner acknowledges the issue raised in this report, outlining that it had planned an additional seminar session for December the following year specifically addressing 'structure' and 'Harvard citation'. It is therefore the view of the assessment team that there is likely further work to be done in this area to ensure that the students across all LAMDA programmes improve their practice, but LAMDA has continued to evidence its endeavours to improve the support for students in this area.

295. Evidence shows LAMDA briefs students on academic misconduct at the point of induction and supports students in their practice by providing accessible referencing guides. Additionally, it informed the team of 'refresher' sessions provided at the beginning of each year which can focus on specific assessment components across modules. LAMDA has measures in place to develop students' academic practice, and the team concluded on balance that students are provided with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice.

296. To determine whether LAMDA operates processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice, the assessment team referred to Annex 9 of LAMDA's Credit Framework. This sets out the policy for academic discipline, providing examples of breaches, the processes and penalties in dealing with offences, and the role of the disciplinary committee. Annex 9 sets out the process for dealing with minor and serious offences, as well as providing detail to students on how they can appeal a decision of the disciplinary committee.

297. Given the emphasis on practical assessment across LAMDA's programmes, the assessment team found that LAMDA had little evidence available related to operational or processes related to academic misconduct. LAMDA told the assessment team that it has only identified two cases of academic misconduct requiring it to convene a disciplinary committee in the last two years. These cases remained under review during the assessment, and the assessment team noted that the low number of cases of academic misconduct identified limited LAMDA's ability to demonstrate how it operated its academic misconduct processes. In the view of the assessment team, LAMDA has in place, an appropriate policy and procedures related to issues of academic misconduct ('Annex 9: Academic Discipline', Credit Framework), that sets out examples of breaches of the regulations, how it will address academic misconduct and any potential penalties. Annex 9 of the Credit Framework also articulates the process to appeal against the decision of a disciplinary panel.

298. The assessment team is unsurprised that unacceptable academic practice levels are low given the large emphasis on practical work in conservatoire-style education. This is further amplified by LAMDA's small size as a higher education provider whereby fewer students will result in fewer potential cases. The team was unable to review any cases of unacceptable academic practice but concluded that on balance LAMDA has in place processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice.

299. To determine that processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are clearly articulated and consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process, the assessment team reviewed:

- LAMDA's Academic Regulations

- Credit Framework

- a sample of four module specifications within the VLE

- the Marking and Feedback Policy

- the 2023-24 Course Handbook for BA (Hons) Professional Acting

- a set of Exam Board minutes dated 2 September 2022

- a sample of nine external examiner reports (from 2020-21 to 2022-23)

- LAMDA's response to a request for further information regarding moderation from the assessment team.

300. The assessment team noted that Annex 6 of the Credit Framework sets out the procedure for marking and moderation and states that course handbooks will make clear the relevant marking procedures. The 2023-24 Course Handbook for BA (Hons) Professional Acting, that the assessment team sampled, provided detail of the grading process, the assessment components and the assessment criteria applied to the learning outcomes. Annex 6, section 6 of the Credit Framework explains that 'at least 80 per cent of the work required for assessment must be marked either by two Internal Examiners or by one Internal Examiner subject to moderation by a second Internal Examiner', where the work contributes to an honours degree classification. Furthermore, section 6.1 explains the process for moderating work and the proportions of work that staff should review. The regulations make explicit that where 'marking has been carried out by more than one marker, the sample of the work for moderation should be drawn from each marker'. Module specifications sampled on the VLE outline assessment methods (section 15), which include the weighting of assessment components, and the marking process, including the moderation process for the module. This range of information for staff and students as detailed in course guidance and LAMDA's regulations shows that LAMDA clearly articulated its processes for marking and moderating marks.

301. Evidence suggests that LAMDA applies its processes for marking assessments and moderating consistently because of its practices of using multiple markers, double and/or sample marking, and involving its lead practitioners and course leaders in the moderation processes, which is important when moderating assessments involving multiple tutors (in a

Creative Team, for example). The assessment team reviewed a sample of student work and associated feedback and confirmed that staff appropriately follow and apply the assessment, marking and moderation processes in use throughout its time-limited DAPs period. External examiner reports also show that they are of the view that LAMDA operates appropriate assessment processes. As noted earlier in this report, LAMDA has been further refining its processes and procedures while it has held time-limited DAPs, and in light of its new leadership. For instance, it plans to implement a moderation form (May 2024) that the assessment team anticipates will prove effective in strengthening its assessment records.

302. Section 12.3 of LAMDA's Academic Regulations sets out the responsibilities of external examiners within which there is an expectation that they will observe student work, and 'monitor and report on whether marking is undertaken rigorously and in accordance with assessment criteria, in particular by reviewing the marking of samples of student work'. The external examiner is a full member of the Board of Examiners (Academic Regulations, section 12), which has responsibility for ensuring the maintenance of appropriate academic standards at module and award level by taking decisions on the award of credit, student progression and achievement. The assessment team noted that in the Exam Board minutes dated 2 September 2022, two external examiners were present and were provided with an opportunity to comment on proceedings (sections 2.2, External Examiners' Comments), where the minutes note that they confirmed that 'practice is on a par with similar awards', and 'quality of teaching and assessment is excellent'. This evidence shows that LAMDA clearly articulates the role of its external examiners and actively uses their advice.

303. In its review of assessed student work, the assessment team found evidence of appropriate marking, moderation and feedback. LAMDA has very low levels of academic appeals and scored broadly in line with the sector average with 82.4 per cent of students answering positively to the question 'how fair has the marking and assessment been on your course?' within the published NSS results for 2024. This further indicates that LAMDA students are largely satisfied in this area. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA's processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are clearly articulated and consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process.

304. The team concluded that marking and moderation procedures are clear and robust, though, as moderation meetings are not currently recorded, the team was not able to fully scrutinise the detail of the practice. The team was assured however that LAMDA is in the process of implementing a moderation form tracking process to capture and verify the moderation processes. A sample of the proposed moderation form was provided to the assessment team and it is the team's view that this will prove effective in tracking moderation practices. The team considered this as evidence further indicating how LAMDA has used the period in which it has held time-limited DAPs to strengthen and develop its processes.

External examining

305. To test whether LAMDA makes scrupulous use of external examiners including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work, the assessment team reviewed a list of external examiners and advisers (2022-2024), a set of Exam Board minutes dated 2 September 2022, nine external examiner reports and five responses to these reports for the academic years 2020-21, 2021-22, and 2022-23.

306. LAMDA has in place external examiners for all its higher education programmes. These examiners sit on the Board of Examiners and submit annual reports. Its regulations require external examiners to scrutinise samples of assessed work and provide external oversight of assessment, marking and moderation processes. Exam Board minutes and the sample of nine external examiner reports show that external examiners have consistently engaged in appropriate scrutiny of the programmes, attend at examination boards, and that LAMDA has provided them with opportunities to give feedback and comment as part of their remit. A section of the LAMDA's external examiners' report proforma requires them to confirm the appropriateness of academic standards and their comparability with similar courses or subjects in other UK institutions. All nine reports reviewed by the assessment team confirmed that external examiners are of the view that LAMDA's standards are comparable to other UK institutions. All nine external examiner reports show that external examiners are of the view that LAMDA has fair assessment processes, conducted in line with its regulations, and that the Board of Examiners committee meeting is rigorous. The reports sampled confirm that in all cases the involvement of external examiners in the assessment process by scrutinising appropriate samples of assessed work and participating in the Board of Examiners. The assessment team therefore concluded that LAMDA makes scrupulous use of external examiners including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work.

307. To test whether LAMDA gives full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations contained in external examiners' reports and provides external examiners with a considered and timely response to their comments and recommendations, the assessment team reviewed a sample of five of LAMDA's responses to external examiner reports, and a sample of nine external examiner reports for academic years 2020-21 to 2022-23.

308. The sample of five written responses to external examiners provided the assessment team with evidence that LAMDA responds promptly to the respective external examiner reports. LAMDA's responses comment on the remarks of the external examiner, acknowledging the positive comments and any highlighted good practice with the critique, recommendations and areas for development. The responses also demonstrate that LAMDA responded to recommendations made by the external examiner, evidencing it is receptive to developing and enhancing its practices.

309. However, the team found within the sample of nine external examiner reports conflicting accounts of the extent to which LAMDA acts on external examiners' recommendations. For example, the final report (dated 30 November 2022) of the previous external examiner for the BA Acting programme stated that the examiner was not assured previous recommendations had been acted upon, specifically regarding the spread of marks across grading bands. Furthermore, the team found that an external examiner's second report for the MA Classical Acting course (for the 2021-22 academic year), reflected concern that previous comments had not been addressed by LAMDA, including recommendations for separate marking criteria for written work, provision of comments for thesis presentation and viva and re-formatting of reading lists.

310. However, the team found that the subsequent year's external examiner reports appeared to reflect that these had since been considered and resolved. For example, in the following academic year 2022-23, the new external examiner for the BA Professional Acting course reported that they considered staff have been using a wider spread of marks in their

assessment of students. Furthermore, the external examiner for the MA Classical Acting (report for the 2022-23 academic year) programme reported that they were 'delighted' that many of the previous recommendations had since been acted upon. This evidence demonstrates that, while previously not all external examiner recommendations had been fully considered and addressed, LAMDA has improved in this practice in recent years. Therefore, the team determined that this reflects LAMDA's continued enhancements in its practice and growing maturity since it was authorised time-limited DAPs in 2021.

311. The assessment team sought clarification from LAMDA regarding the process for responding to external examiner feedback. LAMDA informed the assessment team of steps it had taken 'to ensure that external examiner feedback drives meaningful change', including specific actions to strengthen the quality assurance processes which include:

    a.   The Academic Board requiring a detailed summary of external examiner feedback and actions during annual reviews.

    b.   The Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee reviewing the course leader's responses and actions to ensure alignment with institutional goals and standards.

    c.   Enhanced follow-up processes to ensure that external examiner feedback is explicitly discussed at both the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee and the Academic Board, so that unresolved recommendations from previous years are addressed in subsequent cycles.

312. Furthermore, the team heard from academic staff that changes in the course leadership structure in the period up to 2023 accounted for some anomalies in responding to external examiner feedback on some programmes and that LAMDA has since implemented a different course leadership structure, rebalancing staff workload on the programmes. The team considered that this context aligns with, and might account for, the improvements seen by the assessment team in later external examiner reports and LAMDA's response to them.

313. The assessment team concluded that, on balance, LAMDA gives full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations contained in external examiners' reports and provides external examiners with a considered and timely response to their comments and recommendations. While there have been instances where this has not always been the case, the team found that LAMDA's practice has improved over time and that changes made, as outlined above, will have a positive impact in this area.

Academic appeals and student complaints

314. To test whether LAMDA has effective procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of the academic experience, the assessment team reviewed LAMDA's Credit Framework, the Student Complaints Policy and the Student Non-Academic Misconduct (Disciplinary) Policy and Procedures.

315. LAMDA's Credit Framework (Annex 11) sets out its process for students to make an academic appeal against recommendations of the Board of Examiners. The policy sets out a student's right to appeal, the processes and stages of the procedure and the timeframes involved. In the view and experience of the assessment team, the policy appears appropriate to LAMDA's context.

316. LAMDA's Student Complaints Policy, which is informed by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's 'Good Practice Framework for Handling Complaints and Academic Appeals', sets out advice and guidance for students, the scope of the procedure, information regarding resolution of complaints, confidentiality and timescales. It outlines a three-stage procedure; stage one: informal resolution; stage two: formal resolution, through an investigation by the Head of Student and Academic Services, or their nominee within the Student and Academic Services Team; and stage three: where students can appeal the outcome of their complaint. The policy explicitly details timeframes. For example, LAMDA aims to investigate a complaint and respond in writing at stage two within 28 days and aims to resolve appeals within 21 working days when it issues a completion of procedures letter. The policy also advises students of their right to complain to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. A particular strength of LAMDA's policy is its concern for potential conflicts of interest given it is a small institution, and where appropriate, LAMDA may provide an external contact from a similar school, whom the student may wish to contact for advice and guidance and who will be fully independent from the review process.

317. The team found that LAMDA had received a low number of complaints from students. LAMDA further told the assessment team it had not received any 'appeals against decisions made by an Examination Board' in the period since DAPs was granted.

318. The assessment team received a summary of complaints for 2022-23 evidencing that in that academic year LAMDA received only four formal complaints, all of which it resolved in line with its Student Non-Academic Misconduct (Disciplinary) Policy and Procedures. This policy details LAMDA's expectations for student conduct, the formal and informal procedures for breaches of conduct, provides examples of non-academic misconduct and information on the right to appeal against a decision.

319. LAMDA shared the investigation trail for a sample of two student complaints, which showed that LAMDA managed both complaints in line with LAMDA's Student Non-Academic Misconduct (Disciplinary) Policy and Procedures, with matters brought to an appropriate conclusion. In this sample, complaint-handlers implemented LAMDA's regulations fully and consistently in each case.

320. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA has 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. Furthermore, LAMDA has evidenced that it takes appropriate action following an appeal or complaint in the examples reviewed by the assessment team, with evidence that complaints and their implications are discussed regularly in the SMT meetings and at the Academic Board.

Conclusions

321. The assessment team found that LAMDA has in place effective processes for the design and approval of programmes, and that it clearly assigns responsibility for new programme approvals. LAMDA's senior academic staff are of appropriate expertise and experience to support relevant staff to design and develop programmes. The assessment team noted that a guide to course development handbook would strengthen LAMDA's existing processes by assisting those involved in curriculum design and development.

322. The assessment team further highlighted that LAMDA has scope to strengthen the link between learning support services and its programme planning and approval processes. The team recommends that LAMDA undertakes work within this area to make more explicit how it involves learning support services in the programme planning and approval arrangements and further advises that LAMDA would benefit from a more effective audit trail to consolidate the programme approval process.

323. The assessment team found that LAMDA has a clear approach to learning and teaching, which is vocational, industry-focused and aligns with the objectives of the 2023 to 2030 LAMDA Strategy. It maintains physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use. Furthermore, it has appropriate systems to enable students to monitor their progress and further their academic development.

324. The assessment team found that LAMDA has robust assessment practices and makes scrupulous use of external examiners, including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work. The sample of external examiner reports confirms that LAMDA has improved its practices to ensure it consistently gives full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations contained in external examiner reports and provides external examiners with a considered and timely response to their comments and recommendations.

325. Furthermore, the team concludes that LAMDA has in place effective procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of the academic experience.

326. The team considered that LAMDA has undergone vast changes in the period in which it has held time-limited DAPs and has continually developed and refined its practices. While some enhancements are still being embedded, the team was assured that LAMDA has demonstrated it designs and delivers courses and qualifications that provide a high quality academic experience for all students from all backgrounds. The assessment team concludes therefore that LAMDA meets criterion B3.

Assessment of DAPs criterion C: The role of academic and professional staff

Criterion C1: The role of academic and professional staff

Advice to the OfS

327. It is the assessment team's view that LAMDA meets the requirements for criterion C1: The role of the academic and professional staff.

328. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows in summary that LAMDA has processes in place to ensure that it has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students and that all staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, are appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the levels and subjects of the qualifications being awarded.

329. Furthermore, staff maintain a professional understanding of current developments in research, scholarship and professional creative industrial practices in their subject and the assessment of students is managed and carried out in a professional, robust and consistent way.

330. This view is based on specific considerations of the evidence requirements for this criterion alongside other relevant information.

Criterion C1.1

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

Reasoning

331. To determine whether LAMDA's learning, teaching and assessment practices are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship, the assessment team reviewed opportunities available for staff development, agendas from staff development days, job descriptions of staff roles, minutes from staff meetings and met with groups of senior, academic and support staff.

332. The assessment team considered opportunities for staff development to ascertain whether LAMDA enables staff to reflect and evaluate their learning, teaching and assessment practice and also how these opportunities enable staff to enhance their practice and scholarship of conservatoire pedagogy. The assessment team found that LAMDA's in-house opportunities for professional development for staff support teaching and aims to foster the sharing of staff expertise and promote reflection on teaching as well as providing forums for the evaluation of pedagogic practice. At a meeting with senior teaching staff, the assessment team heard that some staff are preparing portfolios for professional fellowship applications in 2024-25,

providing evidence of this growth in professional evaluation activity. Several LAMDA staff already hold teaching fellowships as discussed at paragraph 341.

333. The team examined opportunities for staff to evaluate their professional practice and found that they are informed by educational scholarship relevant to specialist conservatoire higher education connected to professional practice in the creative industries. For example, agendas for staff development days, which took place for all staff (including sessional staff) in September 2023 and January 2024 respectively, demonstrated a balance of information sharing and training for staff. In the September 2023 training day, staff participated in a challenging stereotypes workshop, attended research sessions led by staff on neurodiversity and actor training, intimacy training and ensemble and group dynamics and received presentations by course leaders. Similarly, in the January training day, staff received course leaders' updates, an assessment workshop run by the Quality Manager, opportunities for staff to debrief on the Training Concern Policy, and heard from an external speaker on changing pedagogic practices and awareness raising (autism and actor training) and a staff coalition regarding inclusivity and challenges in the classroom. The assessment team found this coverage of current sector concerns impressive and that LAMDA works to develop the knowledge and understanding of its staff and apply these specifically into classroom activities. LAMDA provided the assessment team with a commentary on the decision making behind these events, which in the team's view demonstrated criticality and active engagement with the pedagogic development of discipline knowledge. The team's view is that LAMDA promotes a culture of continuous improvement that focuses on future enhancement to ensure students' academic and industry-facing pre-professional experience can develop from its informed and experienced staff team.

334. In reviewing job descriptions for teaching staff, the assessment team found that LAMDA carefully considers the balance of duties in workloads, providing time for staff to reflect and evaluate their professional and educational practices. For example, approximately 50 per cent of a lead practitioner's time consists of direct contact or engagement with students with the remaining 50 per cent comprising of (but not limited to) planning, preparation, marking, workshops, productions, summer schools, personal and curriculum development and other activity. In addition, job descriptions for management and teaching staff require them to hold HE professional fellowships. The team is confident that 'personal and curriculum development and other activity' includes time for reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship; staff that met with the assessment team corroborated this.

335. Staff at LAMDA told the assessment team that they have regular meetings that enable them to discuss pedagogy and assessment methodologies. Each fortnight, the Drama School leadership team meets to discuss key points of LAMDA's strategy. This leadership team circulates the minutes and actions arising from these meetings to departmental teams for discussion at departmental meetings that feedback any items raised to the leadership team. This creates a collaborative communication cycle for the discussion of academic matters. In its meeting with academic staff, the assessment team heard numerous examples of topics discussed, such as reflection on course delivery, session planning, and student engagement. Staff spoke positively about this two-way flow of information and the opportunities to engage with such topics at a local level. The assessment team found that these opportunities for staff to reflect on their own practices supported effective curriculum delivery and the ongoing management of courses.

336. To determine whether staff have academic and (where applicable) professional expertise, the assessment team reviewed a selection of staff CVs, job descriptions of roles, recruitment policies, considered the staffing profile as a whole and a list of qualifications held by the staff body, and met with several groups of staff members.

337. LAMDA employs a range of teaching staff who represent the various disciplines that make up the courses on offer and the assessment team reviewed the composition of this collective staff body through sampling CVs and meeting with teams at the site visit. It found that course leaders are responsible for managing the provision in the relevant course and they are supported by lead practitioners who also have management duties. In the LAMDA academic structure, lead practitioners are skills-based practitioners in Acting, Voice, Music, Movement and Inclusive Practice. As specialists in a professional practice, they have skills developed from working in external settings from education, the creative skills sector, performance or participatory arts and therefore the team found an appropriate range of professional expertise at LAMDA. The team also considered that the academic staff body as a whole is suitably experienced, skilled and focused on the vocational professional training for the creative industries that is at the heart of the commitment in LAMDA's 'Student Success (Learning and Teaching) Substrategy 2024-30' of ensuring that 'robust pedagogical infrastructures underpin and uphold the quality of...degree programmes'.

338. The assessment team considered LAMDA's academic staffing profile typical for conservatoire training providers, with a balance of full and part-time permanent staff as well as additional term-time and freelance staff. 'Working professionals' and 'professional artists' characterise the staffing profile of this additional group of teaching staff. In addition, LAMDA has a small team of industry associates that work during term-time only, sharing current industry expertise, who report to the senior management and work across several courses. The production and technical theatre arts team brings in additional industry specialists, which offers separate provision run by different visiting professionals. LAMDA states that the inclusion of these additional staff members in teaching teams is a result of assessment of the skills and expertise needed to teach content and approaches required to the students. The assessment team concluded that the visiting and term-time staff play an important role in working across courses to cement the professional skills needed by graduates in line with LAMDA's Strategic Plan and Student Success substrategy.

339. LAMDA ensures that all professional artists involved in teaching have a high standard of teaching ability and supports these staff through ongoing mentoring (see paragraph 362). The team requested additional clarification surrounding LAMDA's recruitment practices for term-time staff and found that recruitment processes demonstrate a commitment to 'attract, select and retain people with the right mix of knowledge, skills, behaviours, values and beliefs' and identifying 'the right mix of people for LAMDA' based on the needs of its provision. The assessment team was satisfied that LAMDA's recruitment processes ensure that the teaching associates employed as visiting and term-time staff involved in teaching and supporting learning have relevant professional and industry expertise and experience from recent and current work in the professional creative industries because LAMDA recruits them for specific purposes. This was further reflected in the assessment team's meeting with students who unanimously commented on the value that staff from industry bring to their own training and development as aspiring professionals.

340. At the site visit in January 2025, the team heard from staff in teaching and support roles who were on fractional contracts about their active professional engagement outside LAMDA, such as in recent acting and directing jobs. Both staff and students shared with the assessment team specific examples of such engagements. The team found this active professional expertise contributes to the knowledge of staff concerned and has a positive impact on teaching and learning at LAMDA.

341. According to the documentation supplied by LAMDA in May 2024, in the 2023-24 academic year, 68 per cent of all permanent teaching staff at LAMDA had or were working towards a teaching qualification and recognition through a higher education teaching fellowship. In addition to this, 20 per cent of the management and support staff also held a teaching qualification, though the assessment team could not identify how many management and support staff taught students from the evidence supplied. While none of the termly teaching staff had a teaching qualification, staff told the assessment team that term-time and visiting 'teaching associates' either have teaching experience on entry or are open to being mentored. In terms of academic qualifications, of the 31 permanent academic staff, six per cent had a doctoral degree as their highest qualification, with an additional 48 per cent educated to postgraduate level and 42 per cent with a bachelors' degree and three per cent listed as 'other'. Of the nine term-time only teaching staff, all held degree qualifications: 56 per cent are educated to undergraduate level and the remaining 44 per cent to postgraduate level. To maintain and further develop the teaching qualifications of its staff, LAMDA has arrangements to support staff to secure professional recognition through teaching fellowships, as discussed at paragraphs 245-8.

342. Through its review of job descriptions for specific specialised posts and its meeting with a selection of professional services support staff, the assessment team found that throughout the period in which LAMDA has held time-limited DAPs, the professional services staff team has grown and developed with increasing specialisation. At the meeting with senior staff in June 2024, the assessment team heard that due to the small size of LAMDA some roles are combined within the professional services team, such as admissions and Student Services or librarian and dyslexia assessment but found that this had a positive impact on the holistic view of the student body. For example, staff identify students requiring support from Student Services at a much earlier stage during the admissions process, and a single member of staff actions this. Further, the assessment team met recently appointed staff and heard about their work in widening participation and access; it heard about a significant shift in culture since 2023 with the implementation of a new departmental substrategy (see criterion D).

343. The assessment team concluded there is a broad yet specialised collective skillset at LAMDA relevant to the content and approaches of the degrees it offers which supports the education of its students and that all staff involved in the teaching or supporting of student learning have relevant academic and, where applicable, professional expertise.

344. In order to test whether staff have active engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge, the assessment team reviewed job descriptions of staff, staff CVs, a list of staff applying for or undertaking fellowships, minutes from Academic Board meetings as well as meeting staff and considering the opportunities available to staff at LAMDA.

345. Since 2019 LAMDA requires permanent staff at lead practitioner level and above to work towards professional higher education teaching fellowships. The team reviewed the progress

made by LAMDA since 2021 to consider the effectiveness of its professional development programme for teaching staff. According to data shared with the assessment team by LAMDA, six new fellowships enhanced the staff team in the 2020-21 academic year, prior to LAMDA obtaining time-limited DAPs. In preparation for the January 2025 site visit, LAMDA provided further information on staff qualifications, figures that reflect the shift in staffing for the 2024-25 academic year. LAMDA confirmed the number of staff with professional higher education teaching fellowships had increased to 13 consisting of seven senior fellows, five fellows and one associate fellow. Eight permanent staff have higher education teaching and management fellowships, three of the visiting staff and two of the professional services staff.

346. LAMDA was unable to provide evidence of how it had engaged explicitly with the fellowship process between 2022 and 2024, and the assessment team noted changes in staffing during that time. It sought clarification on this at a meeting with staff in June 2024 where it heard that LAMDA considers re-engaging with the process of supporting applications for fellowships as a priority in the 2024-25 academic year, as part of a more strategic staff development programme. This programme aims to enable staff to reflect on areas of their pedagogy, while also building a mentorship culture within the Drama School, which will advance teaching and learning practices across LAMDA's programmes.

347. The assessment team reviewed evidence that demonstrated that the process of preparing fellowship applications is now underway, after it had appeared to have paused in the initial years of the time-limited DAPs period. Staff told the assessment team that LAMDA planned to enrol course leaders without accreditation in the first cohort for preparing applications for fellowships the 2024-25 academic year. LAMDA intends to extend the scheme to eventually include all staff, including term-time staff by 2027. The assessment team also noted that programme-specific plans for staff CPD for 2024-25 reflect these plans.

348. The assessment team found that LAMDA's plan for teaching staff without a teaching qualification to gain fellowship within two years (for full-time staff) and four years (for part-time staff) is now progressing in line with its objective in the 2024-2030 Student Success (Learning and Teaching) substrategy such to 'provide opportunities for staff development in teaching and learning through training, external partnerships, and pedagogical collaboration with HEIs and Industry, which will advance the careers and recognition of our staff and enable professional progression'. The assessment team agree that this process is set to contribute to maintaining the pedagogical effectiveness of staff and supporting the relevance, currency and sector identity in its training because of the way it enables an increasing proportion of the staff team to reflect and evaluate their professional practice informed by subject-specific and educational scholarship. The team recognise that by implementing its plans to increase its number of fellows, LAMDA's management team is proactive in building the expertise of its staffing base due to the fact that the process of gaining fellowship requires intense reflection and evaluation of professional practice and engagement with subject-specific and educational scholarship.

349. The assessment team also reviewed a range of other opportunities for active engagement by staff, including term-time staff, in the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge. The team was informed that 'All associate and permanent teaching and relevant professional service staff are provided with a comprehensive introduction to Quality Assurance and Standards processes through a formal induction training session given by the Quality Manager within the first month of their start date'. The team considered the extent to which

LAMDA involves all staff in updating of their knowledge specifically in building an understanding of quality assurance processes and quality of academic standards and found that staff have a sufficient understanding and update this knowledge regularly, through, for example, biannual training days, which occur at the beginning of each teaching term.

350. The assessment team learned of a periodic review of the production and technical arts stage and screen department. Although the assessment team had no documentary evidence from this process, as it had occurred just prior to the site visit, LAMDA told the assessment team of the success of this review and the assessment team understand that this process exemplified how external quality assurance and internal annual monitoring had worked together in supporting staff's evaluation of their pedagogical professional practices. Additionally, the team learned that in annual review meetings there is productive and frequent discussion of external examiners' reports between staff and course leaders. This dialogue brings an element of peer feedback back to course teams and prompts regular updating of practices and approaches.

351. Furthermore, the team considered that evidence of course leaders engaging with external examiners, as discussed under criteria B2 and B3, indicates appropriate sharing of relevant scholarship and trends across performance disciplines with specialists working elsewhere in higher education. The team found that the engagement with external expertise through the external examiner role also provides opportunities for staff to actively engage with pedagogic and discipline knowledge within the sector. The assessment team therefore concluded that staff have opportunities and are actively engaged with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge.

352. To determine whether staff have understanding of and active engagement with current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline at an appropriate level, and whether this directly informs and enhances their teaching, the assessment team considered minutes from meetings of the Research Knowledge Exchange and Ethics Committee. Staff contributions in relation to new course approval, knowledge used in bids for facility expansion as well as the opportunities that staff have to continue their own development in industry. Further, the assessment team explored the impact this has on teaching practice and on the experience of the students they teach in meetings with staff during its site visit.

353. Members of the senior team lead the staff development of others to support LAMDA's focus on building ways that knowledge and understanding gained from research engagement and knowledge exchange can directly inform and enhance teaching. Minutes of the RKEC meeting held on 12 February 2024 indicate that this committee is now co-chaired by the Head of Academic Affairs and Research and the Head of Innovation to reflect the intrinsic links between research and knowledge exchange. The team noted that this change was part of a new Research and Innovation Strategy linked to the overarching 2023 to 2030 LAMDA strategy. Minutes from this meeting indicate the implementation of a biannual event celebrating staff engaged in research and knowledge exchange (LAMDA Applause) as well as other various initiatives such as workshops led by senior academic staff, partnership opportunities and the building of a staff CPD programme within the area of research to encourage further development and innovation (see paragraph 6 for further discussion). The assessment team found that these discussions and initiatives demonstrate an active engagement with current research and advanced scholarship, and that LAMDA has several initiatives and opportunities for knowledge exchange for all staff, which have a positive impact on learning and teaching practices.

354. Course approval minutes from the Learning, Teaching and Quality committee in November 2022 detail the repurposing and amalgamation of two previous awards (one a Level 4 to 5 diploma and the other a Level 6 one-year top-up degree award) into a revised BA (Hons) Technical and Theatre Arts programme. The minutes demonstrated reflection by staff and a collective evaluation of practice within the panel including the involvement of an external subject expert. This process resulted in curricula modifications to respond to changes in the industry around digital performance practices and requirements in technical support for multidisciplinary innovations in theatre-making to ensure that students completing the course have current knowledge of the industry. Separately, the assessment team observed that LAMDA's reflection on the expectations of graduates in technical and theatre arts to begin careers in production management had recently led to a successful capital funding bid to the OfS for a new suite of equipment. This successful bid and expansion of LAMDA's facilities demonstrates LAMDA staff's currency of knowledge and advanced scholarship of digital transformations within this rapidly developing field which, in anticipating the future needs of the creative industries to support the employability of its graduates, is solidly applied into the curriculum and training.

355. The assessment team further explored how staff teams encompass industry specialisation appropriate to the curricula they deliver and concluded that, in the LAMDA context, recent and current professional experience is an essential form of research and advanced scholarship for conservatoire teachers and this experience is commensurate with the level and subject of the qualifications being offered at LAMDA. Teaching staff told the assessment team that LAMDA allows and encourages them to work in industry, which they value and consider important to their ongoing knowledge and development; senior teaching staff also confirmed that LAMDA encourages staff to remain professionally active. Students articulated that staff expertise underpins classroom activities and the team found that managers ensure they put arrangements for cover in place immediately when needed.

356. The assessment team also met with contracted teaching staff and heard examples of professional work they undertake alongside short-term teaching contracts. The assessment team found that such opportunities serve to enhance students' academic and professional experience because staff can directly use this experience in the classroom with students drawing on their professional experiences, research and advanced scholarship which students reported as finding useful for their own academic and professional development.

357. In order to understand the opportunities staff have to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practices and the development opportunities they have aimed at enabling them to enhance their practice and scholarship, the assessment team reviewed LAMDA's peer observation policy and processes, records of peer observations carried out and the proforma used in such observations, as well as meeting with a range of academic staff at various levels.

358. LAMDA has an established peer observation system for observing teaching to ensure that expertise remains current and relevant in the ways it is deployed. LAMDA updated its Observation of Teaching Policy for the 2023-24 academic year and this policy applies to all staff, both permanent and term-time only. It exists 'to support all teachers across the various courses and programmes within the School.' Peer observation takes place at least annually and within the first six weeks of teaching at LAMDA for new staff. The policy encourages reflection upon what has worked well and serves to provide an opportunity for the observer

and observee to discuss new approaches and, where required, identify further development needs and plans to address these.

359. The assessment team reviewed a list and dates of observations for the 2023-24 academic year and found that, as intended the Director of Actor Training and Drama School observes the practice of the lead practitioners and course leaders, each year, and they in turn observe their own teams. Evidence shows that observations occur in line with the stated policy supported by a set blank proforma, attached at the end of the policy document. The assessment team found evidence that term-time only staff participated in this observation process. Human resources staff keep appropriate records of scheduled observations and ensure that this process also maintains appropriate confidentiality. The assessment team also found from its review of SMT meeting minutes that SMT monitors the schedule for managing the observations of teaching with members reminded of the importance of the process.

360. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA's peer observation process provides a development opportunity for teaching staff to reflect on what is working well because it places emphasis on the session and not the individual's performance and therefore requires direct reflection on approaches to learning and teaching practice. Additionally, the feedback sessions require the observee to evaluate the session from their own perspective before they receive feedback from the observer. Discussion at the learning and teaching committee or departmental meetings of peer observations allows the sharing of good practice, enabling staff to further reflect on their own practices. The assessment team found that peer observation helps to ensure 'continuity of teaching methods across the various disciplines' in line with LAMDA's aim to 'maintaining a framework of excellence'.

361. Staff told the assessment team that term-time only staff participate in peer observations, can access wider staff development and are paid to attend events and meetings. In this way they also benefit from the reflective opportunities permanent staff have and therefore the assessment team is satisfied that all academic staff have access to opportunities to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice.

362. The team found that mentoring is established practice at LAMDA and that senior staff pass on training methodologies and effective ways of teaching to new staff. LAMDA ensures that senior staff mentor newer, less experienced colleagues and received examples of associate staff new to teaching being part of the mentoring system. For example, in a meeting with senior academic staff, a course leader told the assessment team how LAMDA had inducted recent graduates as tutors and made specific arrangements for their support; they explained that the department was experienced at integrating and inducting freelance staff into staff teams. The assessment team learned that the mentoring and support offered extends to term-time professional artists whose growth and development results from reflective practice and feedback.

363. Additionally, the assessment team received examples of where individual staff members named individuals supporting their development and found that the mentoring system in place positively supports staff to reflect on and enhance their practice and scholarship. For example, LAMDA invited back four previous graduates from the MA Directing programme to begin a teaching career and they are mentored by a course leader. The team was satisfied that the type of projects as selected for staff members with limited teaching experience were appropriate because these staff members were not responsible for assessment, rather assist

the annual Shakespeare in Schools tour and/or run workshops with Cert HE students, under the supervision of the course leader. Furthermore, the team found that should these staff wish to continue building their teaching experience, they can apply for professional fellowship following the wider rollout of this scheme, as discussed in paragraphs 345 to 348).

364. In terms of opportunities to engage in reflection on assessment practices, the team reviewed samples of assessed student work and saw evidence of group marking of this work by staff teams delivering particular learning experiences on specialist modules, which exemplified another way that LAMDA inducts and mentors staff new to teaching in the assessment processes. Such initiatives enable new and less experienced staff to engage with and reflect on their learning, teaching and assessment practice as well as enabling them to enhance their practices as well as providing opportunities for more experienced staff to act as a mentor and reflect on and share their experience of their own practices.

365. In its review of reports on initiatives received at RKEC, the assessment team found that LAMDA encourages, shares and implements a range of opportunities, new ideas and initiatives for knowledge exchange and engagement with research. For example, there is an intention to expand public engagement as part of LAMDA's plan to contribute LAMDA staff research activities to a 'Global Conservatoire' network from a research environment connecting disciplinary knowledge, reflections on pedagogic activities and innovations in creative practice and it has started a number of initiatives. These include the LAMDA O(pen) N(etwork) which is an internal knowledge exchange forum with a schedule of discussions relevant to sharing understandings and practices of key current themes in actor training. Another new initiative recently started is LAMDA Applause, an initiative for creative work-sharing internally. In addition, LAMDA has plans to establish a new centre for research activity, 'The Centre for Creative, Cultural and Artistic Development', and it has a strategy to support active engagement with research and advanced scholarship relating to the disciplines in which it is delivering courses. Furthermore, the team observed how LAMDA is increasingly looking outward in planning forthcoming events aligned with its 2023 to 2030 strategy to support its vision to be 'the global beacon of excellence in performing arts education'.

366. The assessment team considered that this range of activities proactively underpins and develops LAMDA's philosophy, subject expertise and core pedagogy of ensemble learning. Such activities from the LAMDA O(pen) N(etwork), the new centre for research activity and academic conferences hosted at its premises, facilitate discussion and recognition of the qualities and values of its training practices in its unique context. These aimed to sustain and build ambition in its staff to disseminate creative practice, to extend the LAMDA's reputation in leading scholarly reflection and developing sector-leading project-work through research outputs. These activities form part of LAMDA's strategy to support a future REF submission in 2029. The assessment team found that LAMDA staff demonstrate understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their disciplines and that they construct opportunities to develop teaching directly informed by engagement with advanced knowledge and understanding.

367. The assessment team found that professional services functions connected into the operational practices at LAMDA, as shown by the presence of professional service staff at SSLC meetings, and as a result of regular review and monitoring of services received and discussed at other committees (see criterion D). A review of the range of functions and associated job descriptions, which make up professional services at LAMDA, demonstrated to

the assessment team how some members of staff, such as the widening participation and counselling teams, network outside LAMDA with partner organisations. In its meeting with professional services and support staff, the assessment team heard examples of various opportunities that these staff have to network demonstrating that professional support staff have some opportunities to reflect on and develop their professional knowledge and skills.

368. The assessment team's overall view is that LAMDA has a lively and proactive staff environment that supports knowledge sharing between teachers and practitioners and that LAMDA offers a range of internal opportunities for all staff to enhance their practice and scholarship, and this positively impacts on their teaching and learning practices.

369. The assessment team explored the opportunities for staff to gain experience of curriculum development and assessment design including through external examination, Validation Panel membership or external review of other higher education providers and reviewed evidence, such as CVs of staff members, documentation from course approval, reviews and modifications as well as meeting with a range of staff at various levels.

370. The CVs of senior staff demonstrate appropriate sector experience of curriculum development and assessment design and a range of relevant external experience. The assessment team saw evidence of networking at national level, for example, through the appointment of the current Principal and CEO of LAMDA as chair of the Learning and Teaching Forum of Conservatoires UK. During its site visit in January 2025 senior staff told the assessment team of the involvement of other staff in external validation and in external examining across the performing arts sector.

371. With respect to assessment design, the assessment team heard that staff are confident with developing assessment and making improvements and reasonable adjustments and that they know what adjustments are permitted within the specifications in place. The team found that this indicated a good understanding of assessment design. The team further heard how LAMDA's response to the impact of COVID-19 prepared staff to continue to manage assessment flexibly within module descriptors and overall course aims. Additionally, the assessment team learned that the lead practitioners support their teams where decisions and discussions on curriculum design and assessment will take place, with staff being informed and having the option to attend these as CPD opportunities.

372. The assessment team's view is, however, that more specific opportunities for staff to gain experience in curriculum development is limited by the lack of regular periodic review and delays in scheduling events since the authorisation of time-limited DAPs, and that this has somewhat restricted the opportunities for staff to engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge. Having reviewed documentation of course approvals to see which personnel attended internal events, the assessment team concluded that opportunities for developing staff below the level of course leader (and other course leaders who have not recently experienced review or approval) through participation in review and approval at a formal level, was not an explicit feature of LAMDA's staff development practice.

373. The assessment team queried this with LAMDA and was informed that it intends to change this in future and senior staff are ready to engage more junior staff in these processes. It plans opportunities for staff to come forward with proposals for new modules and new

courses working alongside senior staff and external advisers as part of the suite of periodic review events between 2026-30. In a meeting with teaching staff, the assessment team observed the readiness of staff to engage with curriculum review. Staff members spoke in detail about their regular schedule of team meetings and how they discussed the changes they would make within the validated course specifications. Senior staff with recent course development experience at LAMDA expressed interest in mentoring others involved in future reviews of LAMDA's provision.

374. Overall, the assessment team concluded that while LAMDA enables staff to engage with activities of other higher education providers, such as external examining or acting as panel members or external reviewers, it provides limited opportunity for some staff to gain experience in curriculum development and design. However, the team is assured that changes LAMDA has made to its schedule of periodic reviews will allow further opportunities in this area, together with future enhancements to encourage less experienced staff to gain further opportunities. The team was satisfied that staff that have been involved in such processes to date have the relevant and necessary experience of curriculum development and assessment design.

375. To test the extent to which staff have expertise in providing feedback on assessment, which is timely, constructive and developmental, the assessment team met with a range of students and staff, reviewed the Learning and Teaching Strategy, assessed student work and minutes from the SSLC and LTQC meetings with a primary focus on discussions around assessment, marking and feedback.

376. The team heard from students that they receive assessment criteria in advance of assessments and that afterwards tutors hold personal feedback meetings with them about grades, to give them an explanation of what grades mean and how to move forward. The team observed that some students develop reflective practices to keep their personal development on track and that they use this in discussion with tutors to further improve. Students that met with the assessment team were positive about the opportunities to raise questions about assessment and feedback and told the assessment team that the feedback process builds in opportunities for further dialogue.

377. The assessment team met with senior staff to ascertain whether the student experience of assessment aligns with its Learning and Teaching Policy (2019), which provides the underpinning principles for assessment and informs the Student Success (Learning and Teaching) substrategy (2024). The assessment team also met with a range of academic staff and discussed assessment and feedback processes and found that although some courses have distinctive practices due to curricula differences, it supports a consistent approach in how assessment is administered and feedback given across LAMDA. It encourages students to focus on feedback more than the grade by releasing qualitative feedback before marks on the VLE and then holding post-assessment academic tutorials about the feedback. As such, the assessment team was assured that staff are adept at giving feedback to students and that this enables student development.

378. The assessment team surveyed assessment practices through documentation, including the process set out in the Student Handbook and from evidence within a sample of assessed work. Staff and students told the assessment team that a verbal narrative was offered to students before releasing their marks and that this is followed up with individual face-to-face

tutorials. Students spoke positively about the feedback first processes and recognised that the narrative and feedback sessions facilitate improvement. The team was satisfied that assessment and feedback processes work, that feedback is timely and offered in different ways according to student need thus demonstrating that LAMDA gives high priority to providing developmental feedback constructively to its students.

379. The assessment team further examined LAMDA's approach to giving feedback on assessment and found that feedback was transparent, shared and understood by students. The assessment team found evidence of discussion taking place regarding assessment at both the Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee and the Learning and Teaching Forum in June 2024. An example of a recent discussion centred around assessment grading, the role of professionalism and attendance in process marking and the issue of student progress impacted by how and when grades are released. The team found that such discussions ensure an ongoing review of best practice.

380. The team also observed how LAMDA staff monitor and seek to enhance their practice in assessment, for example, one SSLC meeting discussed how staff provided assessment feedback and how students might use such feedback as part of their professional development and experience. This discussion was taken from the SSLC to Learning, Teaching Quality Committee. This evidence of regular discussion about practices in a number of forums reinforced the assessment team's confidence that the assessment approaches taken by staff align with LAMDA's new 2023-2030 strategic vision. Industry-relevant assessment methods and reflective practices lead to meaningful assessments informed by the collective knowledge and expertise of the staff team, which supports effective student learning.

381. To ascertain whether LAMDA has made a rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise required to teach all students, and appropriate staff/student ratios, the assessment team reviewed:

- LAMDA's self-evaluation document

- minutes from the November 2022 Academic Board

- minutes from senior management meetings

- staffing lists and information about the courses they teach on

- staff CVs

- the consideration of staffing as part of recent course validation

- the consideration of staffing as part of recent course review events

- job descriptions

- recruitment to various posts.

382. LAMDA's self-evaluation document identifies a staff-student ratio of 7:1. Based on HESA data and data provided by LAMDA, the assessment team found the number of academic staff employed at LAMDA had increased from 60 in 2022-23 (where 25 staff members had

permanent contacts) to approximately 79 in 2023-24 (where 46 staff members had permanent contacts). This results from a strategic decision to consolidate and increase staffing and to shift from using sessional staff to permanent staff to enhance the student learning experience and management of provision. Evidence driving these changes included minutes of the Academic Board in November 2022, which showed that issues identified in NSS results were thought to stem from the lack of permanent and/or long-term teaching staff and noted that it could resolve this through the consistent resourcing of current programmes. The team considered that this demonstrates that the leadership team assesses and responds to the needs of the student body. The assessment team noted that LAMDA has low staff-student ratios appropriate to the type of provision, which is found to positively impact on the student experience.

383. The assessment team observed how LAMDA's staff-student ratio is considered critical to its Student Success Strategy, and the team was satisfied that LAMDA regularly reviews its cohort size and staffing numbers and plans accordingly. For example, minutes of a SMT discussion of the proposed expansion of the Cert HE for 2024-25 noted that staff had budgeted for new posts.

384. The assessment team found further examples of how LAMDA assesses future staffing needs to match the skills and expertise required for new developments and noted a range of mechanisms that LAMDA uses to assess its staffing needs. For example, the assessment team reviewed a review report from 2020, which proposed that by 2023 LAMDA would establish a broader range of faculty roles and found this had happened with the employment of new staff. The assessment team reviewed eight CVs, including a number of recent appointees to LAMDA who have leadership responsibilities, and concluded that the needs of the institution matched the personnel employed, demonstrating further that staff have the required expertise to fulfil their roles and that consideration is given to this in the recruitment process.

385. The assessment team tested whether course approval processes included a consideration of staffing. Minutes of the MA/MFA Musical Theatre course approval event from May 2023 show it noted the course required and planned for specialist supervision and direction from various industry creatives. The team found that the SMT minutes had recorded changes in staffing as part of budgeting prior to this course approval event, including provision for additional teaching posts offsetting the costs of fixed term contracts. This was done with a view to staffing the new course in a way that could improve student satisfaction, thereby reassuring the assessment team that there is a rigorous consideration of staffing need.

386. The assessment team found evidence of a rigorous assessment of the skills/expertise required to teach students and appropriate staff/student ratios in course review documentation and was satisfied that staff considered increasing the scope of the staffing in line with the proposed course changes. This shows to the assessment team that LAMDA identifies emerging needs following course review in relation to the skills and requirements needed for delivery.

387. Minutes of fortnightly senior team meetings from 2022 to 2024 also show that these meetings regularly consider staffing in relation to student numbers. The terms of reference for this group include that SMT is responsible to the director 'for the management of people and resources'. Staff told the assessment team that LAMDA had expanded its number of

academic and professional services staff in line with priorities outlined in LAMDA's 2023 to 2030 Strategic Plan. Minutes of SMT meetings also provide examples of where discussion influence the design of job descriptions, for example, that of the role of Disability Coordinator, demonstrating that managers assess institutional need at the recruitment stage. As such, the assessment team was satisfied that LAMDA has mechanisms that enable the senior team to keep under regular review how many staff it needs and the skills these staff need to have, and concluded that LAMDA rigorously assesses the skills and expertise required to teach all students and its staff-student ratios.

388. To determine whether LAMDA has appropriate staff recruitment practices, the team considered HR evidence, reviewed LAMDA's recruitment policies and spoke to senior staff. The team found that LAMDA advertises posts internally and externally to ensure that staff consider a wide pool of suitable candidates. In line with a shared Recruitment Policy, LAMDA appoints term-time only and freelance staff in line with clear principles.

389. The assessment team found the explanation of LAMDA's strategy, policy and practice in appointing staff to be clear and equitable with an emphasis on safeguarding, ensuring its commitment to recruiting staff to achieve, as articulated in the recruitment policy, 'the right mix of people for LAMDA'. The team found this reflects LAMDA's ongoing evaluation of its provision and student body, and its approach to recruiting staff who align with these evolving needs. The team was satisfied by the delineation of a clear explanation of roles and responsibilities and the division of the recruitment process into four areas: pre-selection, selection, appointment and commencing employment.

390. The team also reviewed a sample job description for a member of permanent staff and a comprehensive on-boarding guide for term-time staff as part of the wider package aimed at supporting these staff members.

391. The team therefore determined that LAMDA has and clearly sets out appropriate staff recruitment practices. The team was further reassured from meetings with staff that LAMDA follows these processes in practice in recruitment rounds that have taken place during the period in which LAMDA has held time-limited DAPs.

Conclusions

392. It is the assessment team's view that LAMDA has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students and that everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning and the assessment of student work, is appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the level and subject of the qualification awarded.

393. The assessment team concluded that LAMDA has expert staff, demonstrated in the evidence of teaching content and approaches, in its observation of the facilitation of learning and formative and summative assessment for learning by staff teams.

394. The team further determined that staff are engaged with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge, show an understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline and engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice.

395. The assessment team found appropriate staff have experience of curriculum development and assessment design but identified scope for LAMDA to provide more opportunities for all staff to gain experience in this area.

396. Finally, the assessment team found that LAMDA makes rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise needed to teach all students, has appropriate staff-student ratios for its context and recruitment is underpinned by appropriate practices. As such, the assessment team concluded that LAMDA meets criterion C1.

Assessment of DAPs criterion D: Environment for supporting students

Criterion D1: Enabling student development and achievement

Advice to the OfS

397. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA meets criterion D1: Enabling student development and achievement because it meets subcriterion D1.1.

398. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows in summary that LAMDA has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

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

Criterion D1.1

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

Reasoning

400. In order to determine whether LAMDA 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 assessment team reviewed LAMDA's 2023 to 2030 strategy, the 2024 Student Success (learning and teaching) substrategy, LAMDA's Student Handbook, minutes of meetings of the Staff-Student Liaison Committee and graduate outcomes and progression data. The team also considered the work of the Access and Widening Participation team and LAMDA's admission policies and audition processes. Furthermore, the team met with students and support staff during its site visit.

401. LAMDA's recently published 2024 to 2030 Student Success (learning and teaching) substrategy encompasses the areas of learning, teaching and assessment, as well as initiatives to support student engagement, employability and graduate outcomes. Prior to the implementation of this strategy, its 2015-19 Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy remained in place until the 2024-25 academic year and therefore was in place throughout the period in which LAMDA has held time-limited DAPs. Staff told the assessment team that they continued working to the principles of the expired strategy until LAMDA established the new strategy and that LAMDA is revising the monitoring and evaluation processes from the previous strategy so it can apply them to the new one, as discussed under criterion A1. The team found that the previously expired strategy had a strong focus to address systemic issues in actor training and aimed to foster an inclusive, supportive and equitable learning environment for students.

402. The new Student Success substrategy provides LAMDA's current strategic approach to supporting student achievement with its 'commitment to training without borders…fostering a

genuinely inclusive learning environment' and 'a dedication to develop successful students and successful people, through initiatives that prioritise professional growth, educational excellence and the creation of a strong ensemble that is equipped to thrive in and beyond the academy'. The assessment team considered whether LAMDA has the capacity to apply this stated comprehensive strategic approach to student support and found this evident, for example, in the close attention to detail paid to space management, health and safety considerations, the accessibility of physical and digital resources for learning and in clear arrangements for teaching and assessment outlined in the Student Handbook.

403. Alongside the 2024 Student Success substrategy, the assessment team also reviewed the LAMDA strategy for 2023-2030 to understand how LAMDA scaffolds student development and achievement and supports the goal of excellence in its provision aiming to foster 'exceptional talent', 'ensuring inclusive access' and 'empowering students to enrich global culture'. The 2023-2030 strategy underpins a range of substrategies that LAMDA plans to launch in the 2024-25 academic year. The team found that LAMDA takes a comprehensive approach to training for the creative industries and seeks to build on its reputation in its emphasis on its historical strength in ensemble learning and teaching which pervades its student experience. Students told the assessment team that the learning experience was fully immersive in terms of intensity and focus, and that in their experience courses expose them to a wide variety of content and approaches which they felt would prepare them for the industry. The assessment team found that LAMDA's progression data indicates that most students qualifying from its courses secure professional or managerial employment or other post-study opportunities such as further study. This suggests that LAMDA has a comprehensive approach to student development and prepares students effectively for opportunities after graduating.

404. The assessment team reviewed LAMDA's admissions policy and found that changes LAMDA made have positively impacted the process. For example, it listed undergraduate and postgraduate courses on UCAS for the first time, with the acting, directing and musical theatre courses sitting within the UCAS Conservatoires scheme (a specialised admissions service by UCAS designed for students applying to performance based higher education courses). The assessment team found that these changes, and the work of the admissions team, has helped LAMDA to widen diversity within the student population, facilitating delivery of its ambitions to create an inclusive learning environment, with inclusive access. The team found that the Access and Widening Participation team, which has also recently expanded, further supported this work resulting in a new four-year Widening Participation Substrategy and a planned new Access and Participation Subcommittee of the Academic Board.

405. The assessment team further explored the admissions and audition process by reviewing course specifications, a sample audition plan and by meeting with the Access and Widening Participation team during its meeting with support staff. Staff expressed how they approach equality and access matters within the admissions and audition process. The assessment team found that the BA (Hons) Professional Acting course specification states 'students will be selected solely on the basis of talent and ability to learn, regardless of social or economic background, in order to reflect a diverse multicultural society' and noted that each applicant is subjected to an in-depth interview and audition process. Some previous graduates who are now LAMDA staff members considered the recent changes to recruitment practices positive and in line with LAMDA's 2023 to 2030 strategic plan's emphasis on equity and the development of an 'inclusive ensemble'. Members of the Access and Widening Participation

team further corroborated this and informed the assessment team that recent changes, such as the selection of more inclusive audition material choices for applicants helped to attract more diverse candidates from differing backgrounds. The assessment team considered these measures indicative of a strategic approach to enabling development and achievement for LAMDA's diverse range of students right from the point of admission and that these practices align with LAMDA's strategic goals.

406. Minutes of the Staff-Student Liaison Committee further demonstrate that LAMDA uses this forum as intended to discuss and act upon issues relating to student satisfaction and engagement with standing items including a wide range of topics such as course quality, resources and facilities, student welfare, diversity and inclusivity and placement/industry links. In the view of the team, this provides an opportunity for LAMDA to enable student development by determining what matters to students as well as providing an opportunity to evaluate changes from the student perspective. It provides an opportunity for students to raise ongoing and in-depth concerns, which the committee then reports to the Academic Board. Students confirmed in a meeting with the assessment team that LAMDA is purposeful in actioning proposals and decisions to manage and improve its systems and processes and that they find LAMDA an open community with numerous opportunities for productive staff-student dialogue through courses and forums such as the Staff-Student Liaison Committee. Due to the relatively small cohort sizes at LAMDA, students found that staff personalise their support to students, which the assessment team found enables LAMDA to take a comprehensive approach to student development and achievement for its diverse body of students. The assessment team found, and students confirmed, that the small class sizes at LAMDA allow for more personalised and individual attention and continual individual feedback also facilitating students' development.

407. The assessment team concluded that LAMDA has developed a renewed strategic and operational approach to determining and evaluating student development, and the creation of the recent institutional strategy, and Student Success Substrategy demonstrate a commitment to development and achievement for LAMDA's diverse body of students. LAMDA's plans to implement additional substrategies, if implemented, will support it to operationalise its strategic approach to student development and achievement.

408. To test whether students are advised about and inducted into their programmes of study in an effective way and that different students' choices and needs are accounted for, the assessment team reviewed LAMDA's arrangements for enrolment and induction, the Student Handbook, and met with students and support staff during its site visit.

409. Both students and support staff told the assessment team that LAMDA identifies the needs of different students in advance of their arrival at LAMDA and takes account of them prior to enrolment and induction. It creates learning agreements for relevant students prior to enrolment and these remain in place in a live document system, accessible to relevant staff throughout a student's enrolment at LAMDA. Students told the assessment team of an openness around the diversity of needs in the student body and described LAMDA as an 'open community'. Students commented on the learning agreement system and articulated the processes for obtaining these, post-enrolment, from Student Services, noting that LAMDA provides these on a short-term or longer-term basis depending on the need. Students also commented on the proactivity of the Student Services team in finding the right support for students and their emerging needs. The assessment team also heard examples of specific

cases where staff put support in place and students confirmed the growth of the counselling team. Wellbeing, dyslexia and dyspraxia and disability support is managed by appropriate support staff team members at LAMDA for students from application to course completion. Based on this, the assessment team concluded that LAMDA takes account of the needs of different students prior to and during their time at LAMDA.

410. The assessment team reviewed arrangements for LAMDA's week-long induction for students. The team noted that enrolment days precede this intensive mandatory induction programme and that all courses begin on the same day following the induction week. The induction week itself includes IT sessions, with slots reserved for introducing LAMDA document and VLE systems, financial advice and further guidance on LAMDA's Training Policy. A Quality Manager and the Academic Librarian deliver training on good academic practice during induction, which includes sharing guides and resources available to students, introducing the relevant policy from the Credit Framework and explaining the consequences of academic misconduct. This information is additionally available to students post-induction online and in the Student Handbook. Student training on academic practice continues in refresher sessions and in reminders from teaching staff in advance of relevant assessment points. The assessment team found that LAMDA has a clear system to advise and induct students into their programmes of study.

411. LAMDA's Student Handbook, issued to students as part of their induction to LAMDA, is a comprehensive and key resource for students covering all aspects of a student's induction to their journey at LAMDA and their programme of study. It covers a broad range of areas such as equality, diversity and inclusion, work and classroom etiquette, Academic Regulations, punctuality, attendance and engagement, student support including mental health and wellbeing as well as financial support, facilities and resources, including the library, information technology, and how to raise concerns and give feedback. LAMDA provides the handbook in different formats depending on the needs of the student and signposts other key policies and sources of support within the handbook, including for students with additional needs that may arise at any point throughout their enrolment. Overall, the team found this a useful resource and single source of information that students can refer to and, coupled with the week-long induction programme, provided evidence that LAMDA provides a comprehensive induction to students.

412. Overall, the assessment team found that LAMDA advises and inducts students into their programmes in an effective way, that it identifies and considers the needs of students early and throughout their learning. LAMDA's small size contributes to the success of these processes, which allow for more personalised approaches to student support.

413. To assess how the effectiveness of student and staff advisory, support and counselling services is monitored and how resource needs arising are considered, the assessment team reviewed and considered evidence including LAMDA's Student Handbook, job descriptions and roles in the student support team, NSS data and minutes from SMT and SSLC meetings. The assessment team also met with support staff and students during its visit to LAMDA.

414. The team found that various administrative and online systems offer information, advice and support to students, for example, the Student Handbook contains clear guidance signposting students to mental health and wellbeing resources. LAMDA informs students that it will inform them of any changes to key information, such as term dates on these systems. LAMDA World

allows students to easily access support policies and includes information about counselling available for a range of needs.

415. During the period in which LAMDA has held time-limited DAPs, it has grown its student support team, appointing to several new roles, thus expanding the remit and capabilities of the team. The assessment team reviewed this expansion and noted LAMDA appointed four new members of staff during this period to the roles of wellbeing manager, student engagement officer, race equality officer and lead practitioner in inclusive practice.

416. The creation and appointment of these roles aligned to LAMDA's previous 2015 to 2019 Learning, Teaching and Assessment strategy, which focused on the creation of an inclusive and supportive environment for its students while addressing systemic issues inherent in actor training. Since the implementation of the new 2024 to 2030 Student Success (Learning and Teaching) Substrategy, LAMDA has further developed and enhanced the roles in the team and their practice. For example, students can now book appointments for wellbeing support through the Wellbeing Manager who is a qualified and experienced counsellor; additional staff have undergone training for and qualified as mental health first aiders; and the strategic move to have Student Services working alongside the admissions team for the early identification of students' needs. These developments assured the assessment team that LAMDA considers the needs of its student body, and identifies and fulfils resource needs arising from this and its strategic plans.

417. The assessment team further reviewed the job descriptions for the new Lead Practitioner in Inclusive Practice and Student Engagement Officer roles. The purpose of the Lead Practitioner in Inclusive Practice role is to act as 'a focus for the development of progressive practice in the School' which pertains to and contributes to the delivery of LAMDA's access and inclusion agenda. The Student Engagement Officer's main role is to work closely with students, to further build the feedback mechanisms available at LAMDA through supporting students' engagement with student-facing policies and procedures, maintaining appropriate mechanisms for securing and responding to feedback, and overseeing the engagement from students on their academic experience. The team also considers that the new post in student engagement will address the initial concerns of the assessment team that LAMDA surveys student opinion only in a limited way beyond the NSS, which only gathers the opinions of final year undergraduates.

418. The assessment team found that the effectiveness of these enhancements to the Student Services team have been reflected in increased student satisfaction metrics and through enhanced engagement with the team by students. This was not only demonstrated through increased satisfaction in the NSS results when comparing the 2022 data set with the 2023 data set, but also through the positive feedback given by students to staff at LAMDA and to the assessment team during its meeting with students. NSS data, and LAMDA's thorough analysis of this, showed an increased satisfaction in the theme of student voice from 2022 to 2023 supporting the assessment team's view that LAMDA has made significant progress in this area. The assessment team recognises the scope to formalise the mechanisms for student voice and surveying student opinions, but found that the student support team has made positive and effective changes during the period in which LAMDA has held time-limited DAPs. For example, the team saw evidence of the Student Adviser working closely with the Student Presidents to assist them in implementing their plans.

419. The assessment team found that previously, the oversight of Student Services took the form of an annual report to the Academic Board but that this process has changed during the period in which LAMDA has held time-limited DAPs. The monitoring of Student Services is now undertaken continuously as part of a more embedded process, leading to more timely discussions of matters arising. From its review of minutes of the weekly SMT meetings, the assessment team found that it regularly discusses Student Services and matters relating to student experience. For example, a set of minutes from April 2024 show a discussion regarding the structure of a students' union that would best serve students at LAMDA. This involved information gathering from the student presidential team and exploring restructuring options. Additionally, SMT weekly meetings have a standing agenda item on matters such as EDI and admissions, and agendas have cyclical strategic focus discussed each week, often pertaining to Student Services, budgetary considerations or strategic tracking and evaluation. These strategic meetings enable the leadership team to evaluate data, feedback, and reports, and to make operational decisions on service enhancements of student support services aligned with LAMDA's strategic goals and to then report these to the Academic Board as part of the Principal's update. The assessment team consider this revised approach has led to increased monitoring and consideration of Student Services.

420. The SSLC, chaired by a Student President and attended by the Student Adviser, staff members at various levels and student representatives from across LAMDA, provides a forum for students to provide feedback on a range of issues, including those pertaining to Student Services. Staff in Student Services attend SSLC meetings, which allows for students to directly feedback on Student Services provision. The assessment team found that this mechanism for obtaining feedback feeds into the evaluation and enhancement of Student Services, and that SSLC reports on issues arising at SMT meetings, at the Academic Board and relevant working groups as appropriate.

421. The assessment team concluded therefore that SMT meetings and other mechanisms monitor the effectiveness of Student Services in an ongoing and integrated approach, and that the forums provide a platform for ongoing review and discussion of Student Services' performance, ensuring that staff address any emerging issues or opportunities for improvement in a timely manner. Further, LAMDA informed the assessment team it is currently reviewing its reporting processes for Student Services and plans to formalise and reintroduce an annual summary report for the Academic Board in addition to the enhanced mechanisms described above. The assessment team considered that this will provide an additional layer of oversight if implemented, thus enhancing the monitoring and consideration of Student Services even further.

422. During its site visit, the assessment team met with members of staff supporting students as counsellors and learned how the referral process works for students. The assessment team found that the Student Handbook outlines this referral process clearly and states that LAMDA operates an integrated model for student welfare and safeguarding support. Students and staff can make referrals to the Student Wellbeing Officer or the Admissions and Student Services Manager, which in turn may lead to onward referrals. For example, a referral to counselling services or study skills support services, the creation of a learning agreement or a referral to other relevant policies and procedures, such as the Fitness to Train policy. In each instance, staff hold a welfare case meeting between relevant parties or, where deemed necessary, may take the matter directly to the Principal and CEO. The assessment team

found the systems in place to be reassuring and noted that the relatively small size of LAMDA further aids pastoral support for students.

423. The assessment team also heard multiple examples from students regarding student experiences of how communication between teaching staff and support staff had aided their access to additional support. After hearing the perspectives of both staff and students, the assessment team found that LAMDA supports vulnerable students, those with additional needs or disabilities and those experiencing temporary difficulties with their personal learning experience. It predominantly achieves this through the creation and maintenance of learning agreements, which the Student Services team manages. From these discussions, the assessment team was satisfied that LAMDA integrates the various ways that students can seek a wide range of support.

424. The assessment team noted that typically staff identify the needs of students at the point of application or admission if students disclose a disability or additional need, but staff can also draw up learning agreements at any point during a student's journey should the need arise and they are a result of collaboration between the Student Services team and the students themselves. Staff use shared document systems to log student learning agreements and, when students give permission, share access to live documents with teaching and support staff. This support system enables staff to adjust, review, update and close these agreements as required. This system is designed to give holistic support to the student ensuring that staff know of the adjustments that students need. Further individualised support is offered through the Training Concern Policy, which is discussed in paragraphs 428 and 429 below.

425. The assessment team therefore considered that the effectiveness of student and staff advisory, support and counselling services is monitored by LAMDA and that any resource needs arising are considered.

426. To test whether LAMDA's administrative support systems enable it to monitor student progression and performance accurately, and whether these systems provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs, the assessment team reviewed evidence that includes:

- LAMDA's Training Concern Policy

- use of the VLE and student records system

- minutes from various committee meetings

- how LAMDA considers its student outcomes data.

427. The assessment team also met with staff at various levels to discuss how students are monitored.

428. During the team's meeting with LAMDA's senior management and support staff the team heard examples of how they monitor students' needs and how they monitor the systems supporting students' needs. The Training Concern Policy is a key underpinning policy for the monitoring of students, in which relevant staff serve notice to students that LAMDA has concerns about a student's engagement. This policy serves as a route to positive, remedial and supportive action, for example identifying individual students' needs leading to the

relevant support. Freelance term-time staff can use this process in the same way as permanent staff.

429. LAMDA issues a training concern notice when a student displays a pattern of behaviour in one or more of the following categories: attendance/punctuality, behaviour/professionalism, welfare/pastoral or development/progression. The assessment team found that this policy, which applies across LAMDA's provision, leads to all academic and support staff monitoring various aspects of student behaviour, progression or wellbeing resulting in the concerned member of staff completing a training concern form where they have concerns. The wellbeing team receive and process this form and refer it to the appropriate course leader who will subsequently meet with the student on an individual basis and produce an action plan for that individual student's needs. Although this is considered an informal step, staff record meeting notes and send them to the wellbeing team enabling it to monitor progress towards the agreed actions. The assessment team considered this automatic sharing of information an effective way of ensuring relevant staff members can identify students of concern so that staff can monitor further issues. The Student Services team monitors actions, and if there is no progress towards them, the course leader will hold a second meeting. Where needed, a representative from Student Services may also attend this second meeting.

430. In exceptional cases, the staff can trigger the Fitness to Train policy. This has a formal stage and subsequent stage where staff consider a student's further support needs and offered these to the student. The assessment team consider this two-tier system (Training Concern and Fitness to Train) supportive, providing a clear escalation of support and concerns before a student is potentially withdrawn from a course or subject to disciplinary action. The team notes that responsibility for monitoring this system sits centrally with the Student Services team, but the enactment of the policy is a joint responsibility of both staff and students, creating a professional, cohesive and collaborative approach that upholds and builds upon LAMDA's vocational focus, effectively enhancing student commitment.

431. The assessment team reviewed evidence of this policy's operation and the monitoring of its effectiveness and observed how it is regularly reviewed with minutes of the Learning, Teaching and Quality committee showing staff had updated this policy and would circulate it for comment among staff before sending a final version to the Academic Board for approval. Minutes also indicate plans to have a termly meeting to discuss and monitor how the training concern process is working. Minutes of the August 2023 Academic Board indicated discussions about this policy at a previous Academic Board meeting and featured discussions regarding further amendments to the policy. This satisfied the assessment team that LAMDA regularly monitors and reviews the effectiveness of support systems.

432. With respect to student support systems themselves, the assessment team discussed in its meeting with staff the referral process for issues relating to student progress and attendance, the systems staff use for evaluation of this and how they carry out these in practice. All staff, including freelance and term-time only staff, actively maintain a link between the referral system described above, and the maintenance of registers of attendance and academic records of student performance. Electronic registers are taken for every class using a timetabling system, which enables teaching staff and support staff to monitor student attendance and punctuality. The register also enables other staff, such as those in the student support teams, to track and monitor the attendance and punctuality of students, and flag concerns where necessary using the Training Concerns Policy outlined above.

433. Staff record module and assessment marks and grades in the VLE, which provides students with access to a dashboard to monitor their grades, feedback and progress towards their qualification. The student records system is a repository for module results and award information and provides data used in examination boards. Staff have access to these systems to track student performance and can flag causes for concern using the Training Concern and Fitness to Train policies accordingly. As described, these systems of student support result in the notification of relevant parties so that staff can offer a system of holistic student support where needed.

434. In its meeting with students, the assessment team tested students' awareness and use of some of these systems, and students spoke positively about easily accessing assessment feedback before receiving their access grades and spoke highly of the individualised support from staff offered when students wished to discuss their feedback and grades. The assessment team found that staff monitor student progress and performance, that oversight is given by the student support teams and course leaders where they have concerns. Appropriate administrative systems enable staff to monitor student progress and performance and provide accurate information. Students and staff that the assessment team spoke to verified this as do minutes of various committees, including SSLC meetings, SMT meetings and the Academic Board.

435. As discussed throughout criterion A1 and B2, annual course reviews provide the reporting mechanism for LAMDA to review and monitor the attainment and continuation rates of its courses, and the subsequent academic governance procedures. However, as noted in criterion A1, it was not clear through the evidence reviewed how LAMDA records subsequent actions taken as a result of annual course reviews, emphasising the need for LAMDA to strengthen its practice in this area. Minutes of the Academic Board meeting in July 2023 reflect discussion of the new OfS student outcomes indicators, where it noted that completion rates were high when compared to other similar providers, while acknowledging that the other metrics did not yet have enough data to draw comparisons. The team reviewed the latest OfS student outcomes data dashboard, which shows that LAMDA has student outcome data above threshold for these indicators.[17] However, the assessment team was unable to find further evidence, beyond the July 2023 Academic Board minutes, of how LAMDA reviews and analyses the OfS data for student outcomes against its own performance. The assessment team recommends that LAMDA considers further how it uses this data to evaluate its provision. The team noted that LAMDA's 2025 to 29 access and participation plan contains a strategic objective to boost progression rates into further training or employment for underrepresented groups and sets out a range of strategies to achieve this, suggesting further that LAMDA may wish to monitor these metrics.

436. To determine if the organisation provides opportunities for all students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression relating to their course of study and future employability, the assessment team reviewed a range of evidence including information provided to students in the Student Handbook, Library and Learning Resources Policy and careers advice given to students.

437. The assessment team found that from induction LAMDA gives student information regarding the various support mechanisms available. The comprehensive Student Handbook provides

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[17] See Student outcomes: Data dashboard - Office for Students.

information to this end, for example, the study skills sessions that are available through the librarian where a student may need to complete referencing or postgraduate research. LAMDA provides further information regarding the Harvard referencing system and students who are writing dissertations receive specific sessions on the principles of referencing and plagiarism. In addition, LAMDA World provides further information regarding study skills. Students also receive advice on copyright and fair dealing through the Library and Learning Resources Policy. The assessment team found that the signposting of this information also features in each of the course handbooks and, in its meeting with students, found that students knew where to find additional support.

438. Due to the vocational and practical nature of its provision, LAMDA has a limited number of written assessments for most of its courses. The assessment team noted that the recent revalidation of the BA (Hons) Production and Technical Arts Stage and Screen programme led to changes in assessment methods to include more written work. The team learned that these changes were made to help the students develop their writing skills, research and critical thinking and found this a positive step, reflective of the type of employment that these students may wish to enter upon graduation. This demonstrates LAMDA's awareness of the changing skills and requirements of the industry and the need to reflect these in the skills developed through its programmes.

439. Targeted and individualised skills development also exists for students with specific needs, supported by a system of 'Learning Agreements' which identifies those requiring extra help of various kinds. The assessment team learned from its meeting with senior staff that the librarian holds a dual role to provide support for students with dyslexia and dyspraxia, as well as leading on the provision of appropriate physical and digital resourcing. LAMDA reported that this enables an effective route for advising students who have needed help with reading, viewing and research. Since the assessment team's visit, the team was informed LAMDA has sought to employ a designated Disability Coordinator for the 2024-2025 academic year to provide an additional level of support to students with additional needs. The assessment team was assured by LAMDA's assessment of the needs of its student cohort and found LAMDA responds appropriately to these needs, for example, by reviewing the capacity and provision of the Student Services team as discussed above in paragraphs 415 and 416.

440. The assessment team found that students develop relevant skills in oral, verbal and physical presentation and communication from working with professional actors and directors as part of their studies. The team found that LAMDA had recently recruited an additional industry associate staff member and heard that these role holders liaise with casting directors and agents, and arrange for industry speakers to deliver developmental sessions and workshops to students on a range of specialist topics, such as self-employment and seeking representation.

441. The assessment team noted that the industrial liaison programme, which is non-assessed, allows students to develop skills essential to their employment prospects, such as the preparation of digital showreels and creation of online profiles. These sessions are embedded into the second and final year curriculum for its practical courses. However, students from across LAMDA can engage with these sessions. Students spoke positively about these sessions and noted that 'there is always something going on at LAMDA' and that they felt supported by such initiatives. The assessment team was satisfied that student awareness of

the industry was enhanced by the industrial liaison programme of events that aim to target students' personal and professional development.

442. The team reviewed a summary of the careers advice and support offered at LAMDA and heard from senior staff regarding career support opportunities. The team found that alongside access to a generalist careers adviser, all programmes at LAMDA contain professional preparation workshops and course leaders provide additional course and professional studies queries. The team also heard from staff and students how, with prior permission, students can undertake career defining roles if offered during their time at LAMDA. The assessment team concluded that LAMDA firmly places emphasis on future employment and career management skills in its curricula which is industry-led and industry-facing and prepares students for their future careers in the performing arts and associated employment.

443. The assessment team further reviewed the employability focus within the curricula and observed that work placements provide students opportunities to gain experience. LAMDA does not assess students while on placement, instead the student evaluates and reflects on their experiences while on placement and staff subsequently assess this reflection on the placement. The assessment team found that placements for students on the BA (Hons) Production and Technical Arts: Stage and Screen are integrated into their course and this opportunity enables students to receive professional tutoring within arts venues and allows them networking opportunities for their future. For the MA Directing programme, students perform in professional venues in the form of a showcase 'allowing the students the chance to venture into the industry and profession under guidance'. From its sampling of assessed work, the assessment team could see clearly that the curriculum prepares students through the training provided and that LAMDA has a clear strategy for offering industry experience.

444. The assessment team concluded that LAMDA provides opportunities for students to develop essential skills that enable their practical, personal and professional development. The team found that students value these opportunities, preparing them for careers in the performing arts and adjacent industries. The team noted this is further evidenced by LAMDA's student outcomes and progression data, as discussed under criterion B3, which shows, in summary, that students qualifying from LAMDA's courses can secure professional or managerial employment or other post-study opportunities such as further study or training.

445. To test whether LAMDA provides opportunities for all students to learn how 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 assessment team reviewed evidence which included:

- minutes from SSLC meetings

- LAMDA's library and learning resources strategy

- NSS data

- the VLE and staff and student use of this

- the student induction programme and Student Handbook

- the content of workshops held for staff and students.

446. The assessment team learned that LAMDA ensures the safe and effective use of specialist facilities, such as the new digital learning suites for virtual production and motion capture work. Further to opportunities provided within the subject discipline curricula and students' participation in creative and technical training, and engagement in industry-facing professional contexts, LAMDA provides opportunities for students to develop their skillset in ways that underpin their core learning experience. The team noted both the diversity and breadth of additional opportunities, as outlined above, and the clear communication of such opportunities are recorded in SSLC minutes. For example, the introduction to the new facilities for screen and audio work into the BA (Hons) Professional Acting degree, which was further reported on in a meeting with academic staff during the team's visit to LAMDA.

447. The assessment team reviewed the Library and Learning Resources strategy and an evaluation of a recent student survey regarding library services and resources. From this, the team ascertained that the suite of digital resources is growing, and that the librarian actively promotes the use of such resources. The library notifies students about the purchase of new library resources, and this occurs through feedback to cohorts from the student representatives attending the SSLC meetings, and through the agreed actions included in the minutes of these meetings, which take place no fewer than three times per academic year.

448. LAMDA also offers specialist skills training in using digital resources available online through the LAMDA library and refresher sessions on using these resources for assessments, such as dissertations and thesis projects, also build in awareness of appropriate use to avoid academic misconduct. A 2024 survey resulted in findings for improving the use of the library. However, the assessment team noted that the resulting report comments on the low response rate and the team was unable to establish progress towards the actions from this report at the time of its assessment. This is because library staff did not attend a meeting with the assessment team during its site visit. Nonetheless, the team was satisfied that the library and its staff provide opportunities for students to make effective use of the resources available.

449. The assessment team found that LAMDA has a record of high scores for learning resources in NSS results, for example, achieving a positivity measure of 92.8 per cent in 2023 and 86.8 per cent in 2024 (noting that the response rate in 2024 was approximately five per cent higher than in 2023). Furthermore, the assessment team reviewed discussions about physical space in the Staff Student Liaison Committee minutes and found good use of space for the delivery of the courses on the LAMDA campus, with efforts made to also make use of external spaces where possible to support the industry-led provision and provide real-world learning experiences, allowing students access to a wide range of specialist facilities and environments that support their development of knowledge, skills and understanding.

450. The assessment team spoke to staff and students regarding the rollout of the new VLE system that took place in the 2023-24 academic year. Sampling by the team evidenced student participation in the online training offered through the system. The team witnessed students and staff signing up individually for training within the system, through the log-in provided by LAMDA, and could see that the additional help function for further queries is just one feature that is accessible as part of the package. The Learning, Teaching and Quality committee has carefully monitored the uptake and engagement of the VLE as part of its Learning and teaching enhancement agenda and that it offers top-up student training following the introduction of the system at induction. Furthermore, both staff and students spoke positively about the introduction of the system for a range of needs. The assessment

team found that the VLE is a positive addition to LAMDA's resources, and that students make effective use of this online resource through the support, induction resources and training offered.

451. Given the practical nature of courses at LAMDA, health and safety features prominently in the student induction package and in the Student Handbook. This comprehensive and clear information covers specific directives such as appropriate clothing to wear, etiquette when using performance spaces and rules around footwear and jewellery. LAMDA provides comprehensive equipment lists that students must comply with and, should they not, the Student Handbook indicates staff might remove from class to change into appropriate attire and report them to the Head of Actor Training. The handbook also signposts relevant policies and legislation relating to health and safety. The campus itself is self-contained and LAMDA has a dedicated customer service desk that deals with building maintenance, housekeeping and security. Students told the assessment team that staff and students strictly adhere to these rules and procedures, that students understand and comply with them and that students felt that they prepared them for the real-world experiences facing them.

452. Furthermore, the assessment team found that student safety in relation to one another is also considered. A 2023 external examiner report comments on the movement in Drama School education to a more egalitarian environment in student voice and increasing discourse surrounding consent and intimacy in performance, as well as working one-to-one with students. LAMDA responded to this in subsequent ACMRs, and the assessment team noted the range of awareness training for students and staff in this area. For example, the ACMR for the MA Classical Acting for the Professional Theatre programme outlined that the curriculum embeds topics covering unconscious bias, inclusive teaching practice and intimacy sessions with cross-course sessions run at lunchtime and during the evenings for all students.

453. In addition, the MFA Professional Acting ACMR outlines that teaching staff had training days covering a range of topics, including inclusive teaching practice and intimacy training which were facilitated by the EDI officer. The assessment team consider that LAMDA has addressed the comments in the external examiner's report, that it has prioritised awareness training in these areas in the time it has held time-limited DAPs (given the intrinsic links to its strategy both past and present) and that this demonstrates its commitment to providing students opportunities to make safe and effective use of learning resources and creating safe environments.

454. In relation to the effective and safe use of specialist equipment and facilities, the assessment team found that the curricula for courses have embedded module learning outcomes that teach students how to use such equipment clearly stated in the course handbooks for each programme. For example, in the Course Handbook for the BA (Hons) Professional Acting programme, the module Screen and Audio Three has a learning outcome stating that upon completion of the module 'a student will use technical equipment effectively in order to promote one's professional development'. This handbook further outlines safe use of the body when action training, for example, and effective use of voice when ensemble singing which is also embedded in the curriculum and at the heart of actor training. Furthermore, LAMDA has a written and collective expectation that all students are aware of the health and safety of others while undertaking activities as part of their course and, in its meeting with them, students demonstrated this collective understanding to the assessment team. The

assessment team concluded that LAMDA provides opportunities and expectations for the safe use of resources, equipment and space and that this is embedded in LAMDA's practices and in the discipline of its students.

455. To determine if LAMDA's approach is guided by a commitment to fostering an inclusive and equitable environment for all students and staff, the assessment team reviewed the Student Handbook, LAMDA's equity, diversity, inclusion strategic framework and its anti-racism plan. These documents are available to all members of the LAMDA community through LAMDA World and demonstrate how LAMDA define and champion inclusivity and actively promote this culture as part of their strategic mission and in the ethos of everything it does.

456. The assessment team noted, in particular, that the current 2023 to 2030 Strategic Plan promotes LAMDA's commitment to 'training without borders' in ways responsive to 'the complex mosaic of cultures, heritages, sexualities, and backgrounds represented' by students, staff, and partners, whose 'collective learning is enriched by the distinctive blend of past experiences and present realities' in which 'every individual is viewed as a valuable contributor' to growth. The assessment team tested these ambitions in its review of documentation and in discussion with staff and students during its onsite visit. In their meetings with the assessment team, students reported a strong sense of community and that LAMDA fosters an environment in which it wants students to express their voice.

457. The LAMDA Student Handbook underlines LAMDA's expectation that it is the responsibility of all members of the LAMDA's community to champion inclusivity. The 'Inclusion and Diversity Calendar' published internally at LAMDA demonstrates a strategic collective approach, which evidences LAMDA's approach to harnessing the range of perspectives, experiences, talent, identities and backgrounds within its community to build a distinctive and supportive learning culture, reflective of the world of the performing arts industry. The assessment team reviewed minutes of the SSLC that demonstrates that this committee takes the lead in the co-organisation of awareness-raising events with the students' union, for example, the mental health awareness events that took place in spring 2024. As previously noted, students remarked that 'there is always something going on at LAMDA' and spoke positively about such initiatives which assured the assessment team that LAMDA's approach, and its ethos, is guided by a clear commitment to equity, equality, diversity and inclusion.

458. Following its review of the evidence, the assessment team concluded that LAMDA's approach to the enabling of student development and achievement is guided by a commitment to equity, and that LAMDA's regard for the importance of building social equity is ingrained in its expanding agenda of activities targeted at building this commitment further.

Conclusions

459. It is the assessment team's view that LAMDA supports and monitors student development effectively and that it evaluates the effectiveness of its systems. The assessment team found that LAMDA's operational arrangements support the successful delivery of its provision.

460. The assessment team concluded that LAMDA designs policies and strategies to enable appropriate planning and monitoring of arrangements and resources in ways that support LAMDA's strong teaching and learning infrastructure and consequently maximise students' chances of obtaining the qualification they are seeking.

461. The assessment team further concluded that LAMDA is well organised in its planning and delivery of the provision, pays close attention to operational details (including space management, health and safety, accessibility of physical and digital resources for learning) and has clear arrangements for teaching and assessment.

462. The assessment team formed the overall view that LAMDA has sufficient resources in place to monitor and evaluate the arrangements it has established to support students in developing their potential and achieving their academic, personal, and professional goals. However, the assessment team recommends that LAMDA strengthen its review of its data, for example on student continuation, completion and progression, to inform the further development of its support for students.

463. The team concluded that LAMDA demonstrates that it enables students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential with the support of its teaching staff and its student support services. LAMDA has policies and practices in place that support participation for all students and that evidence its collective commitment to equity, equality and inclusivity.

464. In summary, the assessment team found that LAMDA has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential and concluded that LAMDA meets criterion D1.

Assessment of DAPs criterion E: Evaluation of performance

Criterion E1: Evaluation of performance

Advice to the OfS

465. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA meets the requirements for criterion E1: Evaluation of performance.

466. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows in summary that LAMDA critically reviews its own performance through internal and external monitoring and review and has appropriate and robust mechanisms in place for disseminating good practice.

467. Furthermore, LAMDA ensures that actions arising from self-evaluation, scrutiny and monitoring are timely and effectively discharged. It can identify weaknesses and limitations of its own activities and can take timely and effective remedial action when required.

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

Criterion E1

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

Advice to the OfS

469. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA meets criterion E1 because it takes effective action to assess its own performance. LAMDA identifies weaknesses and strengths and responds to these to develop further.

470. The assessment team's view is based on its review of evidence, which shows that LAMDA has met the evidence requirements for E1.

Reasoning

471. To assess whether critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of LAMDA's higher education provision and that action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review, the assessment team reviewed a range of evidence including:

- LAMDA Academic Regulations

- external examiner reports

- completed ACMRs

- LAMDA governance review 2022

- report on the review of the Drama School

- Quinquennial Review 2025: BA (Hons) PTASS

- CAC minutes

- SSLC meeting minutes

- Award Board minutes.

472. The team found that LAMDA's self-assessment states that its 'strategic engagement with external organisations, student feedback, and ongoing self-assessment reviews' demonstrates its continued 'self-critical and analytical approach'. This stated commitment to critical self-assessment is reflected in LAMDA's 2023 to 2030 strategy document, which sets a strategic goal of achieving an average score of at least 95 per cent in the NSS, achievement of which requires LAMDA to critically reflect on student feedback. LAMDA's approach to critical self-assessment is also detailed in its Academic Regulations which set out procedures for various course monitoring review procedures, quality enhancement of courses and the consideration of external examiner feedback. The Academic Regulations set out that the overall purpose of self-assessment is to evaluate the quality and standards of provision, identify and address areas of concern and highlight areas of good practice.

473. The assessment team found evidence that demonstrate multiple examples of LAMDA assessing its own performance including through self-initiated external and internal audits. For example, as discussed under subcriterion A1.1, in 2022 LAMDA commissioned an external governance effectiveness review, the purpose of which was to reflect on how 'the Board and its Committees could become more effective in light of past and future challenges facing LAMDA'. The review's subsequent report made several recommendations for changes to LAMDA's approach to governance and the assessment team found that several of the recommendations had already been implemented or were in the process of being implemented at the time of the DAPs assessment. One such recommendation related to ensuring greater clarity on the business and responsibilities of the Education Committee in relation to the Academic Board. In 2024, LAMDA ultimately took the decision to disband the Education Committee to remove duplication of effort and function between the committee and the Academic Board. The assessment team considered this as sound evidence of how LAMDA takes action in response to matters raised through external reviews to address an area of concern and improve arrangements. As set out under subcriterion A1.1, the team considered that disbandment of the Education Committee, and the consolidation of the committee's responsibilities within the Academic Board, has improved the functioning of academic governance.

474. As discussed under criterion A1.1, the assessment team reviewed the details of an external review of LAMDA and its technical training, commissioned in August 2020 by the then Director of LAMDA. The review panel consisted of external industry and academic experts and focused on areas related to the curriculum, the recruitment and development of faculty and the student journey. As part of the review process, panel members conducted interviews with members of the SMT as well as LAMDA staff and students. The review report culminated in several recommendations for change including the 'overhaul of structure, timetable,

policies and curriculum' and the 'partnering with other organisations including industry champions'. The assessment team saw evidence of some of these recommendations being implemented, specifically changes to the governance structure that have already been discussed in this report. LAMDA's commitment to partnership working, which is also discussed under criterion A1.3, became a core strand of its 2023 to 2030 strategy. Therefore, the team considered this further demonstrated that action is taken in response to matters raised through external monitoring and review.

475. In addition, the assessment team also saw how critical self-assessment is embedded in procedures related to the development and review of its higher education provision. This was evident in CAC minutes related to the approval of three new awards; BA (Hons) Production and Technical Arts, MA/MFA Musical Theatre and MFA Classical Acting: Performance and Practice, as previously discussed under criterion B2. The minutes showed that course approval committees often include an external panel member and that external examiners are invited to submit written reports on course development proposals. These external examiner reports, which often include recommendations for changes to proposals, are discussed and considered by the course approval committee. The CAC minutes for the BA (Hons) Production and Technical Arts note that the external examiner had contributed to the course development at an earlier stage of the process, which was evidenced through a report by the external examiner. This report confirmed that external examiners suggestions for change, which included placing more emphasis on collaborative work between students and on environmental sustainability, had been incorporated into the programme documentation. The team considered that this also demonstrated evidence of how ideas and expertise from outside the organisation are drawn into its arrangements for programme design and approval.

476. LAMDA's Annual Course Monitoring (ACMR) process is one way in which it applies regular critical self-assessment of its higher education provision. As discussed under criterion B2, ACMR reports capture course data related to cohort profile, NSS results and student outcomes. The assessment team found that they also provide a narrative on areas of good practice and matters of concern and that several reports included clear examples of actions taken in response to matters raised. For example, an ACMR report for BA (Hons) Professional Acting sets out that to ensure the dissemination of 'salient information to the wider student body' the programme team had instituted regular meetings with student representatives. Similarly, the ACMR reports for MA Directing and MA Classical Acting discusses improvements made to the marking process in response to concerns raised by the external examiner. Actions taken included the delivery of a marking workshop to review approaches to marking and the application of separate grades for theses and vivas to improve transparency in the marking process.

477. To consider the role of students in LAMDA's approach to critical self-assessment, the team referred to its Academic Regulations, which state that 'the student voice plays a significant role at LAMDA' and provide guidance on the arrangements in place for obtaining and considering the views of students. These include online surveys, twice yearly staff student Q&A sessions and the work of the SSLC. In addition, LAMDA students complete mid-term evaluation surveys as well as surveys targeted to specific areas of delivery such as the library and IT resources. The Academic Regulations state that the Q&A sessions are facilitated by Student and Academic Services and the outcomes from online surveys and the Q&A sessions are collated into a report which is submitted to the Academic Board. The assessment team did not see evidence of the outcomes from Q&A sessions or a subsequent

report to the Academic Board. However, the team reviewed the November 2022 LAMDA Library Update report, which summarises outcomes of the 2021-22 library survey. The report discusses participation levels, key themes emerging from survey responses and actions implemented as a result. These include the creation of how-to videos and library induction sessions for staff.

478. The team also noted that students chair and attend SSLC meetings alongside members of LAMDA's SMT where areas of concern and suggestions for improvement are discussed. SSLC minutes reviewed by the assessment team, evidenced discussion of student feedback across a range of standing agenda items including estates, IT, library and learning resources and course quality and curriculum. Meeting minutes indicate whether assigned actions from previous meetings have been completed. The minutes also show that actions still in progress are added to subsequent meeting agendas for further updates on progress.

479. Reports from SSLC meetings are presented at each Academic Board meeting and through its review of the Academic Board minutes, the team saw some detailed reporting of how matters raised in SSLC meetings had been addressed. For example, in the Academic Board meeting of November 2022, it was reported that in response to student requests, the building would open earlier during weekdays to enable student access.

480. As discussed under criterion B3, external examiner reports provide comment and feedback on the quality and delivery of academic provision. As also set out under criterion B3, the assessment team formed the view that on balance LAMDA takes action in response to external examiner recommendations. The assessment team found some instances where actions had seemingly not been taken in response to matters raised by external examiners and that external examiners had noted this lack of response in their reports. However, the team noted that more recent external examiner reports evidenced that issues unaddressed in previous years had subsequently been acted upon. The assessment team recommends that LAMDA reviews its record keeping procedures to ensure there is a clear audit trail of responses to internal and external monitoring and review.

481. Having considered the evidence overall, the assessment team concluded that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of LAMDA's higher education provision. The assessment team saw various examples of how LAMDA has embedded self-assessment within its arrangements and noted that in most instances, action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review. Furthermore, where LAMDA staff are aware of a lack of action taken in response to external scrutiny, they have taken steps to correct matters.

482. To determine whether clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision, the assessment team reviewed a range of evidence including the evidence set out in paragraph 471.

483. As discussed in paragraphs 473-480, the assessment team found a range of examples that demonstrate how LAMDA takes action in response to internal and external monitoring and review. However, the team found that approaches to assigning and discharging actions were variable. While in some instances there was a clear audit trail of progress against actions outstanding, in other areas the team found less transparency around how actions were assigned and discharged.

484. For example, LTQC meeting minutes showed that actions, such as required updates to module specifications or those arising from programme approval events, are clearly assigned to relevant individuals. The minutes also demonstrated that discussion of progress against actions from previous meetings is a standing agenda item at every meeting. The team found that it was evident from the minutes which actions were completed, and which were still in progress. The assessment team was also satisfied that in line with its terms of reference, LTQC minutes were submitted to each Academic Board meeting. Consequently, the Academic Board maintained oversight of progress against actions assigned in LTQC meetings. Similarly, the Academic Board meeting minutes show that actions are assigned to individuals and meeting agendas include a standing item for discussion of progress against actions outstanding from previous meetings.

485. By contrast however, the assessment team found that while ACMR reports provided evidence of actions being taken, there did not appear to be clear mechanisms for assigning and discharging actions. The team noted that LAMDA Academic Regulations stipulate that the ACMR process should 'ensure that significant areas of concern within teaching provision are addressed, and that the effects of any changes made are monitored'. The assessment team noted that while the ACMR report template asks programme teams to set out the effect of actions taken in respect of issues raised in the previous year's report, in some instances this section was blank in completed reports. Consequently, it was not always clear if all or any actions from the previous year had been discharged. For example, the assessment team saw that the November 2022 ACMR report for the Production and Technical Arts programmes included a concern about the recruitment and retention of students. However, the report does not clarify if any actions have been assigned to address these issues.

486. Furthermore, the November 2023 MA Directing ACMR report lists several actions to be taken forward in response to external examiner recommendations. The team noted the report indicates that these actions will be taken forward by the programme team, however there was no clear timeline for the discharge of actions, rather the report noted that 'all recommendations will be implemented this year'. The meeting minutes from the subsequent Academic Board meeting, confirm approval of the MA Directing ACMR report and note that two of the external examiner recommendations had already been actioned. However, the assessment team did not find evidence in the Academic Board minutes of discussion of the outstanding ACMR report actions. It was therefore not clear how outstanding actions were being tracked to ensure they were discharged in full. While the team found that LAMDA's ACMR process is an effective mechanism for critical self-assessment, and there is evidence of action taken in response to matters raised through this process, the team was concerned at the lack of clear timelines for the completion of actions and robust mechanisms for ensuring their discharge. The assessment team therefore considered that ACMR reports would benefit from the inclusion of action plans that more clearly assign all actions being taken forward and confirm their discharge.

487. As noted above, the team identified some inconsistencies in how LAMDA ensures action is taken in response to matters raised through external examiner reports and the team considered that this is due to inconsistencies in the assigning and discharging of actions following the consideration of these reports. For some external examiner reports, such as those for the BA Acting and MA Classical Acting programmes, the assessment team was unable to determine the extent to which LAMDA had responded to external examiner recommendations and how actions had been followed up. While the assessment team saw

that external examiner comments are integrated into ACMR reports, the inconsistencies identified led the team to determine that there is no clear mechanism in place for the consistent assigning and discharging of actions in response to recommendations from external examiners. The team queried this with LAMDA and was subsequently informed that it had developed and implemented several enhancements to its processes for addressing external examiner comments. These included strengthened oversight, through the submission of a detailed summary of external examiner feedback with actions taken to the Academic Board, to ensure that issues raised are tracked and resolved. As these were recent improvements to procedure, the assessment team did not have an opportunity to assess their effectiveness as evidence of assigning and discharging action. The team considered that this is a weakness in LAMDA's arrangements for ensuring the monitoring and discharging of actions, but noted that LAMDA had already taken steps to address the issues and improve its mechanisms.

488. In summary, the assessment team saw some areas of sound practice in how LAMDA assigns and discharges action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision. However, weaknesses exist that prevent the team from concluding that there is a consistent approach to these mechanisms. While evidence of historical inconsistencies in approach was an area of concern, the assessment team was assured by the measures LAMDA has introduced to ensure transparency and accountability in addressing actions.

489. To assess whether ideas and expertise from within and outside LAMDA are drawn into arrangements for programme design, approval, delivery and review, the assessment team reviewed a range of evidence including:

- LAMDA Academic Regulations

- CAC minutes

- Quinquennial Review BA (Hons) PTASS

- LAMDA Observation of Teaching Policy

- Exam Board minutes.

490. As set out under criterion B2 and B3, LAMDA Academic Regulations stipulate the procedures for programme design, approval, delivery and review including requirements for the inclusion of internal and external expertise. For example, the CAC considers proposals for the development of academic provision and the Academic Regulations set out that CAC membership can include 'academic staff seconded for their specific expertise, and external advisers from academia or industry'. Similarly, course validation panels are required to include a student representative and at least one external expert. The regulations specify that the review panels for periodic reviews should include two external academic experts, internal academics from a subject area different to the one being reviewed and a student representative. Furthermore, as discussed under criteria B2 and B3, external examiners are also integral to LAMDAs programme design, approval and review procedures, such as their role at the Board of Examiners.

491. Examples of external expertise contributing to course development through membership of course approval panels and feedback on design proposals is already noted under criterion

B2. The assessment team also saw evidence of internal expertise being drawn into programme design and approval. For example, the CAC minutes showed that course approval panels also included the LAMDA CEO as well as the LAMDA Chief and Deputy Chief Examiners. The minutes also provided evidence of the approval panel's discussion and scrutiny of programme proposals and showed how internal and external expertise shapes programme design.

492. Furthermore, the assessment team's scrutiny of the periodic review schedule for the PTASS course also demonstrated how internal and external expertise is drawn into the review process. The evidence of this periodic review confirmed that, in line with the Academic Regulations, the review panel included internal and external experts such as the LAMDA Director of Actor Training and Drama School and the Head of Production, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland. At the time of the DAPs assessment, the outcomes from the periodic review including the panel's recommendations were not yet available.

493. The assessment team also considered that the LAMDA Observation of Teaching Policy evidence how internal expertise informs the development of approaches to teaching. The policy sets out that teaching observations are carried out by lead practitioners, course leaders and head of department. The operationalisation of the Observation of Teaching Policy is discussed in full under criterion C1. In summary, the assessment team found that LAMDA's approach to teaching observations not only provides a development opportunity for teaching staff but also enables LAMDA to draw on appropriate expertise to evaluate and enhance the quality of its teaching provision.

494. The assessment team concluded that the evidence showed that ideas and expertise from within and outside LAMDA are drawn into arrangements for programme design, approval, delivery and review.

Conclusions

495. The assessment team concluded that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of LAMDA's higher education provision and it takes effective action to assess its own performance. LAMDA maximises opportunities to draw on internal and external expertise in the development and review of academic provision.

496. While the assessment team found that overall LAMDA takes action to respond to identified weaknesses, the team found some historical inconsistencies in how it responded. The team was reassured by measures that LAMDA has recently introduced to strengthen mechanisms for the assignment and discharge of actions in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision, specifically its response to external examiner reports. However, the assessment team recommends that LAMDA keep these processes for critical self-assessment under review to ensure that timely and effective remedial action continues to be taken.

497. The assessment team therefore concluded that LAMDA meets criterion E1.

Assessment of overarching criterion for the authorisation for DAPs

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

Advice to the OfS

498. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA meets all the underpinning criteria and the requirements of the overarching criterion for Full DAPs.

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

500. This view is based on consideration of the evidence requirements for the DAPs criteria, alongside other relevant information.

Reasoning

501. The assessment team found that **self-criticality** has been demonstrated throughout the period in which LAMDA has held time-limited DAPs. Although LAMDA has made significant changes during this period, these changes were informed by and a result of internal and external review. Internal mechanisms such as annual course monitoring, periodic review and external examiner feedback are used to identify areas for improvement and LAMDA has taken steps to strengthen these processes, which assured the assessment team of LAMDA's self-criticality. LAMDA has shown responsiveness to external scrutiny, including implementing recommendations from external reviewers and examiners and refining its academic policies and procedures accordingly.

502. The assessment team found LAMDA constitutes a **cohesive academic community** which has been strengthen by its 2023 to 2030 strategy, co-created with staff and underpinning LAMDA's academic provision. Its governance structures embed student and staff voices at all levels and there is a collaborative culture amongst its staff fostered through regular staff development days, mentoring schemes and peer observation, which promote shared pedagogical values and practices. The assessment team's view is that LAMDA's small size and specialist focus contribute to this cohesion, enabling close working relationships and effective communication across the organisation.

503. In the period in which it has held time-limited DAPs, LAMDA has demonstrated a **proven commitment to the assurance of academic standards** through application of its Academic Regulations and Credit Framework and its robust quality assurance approval, monitoring and review procedures. The team found that effective assessment and moderation practices ensure that qualifications meet sector-recognised standards and the FHEQ, and that programme learning outcomes are mapped to corresponding levels of these standards. The commitment to the assurance of standards is further demonstrated by confirmation of external

examiners that LAMDA's academic standards are appropriate and comparable to those of other UK degree awarding bodies.

504. The assessment considers LAMDA's **quality systems are effective** and appropriate to its context, as evidenced by comprehensive academic governance structures, including the Academic Board and its subcommittees, which oversee quality assurance and enhancement. The team found that there are robust procedures for programme design, approval, monitoring and review, and that mechanisms for student support and development contribute to a high quality academic experience. While the assessment team identified occasional instances of inconsistent approaches to the documenting and recording of all actions related to these procedures, the team found that LAMDA has already taken steps to address these, further strengthening its quality systems.

Conclusions

505. The team therefore concludes that LAMDA meets the overarching criterion for Full DAPs as the evidence demonstrates that it has a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective quality systems. Despite going through a significant period of change, LAMDA has demonstrated its ability to exercise its DAPs securely, since those powers were granted and the team determines that LAMDA will continue to operate its DAPs securely in the future.

Annex A: Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
ACMR	Annual course monitoring report
BA	Bachelors' of Arts
CAC	Course Approval Committee
CDD	Conservatoire for Dance and Drama
CertHE	Certificate of Higher Education
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CV	curriculum vitae
DAPs	Degree awarding powers
EDI	Equality, Diversity, Inclusion
FHEQ	Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications
HERA	Higher Education Research Act 2017
HESA	Higher Education Statistics Agency
Hons	Honours
LAMDA	London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art
LTQC	Learning, Teaching and Quality Committee
MA	Masters' of Arts
MFA	Masters' of Fine Arts
NSS	National Student Survey
OfS	Office for Students
PSRB	Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies
PTASS	Production and Technical Arts for Stage and Screen
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QAC	Quality Assessment Committee
REF	Research Excellence Framework
SMT	Senior management team
SSLC	Student-Staff Liaison Committee
TEF	Teaching Excellence Framework
VLE	Virtual learning environment