

Degree awarding powers assessment report for the National Institute of Teaching

New degree awarding powers assessment

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Enquiries to: regulation@officeforstudents.org.uk

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Executive summary

Type of assessment	Quality and standards assessment for new degree awarding powers
For	National Institute of Teaching

1. This report represents the conclusions of an assessment for new degree awarding powers (New DAPs) at School-Led Development Trust, trading as the National Institute of Teaching (NlOT). The NlOT is seeking authorisation for New DAPs for 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. This report contains the advice and judgement of the team following its assessment.
3. The team concluded that the NlOT is ready to operate with New DAPs (see Table 1). This report does not, however, represent any decision by the OfS to authorise these powers.

Table 1: Summary of advice against the DAPs criteria

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

What are new degree awarding powers?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Assessment and decision-making process

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

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

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

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

² For a summary of different types of degree awarding powers, see OfS, [Registering with the OfS – Degree awarding powers](#).

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

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

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

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

The report is then considered by the OfS's Quality Assessment Committee (QAC). The QAC is responsible for providing advice to the OfS under section 46 of HERA on the quality of and standards applied to the higher education being delivered by providers for which the OfS is considering granting, varying (or in certain circumstances revoking) authorisation for DAPs.⁴

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

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

Further information

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

4. The NIoT is a private limited company by guarantee without share capital, which was incorporated on 31 May 2021. The NIoT delivers taught Level 7 qualifications, specifically postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) with qualified teacher status (QTS) in both primary and secondary subjects and in full-time and part-time modes.
5. On 22 December 2023 the NIoT applied for New DAPs at taught level, up to and including Level 7. In accordance with the guidance on how to apply for DAPs, the NIoT is eligible to be considered for this because it meets the eligibility criteria set out in paragraph 221 of the OfS's regulatory framework.
6. The OfS appointed an assessment team on 19 August 2024 to undertake a New DAPs test, including a desk-based assessment of the NIoT's New DAPs plan and supporting evidence. The team was asked to give its advice and judgements about the quality of, and standards applied to, proposed higher education courses at the NIoT and whether the NIoT has a credible New DAPs plan which demonstrates a full understanding of the DAPs criteria, including the overarching criteria for a New DAPs authorisation.

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

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

⁶ See OfS, [Regulatory advice 12: How to apply for degree awarding powers](#).

7. This report will be considered by the QAC at its meeting of 21 May 2025. The QAC will formulate its advice to the OfS regarding quality and standards at the NIoT having considered this report.
8. This report does not represent any decision of the OfS in respect of whether the New DAPs authorisation the NIoT is seeking should be granted. The OfS will consider the assessment report, and the QAC's advice, in deciding whether to grant the NIoT's New DAPs authorisation on the basis requested. It will also consider its own risk assessment for the NIoT, and have regard to the advice received from others where this has been sought, as well as other relevant considerations such as its general duties under section 2 of HERA.

Introduction and background

9. This report represents the conclusions of an assessment for new degree awarding powers (New DAPs) for the NIoT. The NIoT is seeking authorisation for New DAPs for taught awards up to and including Level 7.

Context

10. The NIoT delivers taught Level 7 qualifications, specifically PGCE with QTS in both primary and secondary subjects and in full-time and part-time modes.
11. The NIoT is the trading name for the 'School-Led Development Trust', a charity registered with the Charity Commission. The NIoT has a board of 11 trustees, including the chief executive officers (CEOs) of the four founding multi-academy trusts – Harris Federation, Outwood Grange Academies Trust, Star Academies and Oasis Community Learning.
12. The NIoT's founding members have been delivering QTS courses for several years and established the NIoT to deliver school-led teacher education. Academic year 2023-24 saw the first cohort of students undertake higher education courses at the NIoT.
13. The NIoT is currently validated by University of Birmingham for all its PGCE provision, and students on the PGCE courses receive a University of Birmingham degree award.
14. The NIoT operates campuses in four regional areas, each based in a school run by one of its founding members. These are:
 - North and West, with a campus based in Blackburn
 - North and East, with campuses based in Doncaster and Redcar
 - South and West, with campuses based in Birmingham and Bristol
 - South, East and London with a campus located in Peckham.
15. Each region is responsible for delivering teaching to its students, but all teaching materials, timetable and programme curriculum are shared and governed centrally by the NIoT.
16. Academic year 2023-24 was the first year of the NIoT's higher education delivery. At the start of this academic year there were 509 enrolled higher education students (465 full-time and 44 part-time) studying for PGCE awards. The number of students enrolled dropped to 491 by March 2024 because of deferments and withdrawals.
17. The NIoT offers PGCE with QTS in the following subject areas:
 - PGCE Primary Education (QTS) (3 to 7)
 - PGCE Primary Education (QTS) (5 to 11)
 - PGCE Primary Education (QTS) Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (3 to 7)
 - PGCE Primary Education (QTS) Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (5 to 11)
 - PGCE Primary Education (QTS) with Mathematics (3 to 7)
 - PGCE Primary Education (QTS) with Mathematics (5 to 11)
 - PGCE Primary Education (QTS) with Physical Education (3 to 7)
 - PGCE Primary Education (QTS) with Physical Education (5 to 11)
 - PGCE Primary Education (QTS) with Science (3 to 7)

- PGCE Primary Education (QTS) with Science (5 to 11)
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Art and Design
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Biology
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Business Studies
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Chemistry
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Computing
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Design and Technology
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Design and Technology with Art and Design
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Drama
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) English
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Geography
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) History
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Mathematics
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Modern Languages
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Modern Languages – Arabic
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Modern Languages – French
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Modern Languages – French and Spanish
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Modern Languages – German
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Modern Languages – Mandarin
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Modern Languages – Spanish
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Modern Languages – Urdu
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Music
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Physical Education
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Physical Education with Biology
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Physical Education with English
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Physics
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Religious Education
 - PGCE Secondary Education (QTS) Religious Education with Citizenship.
18. The NIoT offers two funding pathways for students on the PGCE programmes, in both full-time and part-time modes:
- a. Self-funded higher education students who are studying for a PGCE (known as trainees) with QTS in either primary or secondary subjects.
 - b. Salaried apprentices employed by schools in the NIoT network (known as apprentices) who are studying for a PGCE with QTS in either primary or secondary subjects.
19. There are also apprentices directly employed by schools in the network, who are studying for QTS only. They are taught in the same classes as students on PGCE courses.

20. The NIoT operates with a schedule whereby full-time students spend four days in their school placements and one 'core' day at the NIoT for teaching, largely in person. Part-time students are required to attend the in-person 'core' training but spend fewer days in their school placement across the week. The longer duration of the course ensures they complete the same number of placement days as their full-time counterparts.
21. The NIoT is validated to deliver 30 subject-specific PGCE courses and delivers the Intensive Training and Practice framework. This is a government-published element of initial teacher training, which seeks to strengthen the link between classroom practice and evidence-based teaching principles, based on the Core content framework. This framework details the initial teacher training skills needed for students to gain QTS and for positive assessment against the Teachers' Standards, which set the minimum professional standards for teachers' practice and conduct.
22. In accordance with its regulatory framework and operational guidance on how to apply for DAPs, the OfS undertook an initial eligibility and suitability assessment of the NIoT. It decided that a New DAPs test should be undertaken to inform a judgement about whether NIoT:
 - has a credible New DAPs plan
 - demonstrates a full understanding of the DAPs criteria
 - has set standards for the proposed courses at an appropriate level.
23. The OfS formally appointed an assessment team on 19 August 2024 which consisted of three academic expert assessors and a member of OfS staff, in the following roles:
 - Dr John Macklin – committee chair and lead assessor
 - Dr Janet Ramdeo – deputy committee chair and assessor
 - Dr Fay Glendenning – assessor
 - Jo Golding – committee member and assessment coordinator.
24. The assessment team was asked to give its advice about the quality of and standards applied to higher education courses at the NIoT, whether it has a credible New DAPs plan and whether it has demonstrated a full understanding of the DAPs criteria.
25. The assessment team considered a range of information submitted by the NIoT in support of its application for New DAPs.

Assessment process

Information gathering

26. In accordance with the operational guidance on assessment for degree awarding powers, the NIoT submitted a New DAPs plan on 20 April 2024, setting out how it will meet the DAPs criteria in full, by the end of the probationary period, and its arrangements to make awards at the level for which it has applied from the intended start date of the probationary powers. It submitted its supporting evidence on 9 August 2024.
27. The decision to commence the degree awarding powers assessment was taken on 18 March 2024. However, the start of the assessment was paused as the NIoT was undergoing a quality and standards assessment in relation to initial conditions of registration B7 and B8.
28. To support the statements made in the New DAPs plan, the NIoT submitted a range of documentary evidence. This included programme documentation and information relating to academic policies, processes and governance structures.
29. Following its initial analysis of the NIoT's New DAPs plan and evidence submission, the assessment team requested further information, which was submitted variously on 15 November 2024, 28 February 2025 and 21 March 2025. During a visit to the higher education provider in March 2024, members of the assessment team observed two teaching sessions (one primary and one secondary), and viewed a demonstration version of the new virtual learning environment (VLE). Members of the team also met with members of the NIoT's senior management team in an online meeting on 9 April 2025. The purpose of this meeting was to seek clarification on the NIoT's approach to ensuring equity of student experience between full- and part-time modes of delivery and across the national mode of delivery.

Assessment of DAPs criterion A: Academic governance

Criterion A1: Academic governance

Advice to the OfS

30. The assessment team's view is that the NIoT's New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion A1: Academic governance. The team concluded that NIoT has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion A1.
31. The team's view is based on its consideration of the supporting evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside any other relevant information. Specifically, it is based on its review of the NIoT's New DAPs plan and supporting evidence, which show in summary that the NIoT has developed effective academic governance, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities. It also has in place credible plans to further develop the appropriate and effective academic governance structures necessary for a higher education provider of its size, context and type. It has demonstrated that it has strategic oversight over its higher education delivery, including its current and proposed academic quality assurance mechanisms.

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

32. The assessment team's view, based on its review of the NIoT's New DAPs plan and supporting evidence alongside other relevant information, is that the New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion A1.1 because it contains sufficient detail, including key milestones and timelines, to demonstrate how the NIoT can be reasonably expected to meet criterion A1 in full by the end of the New DAPs probationary period.
33. The team's view is that the NIoT has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion A1.1 because it has developed a governance framework that clearly defines roles and responsibilities at every level of its academic structure, including how it will engage with students. This framework demonstrates that academic governance is systematically managed, with clear reporting lines and accountability mechanisms that align with its strategic academic goals. It has effective academic governance, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities.

Background

34. The NIoT provided the following contextual information regarding its management and governance structures. The NIoT is the trading name for the 'School-Led Development Trust', a registered charity with the Charity Commission. The NIoT has a board of 11 trustees, including the CEOs of the four multi-academy trusts that founded it – Harris Federation, Outwood Grange Academies Trust, Star Academies and Oasis Community Learning.
35. The NIoT operates campuses at the four multi-academy trusts, with each region being responsible for delivering teaching to its students, but all teaching materials, timetable and

programme curriculum are shared and governed centrally by the NIoT. The NIoT is currently validated by University of Birmingham for all its PGCE provision, and students on the PGCE courses receive a University of Birmingham degree award.

36. The NIoT's Board of Trustees is responsible for all its corporate and academic affairs including quality outcomes, the maintenance of standards and outcomes for students. The trustees delegate responsibility for higher education quality assurance, management, and oversight to the NIoT executive team, which manages the daily operations. According to its organisational chart, each of the campus principals report to the Director of Academic Development and Delivery, who reports directly to the CEO.

Reasoning

37. To determine whether the NIoT's higher education mission, strategic direction and associated policies are coherent, published, understood and applied consistently, the assessment team reviewed documents, including the NIoT's New DAPs plan and self-assessment. The team also reviewed supporting documentation, including:
- the NIoT 2024 to 2027 strategy
 - the NIoT Strategy refresh 2024 to 2027 document
 - the NIoT Strategy pack for the executive team
 - draft 2025-26 postgraduate taught degree regulations
 - terms of reference for the Academic Board, Programme Advisory Group, Programme Assessment Board, Programme Board and Student Experience and Quality Assurance Committee.
38. According to the NIoT's self-assessment and 2024 to 2027 strategy, its vision is to be a 'school system that nurtures the talents of teachers and leaders at all stages of their career, so that they can provide children with the excellent education they deserve'. Its mission is to 'improve the quality of teacher training and leader development at a system level,' through generating and interpreting research and applying these learnings to the development, design and delivery of its programmes. The NIoT also states that it 'strongly believes all students with the ability and desire should be supported to access and succeed in higher education, irrespective of their background.'
39. The Strategy refresh 2024 to 2027 document sets out three overarching phases of the maturity and growth of the NIoT: 2023 to 2025 as a 'start up' phase, 2025 to 2027 as a 'maturing' phase and 2028 onwards 'leading systemic change'. The NIoT places itself in the 'start up' phase, where it is actively developing its organisational structures, teams and assets. Its proposed new strategy sets out that, during this phase, it will operate in line with the following 'interim values', which it plans to revisit and review from December 2024. The NIoT's 'interim values' for 2024-25 are:
- 'We are experts at navigating ambiguity.'
 - 'We always put our hands up.'
 - 'We leave our egos at the door.'
 - 'We are hyper-teacher-attentive.'
 - 'We have a bias towards action.'
 - 'We are seamless.'

40. The assessment team found that NIoT's strategy for 2024 to 2027 demonstrates effective planning for its future direction and has coherence between its vision, mission and goals.
41. The team noted in the NIoT New DAPs self-assessment document that the NIoT had begun to implement its 2024 to 2027 strategy, which was agreed through its governance structure and communicated to staff. Furthermore, the self-assessment document confirmed that the strategy informs the NIoT's academic governance and operations. The team saw evidence that the strategy had been communicated to staff, students and partners during 2024, and furthermore that strategic and operating priorities will continue to be communicated to all staff at twice-yearly staff team days. The team also saw evidence that the NIoT team leaders build on staff team days through regular team meetings, and that resources are made available to leaders to support effective, regular and consistent strategy communication.
42. The team saw that the New DAPs plan includes detail and milestones for the development, approval and implementation of the 2027 to 2030 strategy, including a programme of consultation with internal and external stakeholders and publication of new strategy documents on its website. Development of the new 2027 to 2030 strategy will include an evaluation of the 2024 to 2027 strategy, and when approved it will be communicated to internal and external stakeholders.
43. The team considered that implementation of the current strategy and any updated strategy, and the planned steps the NIoT will take to ensure these are published, understood and applied consistently throughout the organisation, will need to be monitored during the probationary period.
44. The team saw that the New DAPs plan sets out information and milestones related to the production of annual operating plans aligned to the board-approved strategy and values. Annual operating plans will include strategic targets and key performance indicators. Progress on operating plans are to be provided to the board at every meeting via the CEO with an end of year evaluation presented to the board summarising successes and challenges to inform future year operating plans. Annual operating plans are to be presented to the NIoT's Executive Committee (ExCo) and its Board of Trustees.
45. The team reviewed an ExCo front sheet template, which is a cover note for all papers presented to ExCo. The team saw that the template requires the author to review the strategy and the annual operating plan, and to frame their paper in the context of the strategy. The team also reviewed the completed front sheet for the 2025-26 operating plan document, and was content that it evidenced that the development of the 2025-26 operating plan will take full account of the strategy and strategic enablers.
46. The team found that the terms of reference for the NIoT's governing committees, including the Academic Board, the programme advisory group, Programme Board and Programme Assessment Board, set out clear roles and responsibilities for the approval of strategies and associated policies. For example, through the Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Programme Board, the Academic Board maintains oversight of all policies and procedures. This demonstrated that the NIoT has considered consistency of approach in its governance structures, to ensure effective oversight and implementation of the strategy and associated policies.
47. Furthermore, the team found that the NIoT has produced a range of policies and procedures governing its higher education delivery and management, and that these reflect its mission and vision. For example, its quality assurance manual (QAM), which details the design of its academic provision, reflects a commitment to regularly reviewing its curriculum based on

latest developments across the sector. The draft 2025-26 postgraduate taught degree regulations reviewed by the team reflect the NIoT's higher education provision and operating context.

48. In the April 2025 meeting between the assessment team and the NIoT's senior management team, it was confirmed to the assessment team that further development of the academic regulations would ensure that those regarding the maximum periods of study and the interruption of study take appropriate account of part-time students. It was also clarified that all trainees and most apprentices undertake both the QTS element of the course and the PGCE. Furthermore, students who fail the PGCE can still qualify for QTS. The assessment team recommended that the NIoT clarify in the academic regulations the arrangements that apply if a student fails the QTS elements of the course, and what qualification if any they might obtain under these circumstances.
49. The assessment team formed the view that the NIoT has the structures in place to ensure that academic policies, including assessment regulations, student protection, and quality assurance, will be applied consistently and that sound academic leadership will be embedded and fully functional across the organisation by the end of the probationary period. The team noted that the NIoT's strategic direction and values, together with some policies, are published on its website. The team considered that it would reasonably expect the NIoT to publish its updated strategy and values during the probationary period.
50. The team concluded that NIoT's higher education mission and strategic direction outlined in the strategy refresh 2024 to 2027 document is coherent. The evidence of appropriate governance structures assured the team that the NIoT will ensure associated policies are coherent with its higher education mission and applied consistently and understood. For example, the NIoT's Academic Board maintains oversight of academic policies and procedures and ensures that they are up-to-date, relevant and consistently applied across the organisation. To ensure that the policies are communicated and understood, relevant policies are shared through staff inductions and development activities and departmental meetings, while student-facing policies are shared through the PGCE student handbook and on the NIoT's website.
51. In consideration of the above evidence, the team concluded that the NIoT's higher education mission and strategic direction and associated policies are coherent, published, understood and applied consistently. The team considers that ongoing development and consistent implementation of the strategy should be monitored throughout the New DAPs probationary period.
52. To assess whether the NIoT's academic policies will support its higher education mission, aims and objectives, the team reviewed the NIoT's existing higher education policies including its QAM, Learning and teaching strategy, Academic appeals procedure, Academic misconduct policy, Fitness to practice and Fitness to study policies and procedures, the Complaints policy and the Academic integrity procedure. The terms of reference for the NIoT's committees and boards were also considered.
53. The team found that the NIoT's existing academic policies support its mission of providing high quality higher education. The NIoT currently operates in accordance with the academic regulatory frameworks of its validating university, the University of Birmingham. It operates some of its own academic policies, through a quality and standards assurance framework, which reflects the NIoT's role in the delivery of its programmes. As discussed above, the NIoT

has drafted a set of postgraduate taught degree regulations, whose development and implementation will be led by a newly appointed academic registrar.

54. The principles of the NIoT's current quality framework and policies are set out in its QAM, which provides details of the associated policies, procedures and guidance. The team noted that these were produced in readiness for the first PGCE cohort in 2023-24, and that the NIoT intends to review and develop these following its experience of its first year of PGCE delivery. The assessment team found that the QAM covers the following overarching topics relevant to its higher education delivery:
- the design of the institute's academic provision
 - the approval and modification of the institute's provision
 - the admission of students to the institute
 - the review of the institute's programmes
 - the assessment of the institute's students
 - the institute's research degrees (in draft)
 - supporting student achievement at the institute.
55. The team considered how far the policies and procedures set out in each topic of the QAM reflect the NIoT's higher education mission, aims and objectives. For example, as discussed earlier in this section, the 'design of the institute's academic provision' section of the QAM reflects the NIoT's commitment to regularly reviewing its curriculum based on latest developments across the sector. Furthermore, the policies are designed to ensure that the NIoT has a clear framework for maintaining high educational standards and clearly articulates the mechanisms it will use to ensure students and staff understand what is expected of them. For example, the Academic misconduct and Academic integrity policies define what the NIoT considers to be academic misconduct.
56. Based on the evidence reviewed, the team considered that the NIoT's academic policies are designed to support its higher education mission, aims, and objectives, and that its governance structures are intended to ensure the consistent application and alignment of these policies with the NIoT's strategic direction.
57. More detailed consideration is given to the QAM under criteria B1 and B3. The team would reasonably expect all academic policies to be reviewed and developed as necessary during the probationary period and noted that such milestones are set out in the NIoT's New DAPs plan.
58. To test the clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels of the NIoT's academic governance arrangements, the team reviewed the NIoT's Executive and deliberative committee structure, the terms of reference of its boards and committees and the CVs of executive team staff, together with the 2023-24 Scheme of delegation. The team reviewed this evidence to confirm whether the function and responsibility of the group's senior academic authority is clearly articulated and consistently applied.
59. As set out earlier in this report, the NIoT has a board of 11 trustees, including the CEOs of the four multi-academy trusts. This board is responsible for all its corporate and academic affairs including quality outcomes, the maintenance of standards and outcomes for students. The trustees delegate responsibility for higher education quality assurance, management, and oversight to the executive team, which manages the daily operations.

60. The Executive and deliberative committee structure gives clarity to the NIoT's proposed academic governance structure by visually illustrating the lines of accountability and reporting structures in place. This is supplemented by terms of reference for the governance boards and committees, which clearly outline their reporting responsibilities. This evidence sets out that the Academic Board is the senior academic authority and has overall responsibility for all academic matters, as part of its delegated authority from the Board of Trustees. The Academic Board also reports regularly to the executive team. Each board and subcommittee sitting below the Academic Board has specified areas of responsibilities, tasks and authority, which are clearly defined and align with the NIoT's strategic direction and objectives. The subcommittees of the Academic Board include:
- a research committee (to be established from 2024-25)
 - the Student Experience and Quality Assurance Committee (established 2024-25)
 - the Programme Board
 - the Ethics Committee
 - the Programme Assessment Board.
61. The assessment team considered that such separation of responsibilities ensures that academic governance operates effectively and that decisions regarding higher education provision will be managed appropriately at all levels. The terms of reference for the boards also sets out that there are effective mechanisms in place for continuous improvement with responsibility assigned for review processes. The team found that the Academic Board receives reports from its sub-boards and subcommittees and has responsibility for procedures relating to the approval and award of qualifications, ultimate approval for programme development, the academic regulations and quality assurance and academic standards, and oversight of the recruitment of students. The membership of the Academic Board includes the chief executive as chair, four campus principals, the Executive Director of Programmes, student representatives and representatives of academic delivery staff.
62. Responsibility for monitoring the NIoT's programmes lies with the Programme Board, whose terms of reference show that it reports directly to the Academic Board. The Programme Board also has operational oversight of matters relating to academic operation and the student experience, including delivery, review of student performance, student employment rates and student satisfaction and feedback. The membership of the Programme Board includes the academic staff, two student representatives and the programme leader.
63. The team noted that the NIoT has established a Student Experience and Quality Assurance (SEQA) committee. A review of SEQA committee meeting minutes evidenced the committee's discussion of student experience matters and annual programme reviews, in line with its responsibilities. The NIoT has also established staff-student consultative committees (SSCCs) as a forum for student-focused discussions, which the team found evidence of in practice.
64. The team noted that the New DAPs plan sets out milestones and timelines for the further development of governance structures. Plans include the completion of work to restructure the Finance, Audit and Risk Management committees, the establishment of a research committee and the design of processes for annual and periodic governance reviews.
65. The team was assured that the academic governance structure and boards currently in operation represent clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels, in relation to arrangements for managing the NIoT's higher education provision. The proposed

academic governance structure reflects what the team would reasonably expect to see in a provider of this size and complexity.

66. Overall, the evidence reviewed by the team demonstrated that the NIoT's existing academic governance structure appears appropriate and effective. However, the continued development of the academic governance structure should be monitored through its probationary period, together with the management of higher education delivery.
67. The team reviewed the terms of reference for the boards and committees and found that all aspects of academic governance – including the quality assurance of current programmes and student experience and achievement, design and implementation of new programmes and decision making relating to marking student work and to recommending the conferment and classification of awards – have clear lines of responsibility and reporting in the governance structure. Evidence of Academic Board minutes further informed the team's view that this board's subcommittees report to it to ensure it has ultimate oversight of all academic matters within the NIoT. For example, minutes of the April 2024 Academic Board meeting included discussion of Programme Board reports and necessary actions arising out of the discussions.
68. The team considered that the function and responsibilities of the Academic Board ensure it operates appropriately as the senior academic authority for the NIoT. The authority of the board is clearly articulated, and its reporting structures demonstrate that it receives the knowledge and understanding to enable it to exercise ultimate responsibility for all academic matters within the NIoT.
69. From its review of the evidence, the assessment team reasonably expects that by the end of the probationary period, the NIoT can demonstrate that the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority are clearly articulated and consistently applied.
70. However, because of the recent inception of the NIoT's higher education delivery, including the establishment of the board in 2023, and its planned developments across the wider academic governance structure, the function and responsibilities of the Academic Board, and its sub-boards and committees, should be monitored throughout the probationary period.
71. To assess whether there is appropriate strength and depth of academic leadership within the NIoT, the team considered the following evidence: the CVs of senior staff on the executive team, a sample of redacted CVs of academic tutors and academic support staff, CVs of the trustees, and the Executive and deliberative committee structure.
72. The assessment team considered the CVs of senior academic staff and members of the executive team, including the chair of the Academic Board, to assess the suitability of those in academic leadership roles. The review confirmed that senior academic staff, particularly the Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director of Programmes, have significant and relevant academic leadership experience and the expertise to effectively oversee academic governance. The chair of the NIoT Board of Trustees has significant experience as the chief executive of a large educational organisation, and the team found that all trustees have significant experience of educational leadership, including direct academic management of both educational organisations and charities.
73. The assessment team was assured that there is appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership, as all appropriate staff possess the necessary qualifications and industry experience to have oversight of the governance and management of the NIoT's higher education delivery.

74. The redacted CVs of tutors and academic staff show that they are appropriately qualified and have sufficient professional backgrounds.
75. The team reviewed the NIoT DAPs self-assessment document and the terms of reference for the Programme Advisory Group (PAG) and the Academic Board to test how the NIoT develops, implements and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff and students and external stakeholders. The NIoT plans to use the PAG as a forum for connection between national, and potentially international, experts. This would include schools and colleges in the NIoT network and associated colleges network, experts in design and implementation of teaching pedagogies and academic leadership, practicing teachers and advisers on central and local government education policy. This group will provide the NIoT with feedback on its programmes, test new programmes and delivery methods, and enable it to gain perspectives from the wider sector which could be used to inform future planning and development of best practice.
76. The team noted that, according to the Executive and deliberative committee structure and its own terms of reference, the PAG will meet twice a year, report directly to the executive leadership team and include members with national and, where appropriate, international standing in the field of teacher education, experience in translating teaching methodology research into programme design and delivery, and expertise in learning and teaching pedagogies. The team saw that the New DAPs plan provided further detail and milestones regarding the work of the PAG. This included plans for:
- a. The PAG to provide advice to SEQA and the Academic Board, in line with the processes to approve programme or module specifications.
 - b. The PAG to undertake twice-yearly benchmarking review of academic standards, with outcomes reported to the Academic Board.
 - c. The PAG to undertake review, every two years, of the Academic design manual to ensure academic standards are identified, articulated and built in to inform design and delivery.
 - d. PAG meeting minutes to be reported into relevant programme boards, to ensure that its views on academic standards are embedded in the design and delivery of the programme.
77. The assessment team considered that, should the group develop and function as it is intended, it will provide effective external input and contributions to the NIoT's continued development, and recommends that the continued development of this group should be monitored throughout the probationary period to ensure it operates as outlined in its terms of reference.
78. According to its self-assessment, the NIoT 'prides itself on the close working relationships' between staff and that this allows for effective collaboration and understanding during the development and implementation of policies and procedures. Weekly team 'shout-outs' form the main mechanism for communication regarding operational changes, together with all staff away days. Notes from the May 2024 staff away day show a session seeking staff input and contributions to the proposed 2024 to 2027 strategy. Students are made aware of policies and procedures through the Student handbook, the NIoT's website and the 'Flying start' induction week.
79. The minutes from the Academic Board meetings from December 2023 and April 2024 show the involvement of staff and student representatives and a discussion on policies, procedures

and documentation such as the Initial Teacher Education (ITE) student handbook. In addition, the December 2023 Academic Board meeting minutes demonstrated how the NIoT actions student feedback, with a new virtual learning environment coming into effect from 2024-25 in response to student feedback made at an earlier Academic Board meeting.

80. The team saw that the New DAPs plan includes milestones and timelines for the establishment of a framework for all academic policies, to include consultation and communication with staff and students. Separately, the team reviewed the NIoT's Policy Development and Review Framework, which sets out the approach to academic policy development including requirements for staff and student consultation.
81. The assessment team concluded that the evidence shows how staff and students are currently involved in the review and approval of recent changes to the NIoT's procedures and documents, including in the development of the NIoT strategy. Furthermore, the NIoT has credible plans to further develop approaches to consultation with staff and students in the development of academic policies. The team noted that the NIoT's New DAPs plan includes milestones for the regular review of its policies and procedures through its committee structures. For example, it plans for the SEQA to receive the 'review of Student Services and Learning Resources and any updates to the student policy framework'.
82. However, the team recommends that evidence of staff and student consultation or collaboration in the development of new policies and procedures should be monitored throughout the probationary period. Further consideration of student engagement in NIoT's management and governance is discussed under subcriterion A1.2.
83. As discussed throughout this section, the team found that the NIoT has proposed a well-structured and transparent approach to managing its academic responsibilities and has mechanisms in place that ensure its academic governance and quality assurance procedures are operating with appropriate oversight. The team considered the NIoT's existing approach to managing student assessment and quality assurance of its higher education delivery by reviewing the QAM and the 2024-25 Postgraduate taught degree regulations. The team found that the NIoT demonstrated appropriate understanding of the requirements to manage successfully the responsibilities that would be vested in it, were it to be granted degree awarding powers. The QAM provides a clear outline of reporting responsibilities and oversight procedures and establishes a consistent and thorough approach to maintaining high academic standards that align with the NIoT's strategic goals.
84. The NIoT's partnership with University of Birmingham provides further assurances to the team that the NIoT has the experience, knowledge and understanding to effectively manage the required responsibilities.
85. However, the team considers that, as 2023-24 is the first year of NIoT's PGCE programme delivery, many of the academic governance and higher education management structures, procedures and policies have not been fully implemented and therefore would require monitoring during the probationary period.
86. Based on the evidence reviewed, the assessment team concluded that NIoT either has appropriate academic governance structures in place or has credible plans for further development and implementation across the probationary period that might be expected in a higher education provider of its size, context and type. It has demonstrated that it has strategic oversight over its higher education delivery, including its academic quality assurance mechanisms. Appropriate evidence of engagement with internal and external stakeholders is

evident, and the team considers that the NIoT has demonstrated it will successfully manage the responsibilities vested in it if it is granted degree awarding powers.

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

87. The assessment team's view, based on its review of the NIoT's New DAPs plan and supporting evidence showing that the NIoT can be reasonably expected to meet the evidence requirements for A1.2 in full by the end of the probationary period, is that the New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion A1.2.
88. The team's view is that NIoT has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion A1.2 because it has in place mechanisms to enable its students to engage effectively, individually and collectively, with the management and governance of its higher education provision. It has identified appropriate mechanisms and structures to ensure that oversight of its higher education provision is conducted in partnership with its students. However, further evidence of how the NIoT supports students to engage effectively should be monitored through the probationary period.

Reasoning

89. To establish whether the NIoT's students are individually and collectively engaged in the governance and management of the NIoT's higher education provision and are supported to engage effectively, the assessment team considered a range of documentation including:
- the Executive and deliberative committee structure
 - the terms of reference for the Academic Board, Research Committee, SEQA committee and Programme Board
 - the minutes from various SSCC meetings
 - evidence of student representative appointments and training
 - the NIoT's paper Continuous improvement: Responding to feedback.
90. Through its review of evidence, the team found that students are represented at all levels of the academic governance via student representative roles. The Executive and deliberative committee structure identifies student representation on the Academic Board, Research Committee, SEQA committee and programme boards.
91. As noted under criterion A1.1, the SEQA committee has oversight of all matters related to the student experience and the quality and standards of all programmes delivered by the NIoT. The team saw from the SEQA terms of reference that membership includes at least two elected student representatives, whose attendance was confirmed in the SEQA minutes. SEQA reports directly to the Academic Board and is responsible for managing and evaluating processes to gauge student opinion and to address any identified issues. The team considered that SEQA is an effective way to engage students as partners in the academic governance and oversight of the NIoT's higher education provision and should ensure that the student voice is recognised and heard at a high level in the NIoT governance structure.

92. The NIoT uses SSCC meetings as forums for discussion of student feedback and to address issues related to the student experience. Regional student representatives sit on regional and national SSCCs. The team considered that these committees provide a direct connection between students and the Academic and programme boards. The team found that this ensures that the student voice can be heard at all levels of academic governance. It also found the direct link to senior academic governance boards to be critical, as these boards are collectively responsible for academic quality, standards and assurances at the NIoT, and for policies that then directly impact the student experience.
93. The team saw that the New DAPs plan includes milestones and timelines for running annual SSCC election processes, to ensure student representative coverage across pathways, modes and student characteristics, student representative onboarding and induction. Furthermore, the New DAPs plan indicates there will be a process of student representative onboarding and induction as well as end of appointment term debriefs from SSCC student representatives to inform continuous improvement of the student representative process.
94. Student representatives are included as members on the major governance boards including the Board of Trustees, the Academic Board, and the programme boards providing a critical platform for the student voice to be heard and to influence the development of policy, which will directly impact students studying at the NIoT.
95. The team considered evidence showing that all committee and groups with student representation include agenda items focused on student feedback. The team would expect further evidence of effective student engagement in the NIoT's academic governance to be available during the probationary period.
96. The NIoT reported in its self-assessment that student representatives are provided with briefings and guidance to support them in their roles and to enable them to engage effectively in academic governance meetings. The NIoT's New DAPs plan sets out milestones and timelines for the annual recruitment and induction of student representatives. These will include guidance on onboarding, induction and training as well as support for student participation. The team reviewed the NIoT's Guidance for student representatives on the board document and found that it helpfully sets out the expectations of the role of student representatives on the Board of Trustees. This includes ways in which student representatives can be effective in their contributions, such as how to advocate for student interests, how to prepare in advance for meetings, and how to contribute to decision making.
97. In its Continuous improvement: Responding to feedback paper, the NIoT sets out other mechanisms to ensure that the student voice informs continuous improvement at the organisation. For example, the NIoT asks students to undertake weekly surveys that are reviewed by regional heads of ITE. The ITE trainee end of year survey analysis demonstrates a method the NIoT uses to receive feedback from students, and the team saw evidence that shows the NIoT analyses this data. The paper provides examples of how student feedback has led to improvements, such as changes to module three guidance following student concerns about how it was interpreted by tutors. This demonstrated timely and effective action taken by the NIoT in response to student feedback. The team noted that consideration of student feedback and subsequent action plans is also detailed in the NIoT's New DAPs plan under criterion E1.
98. Based on the evidence provided, the team concluded that the NIoT has begun to develop and implement arrangements for ensuring that students are individually and collectively engaged in the governance of the organisation's higher education provision and supported to be able to

engage effectively. The team considers that how the NIoT supports students to engage effectively with academic governance and management of its higher education delivery should continue to be monitored through the New DAPs probationary period.

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

99. The assessment team's view, based on its review of the NIoT's New DAPs plan and evidence showing that the NIoT can be reasonably expected to meet the evidence requirements for A1.3 in full by the end of the probationary period, is that the New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion A1.3.
100. The team's view is that the NIoT has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion A1.3 because, where it has plans to work with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, it is developing processes to ensure the 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.

Reasoning

101. The assessment team considered the terms of reference for the College Advisory Group, the Associate college partnership agreement and the Associate college due diligence process, to assess whether the NIoT is working with other organisations in a strategic manner when delivering learning opportunities and is carrying out due diligence regarding its partners.
102. The NIoT works with 'associate colleges' outside the NIoT founder's school network. The NIoT partners with these associate colleges to oversee ITE placements in their schools, ensuring that the NIoT students have a diverse range of placement opportunities. The submitted evidence shows that the NIoT undertakes a due diligence process to ensure prospective associates can offer placements that meet its requirements. The process captures key Ofsted inspection outcomes, key stage data and the regional need for teachers in the prospective associate's local area.
103. Management of the ITE programme is governed by a legal agreement between the NIoT and the associate college. The team reviewed a template Associate college partnership agreement, and found it reflects the typical expectations of a partnership agreement, including details of regular engagement and meetings between appropriate members of staff for leadership, management and quality. The team noted that this agreement is not a partnership to deliver higher education provision and relates to the provision of teaching placements.
104. The template agreement includes a section on the performance management of the associate college. It contains specific requirements that associate colleges must deliver, including monthly attendance at meetings with the NIoT regional principal and the ITT lead from the relevant associate college. The agreement includes a requirement to undertake quality assurance, including feedback from participants regarding their experience of the placement, the mentor support provided and the management of placement-related complaints. The team

has not reviewed any signed agreements, and it recognises that completed agreements are commercially sensitive information, but it is therefore not able to confirm that all the terms seen in the template agreement are present in the signed agreements between the NIoT and the individual associate colleges.

105. According to its self-assessment, the NIoT's quality and standards assurance policies and procedures are applied to the associate college in the same way as to its own programmes and students. Representatives from associate colleges are also members of the Programme and Academic Boards, and their assessment data is therefore submitted through quality assurance and governance processes in the same way as that for NIoT regional campuses.
106. The team found that the NIoT's College Advisory Group is a forum for regular updates and discussion between the four founding trusts of the NIoT and its associate colleges and, as appropriate, any other local or regional delivery partners. The group reports to the executive leadership team, and its terms of reference show that the NIoT intends it to play a key role in 'monitoring the operations and effectiveness of NIoT at campus level, addressing matters of concern and helping develop continuous improvement plans.' The team reviewed minutes from the summer 2024 School-Led Development Trust College Advisory Group. The team found that it demonstrated NIoT was taking strategic oversight of its arrangements with associate colleges, and that it can be seen as an effective tool of information dissemination and collaboration. The team recognises the limited sample size, however, and expects further evidence of this to be available for monitoring during the probationary period.
107. The team noted that the New DAPs plan set out milestones and timings for:
 - a. Defining annual and periodic associate college (teaching practice) partnership review processes, to include alignment with NIoT strategy.
 - b. Conducting a periodic (three-year) review of the Associate college (teaching practice) partnership strategy, including strategic intent of partnerships, due diligence process for new partnerships, respective roles, governance framework, resource allocation and contractual environment.
 - c. Monitoring and reporting of partnership performance, including half-termly associate college review meetings with NIoT regional principals with reporting to Academic Board and the Board of Trustees.
108. The assessment team concluded that there is evidence to show that the NIoT takes a strategic approach regarding how it works with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities. The existing arrangements are informed by a due diligence process and defined in a written legal agreement. Furthermore, the team formed the view that the evidence demonstrates that the NIoT has clear plans to ensure adequate management and oversight of these associate partnerships. The team considers that the implementation of these plans should be monitored during the New DAPs probationary period.

Conclusions

109. The assessment team concluded that the NIoT has demonstrated an understanding of criterion A1, because the evidence demonstrated that NIoT has in place plans to further develop the appropriate and effective academic governance structures necessary for a higher education provider of its size, context and type. It has demonstrated that it has strategic oversight over its higher education delivery, including its current and proposed academic quality assurance mechanisms.

110. The assessment team considered that the Academic Board, supported by sub-boards and committees, is structured in a manner that will provide effective oversight for academic quality, policies, and procedures, ensuring that academic governance is appropriately managed.
111. The assessment team also concluded that the NIoT's governance approach includes appropriate provisions for student engagement. The NIoT has begun to engage successfully with students across its governance and management structures, particularly securing student representation on boards with responsibility for setting and reviewing policy that will directly impact students.
112. The team further concluded that the NIoT has demonstrated an approach to managing partnerships with external organisations that are informed by an effective assessment of risk, including the carrying out of due diligence, and that partnership arrangements will be subject to robust oversight and governance.
113. As the assessment team found that the New DAPs plan is credible because it contains sufficient detail to demonstrate how the NIoT will meet criterion A1 by the end of the probationary period, it did not identify further changes to the New DAPs plan in respect of this criterion. However, the team identified the following areas that should be monitored throughout the New DAPs probationary period:
- a. How NIoT's higher education mission and strategic direction, and any update to associated policies, are published, understood and applied consistently following implementation of its new strategy.
 - b. The continued development of NIoT's academic governance structure and management of its higher education delivery, including the function and responsibilities of the Academic Board, and all its subcommittees and sub-boards.
 - c. How the NIoT collaborates with staff and students in the development of new policies and procedures.
 - d. How the NIoT supports students to engage effectively with academic governance and management of its higher education delivery.
 - e. How the NIoT ensures that arrangements with other organisations are subject to the same robust oversight and governance as the rest of the organisation's provision.
114. The team's view is that NIoT's New DAPs plan is credible because it contains sufficient detail, including key milestones or timelines, to demonstrate how the NIoT will meet criterion A1 in full by the end of the New DAPs probationary period.

Assessment of DAPs criterion B: Academic standards and quality assurance

Criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks

Advice to the OfS

115. The assessment team's view, based on its consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside other relevant information, is that the NIoT has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion B1 and its New DAPs plan for is credible in relation to criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks.
116. The team's view is based on its review of evidence showing that the NIoT is developing transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it will award academic credit and qualifications.

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

117. The assessment team's view is that the New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion B1.1 because it contains sufficient information, including key milestones or timelines, to demonstrate how the NIoT will meet criterion B1.1 in full by the end of the New DAPs probationary period.
118. The team's view is based on its review of the submitted evidence, which shows that the NIoT has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion B1.1, and can be reasonably expected to meet criterion B1.1 in full by the end of the probationary period. This is because it has begun to develop comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it will award academic credit and qualifications.

Reasoning

119. To determine whether the NIoT's academic frameworks and regulations governing its higher education provision are appropriate to its current status, and are implemented fully and consistently, the assessment team considered a range of evidence including:
- the NIoT's self-assessment
 - the New DAPs plan
 - a draft set of 2025-26 postgraduate taught degree regulations
 - the validated programme specification
 - sections 3 and 5 of the QAM
 - the Fundamentals of marking at M level
 - the standardisation session for markers module two
 - the PGCE student handbook

- the Academic misconduct policy
- the Complaints policy
- the QAM
- Extenuating circumstances and extensions
- Feedback and continuous improvement
- the relevant sections from the 2023-24 academic regulations from NIoT's validating partner
- the terms of reference for the programme assessment and academic boards.

120. As discussed under criterion A, the NIoT has drafted a set of Postgraduate academic regulations and developed a set of academic policies, which it operates through its quality and standards assurance framework. The team saw that the NIoT's draft 2025-26 postgraduate taught degree regulations set out core principles for the governance of its higher education provision, including student admissions, approaches to student assessment, the operation of examination boards and the award of qualifications. The team considered that the draft 2025-26 regulations reflect the NIoT's higher education provision and operating context, for example through confirming that the programme of study currently offered is the PGCE. The team was aware that these were draft regulations and still in development. As discussed under criterion A, it was confirmed to the team that further development of the regulations would ensure that those regarding the maximum periods of study and the interruption of study took appropriate account of part-time students.

121. The team found that the New DAPs plan includes milestones and timelines for the further development of the academic, regulations including:

- Drafting new academic regulations for the 2025-26 academic year, in time for NIoT-awarded degrees.
- Creating processes for the review, every two years, of academic regulations, and processes for updating academic regulations to ensure they are aligned with the NIoT's operating context.
- Communication of academic regulations to staff each July, with training and guidance on how to adhere to them, in time for the start of the following academic year. Training will include virtual sessions, guidance documents and drop-in sessions with the Registrar and ITE lead.
- Communication of academic regulations to students through all instances of the Student handbooks. This is to be followed up with live in-person inductions and reminders sent before the start of each academic module.

122. To underpin its taught degree regulations, the NIoT has developed a suite of academic policies and procedures. These are set out in the NIoT Quality and standards assurance outline guide and supporting Quality and standards assurance manuals. The team saw that the former provides an overview of the NIoT's approach to ensuring the quality and standards of its academic provision and clarifies that responsibility for quality and standards is shared with 'all staff engaged in the delivery and support of learning, teaching'. In addition, the supporting quality and standards assurance manuals appear to be designed to cover a range of regulatory processes. For example, the QAM sections 1, 2 and 4 cover aspects of the design, approval, modification and review of the NIoT's higher education provision. Section 3

of the QAM sets out how students will be recruited and admitted onto NIoT courses, including entry requirements, selection processes and the management of student transfers.

123. The team noted that the DAPs self-assessment document states that NIoT's policies and procedures that flow from the Quality and standards assurance framework are being developed and enhanced in the light of operational experience in 2023-24. Furthermore, the team saw that the New DAPs plan also sets out detailed milestones and timings to develop, approve and implement policies and processes set out in the Quality and standards assurance framework and manuals. These include:
- a. An interim review of the QAM to confirm and approve any major modifications required in time for the 2025-26 academic year.
 - b. A detailed review of the QAM, incorporating student feedback and external review from staff at UK universities. Output of the review, with proposed changes to the QAM, to be reported to SEQA and approved by Academic Board.
 - c. The creation of an Academic design manual, defining staff roles and setting out consultative and decision-making routes for academic design, through academic governance structure. This will include: external referencing of other UK higher education providers; review of programme specifications; feedback from stakeholders including staff, students, external examiners and PAG; and review of governance meetings where updates have been suggested
 - d. The development of an NIoT outcomes framework referencing the sector-recognised standards for FHEQ Level 7, and including external referencing of other UK higher education providers.
124. The team also reviewed the NIoT Live updates log, which captures areas of the QAM identified as requiring improvement and update via interim and detailed QAM reviews. The team was content that the log contained a broad and appropriate range of updates and enhancements across all the QAM. These included, for instance, updates to QAM sections 2 and 4 (the approval and modification and review of the institute's provision) to ensure appropriate referencing of FHEQ standards in QAM documentation and provision for appropriate input into academic standards from external points of expertise.
125. The academic regulations set out the terms of reference for award boards, which include the boards' remit to confer academic awards to eligible students, determine award classifications and report annually to the Academic Board. The team reviewed the minutes of the ITE assessment board meeting of 11 July 2024, the external exam board meeting held on 18 July 2024 and the Academic Board meeting of 11 July 2024, to determine whether these boards operated in line with the relevant provisions of the NIoT's taught degree regulations and according to each board's respective terms of reference. The team found that the minutes demonstrated that the boards are operating in accordance with their terms of reference and their purpose, as laid out in the academic regulations and frameworks.
126. Furthermore, the team found that decisions made by each board were approved by all members of that board, and that reporting and review responsibilities were being maintained, particularly in terms of the Academic Board, which has overall responsibility for academic governance. The external exam board minutes demonstrate that feedback and recommendations from external examiners were also considered.

127. The team is aware that programme and award boards are currently operated under the validator's arrangements. However, it is satisfied that the provisions of the NIoT's 2025-26 taught degree regulations and its Quality and standards assurance framework will enable assessment and award boards to continue as currently operated if the NIoT is granted DAPs authorisation.
128. The NIoT uses external examiners to review a sample of assessed student work, and comment on assessment marking. External examiners attend meetings of the relevant programme assessment boards, where recommendations regarding student progression and the granting of awards are made. The terms of reference for this board indicate that the contribution of external examiners is central to the operation of the board when considering and ensuring consistency in assessment outcomes, awards and student progression.
129. The team was satisfied that the academic frameworks and policies governing the NIoT's higher education provision are appropriate to its context. However, the team is aware that the NIoT has recently completed its first year of delivering higher education, and that consequently some provisions of the Quality assurance framework have not yet been fully implemented. The team cannot therefore confirm that academic frameworks and regulations are implemented fully and consistently. The team therefore recommends closer scrutiny of the operationalisation of academic regulations and frameworks during the probationary period.
130. As discussed under criterion A, the NIoT has begun to create academic frameworks and regulations in readiness for awarding its own higher education qualifications. For example, section 5 of the QAM clearly sets out how assessments and examinations should be administered to ensure they are conducted fairly and consistently within and across cohorts. The team saw that the NIoT has also begun to develop policies and documentation to support its academic frameworks and regulations.
131. For example, the PGCE student handbook provides students with an overview of the PGCE programme, with two of the three assessment briefs stated in full, along with the marking scheme and assessment criteria. The handbook also provides students with clear information regarding academic integrity, extenuating circumstances, assessment extension and assessment resits. The NIoT's Academic appeals policy sets out the principles and approaches to allowing students to raise concerns about their academic progress. Similarly, the NIoT's Academic misconduct policy provides guidance on definitions of academic misconduct and the NIoT's procedures for handling academic misconduct cases.
132. The team was satisfied that the NIoT has begun to develop its academic frameworks and regulations, which draw on regulations and documentation used by its validator, but which align more closely with its own operating context and the provision it offers. The team considers that the further development of academic frameworks and regulations should be an area of further review during the New DAPs probationary period.

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

133. The assessment team's view, based on its review of the evidence showing that the NIoT can be reasonably expected to meet the evidence requirements for B1.2 in full by the end of the probationary period, is that the New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion B1.2. This is because it contains sufficient information including key milestones or timelines, to demonstrate how the NIoT will meet criterion B1.2 in full by the end of the New DAPs probationary period.
134. The team's view is that the NIoT has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion B1.2 because it has begun to establish processes for maintaining a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves, and of subsequent changes to these. The records will be the reference point for delivery and assessment of programmes, as well as their monitoring and review. They will also be the reference point for providing records of study to students and alumni.

Reasoning

135. To determine whether the NIoT maintains definitive and up-to-date records of each programme and qualification it approves, and whether these records are used as the basis for delivery and assessment, the assessment team reviewed a range of evidence including:
- the New DAPs plan
 - programme and module specifications
 - the 2024-25 PGCE student handbook
 - section 4 of the NIoT QAM
 - the NIoT's Digital systems: Progress review paper.
136. The team reviewed programme specifications for the NIoT programme awarded by the NIoT's validating partner, and found that these set out a range of programme information including qualification titles, the corresponding FHEQ level, programme aims and learning outcomes, and whether the PGCE is for primary or secondary education. The team noted that the validating partner's programme specification is also embedded in the validation agreement. The team understood that the NIoT intends to maintain existing courses, should it be granted degree awarding powers, and saw that the New DAPs plan sets out key milestones and timings for the development, approval and implementation of definitive and up-to-date records of each qualification to be awarded. These plans include:
- a. Drafting a new programme specification template, mapping to the FHEQ to ensure programme aims, outcomes, and assessments align with the relevant FHEQ Level 7 descriptors, and demonstrating how students will acquire the required skills and knowledge during their studies.
 - b. Annual communication, training and guidance to all staff on how to adhere to programme specifications.
 - c. Storage of programme specifications and module specifications of all variants in the NIoT student record system (Dynamics), to ensure a definitive and up-to-date record of each qualification.
137. The New DAPs plan also set out plans for enrolling students onto Dynamics to ensure that relevant programme information is attached to students' records of study and that Dynamics holds the definitive record of that study. A student transcript template developed within

Dynamics will ensure that students and alumni can be provided with a definitive record of study. A review of the NIoT's Digital systems: Progress review paper also confirmed to the team that Dynamics will also be used for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

138. The team also reviewed the 2024-25 PGCE student handbook and the part-time addendum handbook and was satisfied that these also provided students with a detailed record of study that includes the learning objectives and the assessment strategy for all modules. Furthermore, the New DAPs plan indicates that students receive a student handbook during enrolment and that all handbooks will be loaded onto the VLE for access at any point during the year. The NIoT also plans for all instances of the student handbook to be annually reviewed and approved before they are communicated to staff and students.
139. From the review of evidence, the team formed the opinion that the NIoT maintains definitive and up-to-date records of each qualification to be awarded, and that records are used as the basis for the delivery and assessment of each programme. Furthermore, the team is content that the NIoT plans to continue developing and maintaining definitive records of study and providing records of study to students and alumni.

Conclusions

140. The assessment team concluded that NIoT has demonstrated an understanding of criterion B1, because the evidence demonstrated that NIoT has developed a range of academic frameworks and regulations to govern delivery of its higher education provision.
141. The evidence also demonstrated to the assessment team that the NIoT programme assessment and award boards and its Academic Board operate as intended and are exercising the required academic oversight. This includes the consideration of external examiner feedback and recommendations when marking student work and the determination of awards made to students.
142. The assessment team also concluded that the NIoT intends to develop its own programme specifications, along the lines of the programme specification developed with its validating partner, and that such a specification will form a definitive record of the programme being offered. The team was content that the NIoT's PGCE student handbook provides a further up-to-date record of the programme for students, which can be relied upon as the basis for delivery and assessment of the programme. Furthermore, the team was satisfied that developments with the NIoT's student record system will ensure that students and alumni are provided with records of study.
143. As the team found that the New DAPs plan is credible because it contains sufficient detail to demonstrate how the NIoT will meet criterion B1 by the end of the probationary period, it did not identify further changes to the New DAPs plan in respect of this criterion. However, the team considers that there should be monitoring throughout the New DAPs probationary period of the NIoT's plans for further development and operationalisation of its academic regulations and its Quality assurance framework and manuals.

Criterion B2: Academic standards

Advice to the OfS

144. The assessment team's view, based on its consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside other relevant information, is that the NIoT's New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion B2: Academic standards and that the NIoT has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion B2.
145. The team's view is based on its review of evidence showing in summary that the NIoT is developing clear and robust mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications. Furthermore, the team's view is that the NIoT is able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ. The NIoT also has in place processes to enable it to set and maintain standards above the threshold that are reliable over time, and reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.

Subcriteria B2.1 and B2.2

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.

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.

Reasoning

146. To test whether the NIoT's higher education qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of FHEQ, the assessment team reviewed a range of evidence including validated programme and module specifications, the Quality and standards assurance framework outline guide and manuals, the New DAPs self-assessment document, the Academic benchmarks in programme development and professional development of staff document, and staff training materials for marking and assessment.
147. The team noted that the programme specifications for the validated PGCE award state that the programme corresponds to Level 7 of the FHEQ, and that the qualification descriptor informs the level of academic achievement expected of students, and consequently the teaching, learning, and assessment methods used on the programme. The NIoT's DAPs self-assessment document sets out that the current programme underwent a rigorous validation process, through which it demonstrated that academic standards are set at a level that, as a minimum, meets the UK threshold standard. The team also reviewed the corresponding updated module specifications and found that assessment strategy for modules one two and three align with the qualification descriptors for Level 7 awards.
148. To determine whether the NIoT has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its own higher education qualifications (i.e. any qualifications awarded under its own DAPs authorisation if granted), the team reviewed the

NIoT's Quality and standards assurance framework outline guide alongside QAM sections 1 and 2.

149. The team noted that the former includes in its principles that 'the Institute will ensure that its academic standards meet external reference points.' External reference points listed include the UK Qualifications Framework as well as the requirements of any professional, statutory and regulatory organisations. The outline guide goes on to state that academic standards are assured by an 'Institute higher education outcomes framework, which is aligned with the UK Qualifications Framework and provides reference points to enable a common understanding of the characteristics and achievements represented by an Institute award'. The guide also clarifies that the Academic Board is responsible for ensuring that 'a clear framework for academic standards is in place, which ensures consistency in the academic standards both externally (in relation to UK and international frameworks) and internally (between all awards at a given academic level across all programmes)'.
150. As discussed under criterion B1.1, the New DAPs plan also sets out detailed milestones and timings for the development, approval and implementation of policies and processes set out in the Quality and standards assurance framework and manuals. These include processes to ensure that qualifications continue to be offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ. As also noted under criterion B1.1, the New DAPs plan makes provision for the development of an NIoT outcomes framework referencing the sector-recognised standards for FHEQ Level 7, including external referencing of other UK higher education providers. It was confirmed to the team that the NIoT outcomes framework will form part of the Quality assurance framework and that staff involved in the design and development of provision will be prompted and enabled to review the outcomes framework.
151. The NIoT's DAPs self-assessment document states that, to further ensure academic standards are set at FHEQ Level 7, all staff involved with the delivery and assessment of provision have undergone appropriate training. The team saw training materials related to marking and assessment, such as the Fundamentals of marking at M level presentations and marking standardisation session. It was clear to the team that one of the aims of these sessions is to ensure Level 7 standards are maintained through consistency in assessment and marking.
152. The team also found that the New DAPs plan provides information on the development of further support and guidance for staff on processes for the design and development of higher education provision. Milestones and timelines set out in the New DAPs plan include:
 - a. Communication of QAM changes to staff, with training and guidance on how to put the QAM into action.
 - b. Annual staff training on QAM and the Academic design manual, to include ensuring staff understand the FHEQ benchmarks when developing programmes and are appropriately equipped to design programmes effectively at FHEQ level 7.
 - c. Input into academic staff training from the Student Support and Welfare Manager, to ensure programme design and development take account of students' learning support needs.
 - d. Identifying the learning and development needs of all staff across the NIoT and developing a plan to deliver relevant training.

- e. Developing processes to provide academic staff with opportunities to participate in external academic review, or as external examiners for other higher education providers. This will include proposals for incentives for academic staff to participate.
153. The team formed the opinion that the NIoT is developing clear and robust mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications. Furthermore, its plans for development of the Quality and standards assurance framework will support processes to design new or modify existing higher education provision, to ensure that qualifications continue to be offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ. The team considers that the development and implementation of policies and processes set out in the Quality and standards assurance framework and manuals will be an area for further scrutiny during the New DAPs probationary period.
154. To assess whether, in setting and maintaining academic standards, the NIoT takes appropriate account of relevant external and independent points of reference and expertise, including students, the team reviewed a range of evidence including the New DAPs plan, the Quality and standards assurance framework outline guide and supporting manuals, the NIoT Live updates log and the Academic Board terms of reference.
155. The team saw that the Quality and standards assurance framework outline guide states that NIoT ensures academic standards meet external reference points such as the UK Qualifications Framework and, where appropriate, the requirements of any professional, statutory and regulatory organisation. It also sets out that processes for the assurance of academic quality and standards 'must align with extant guidance published by the QAA' (the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education). Furthermore, the team found that section 1 of the Quality and standards assurance manual states that the design of academic provision is informed by 'the relevant policies of the NIoT and the elements of the UK national academic infrastructure for higher education as set down by the Office for Students and the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.'
156. The team reviewed the proposal and approval template forms for new and modified provision that are included as appendices to the Quality and standards section 2 manual. The team found that these forms did not provide opportunities for programme design teams to indicate how account has been taken of external points of reference such as the OfS, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies or QAA guidance. However, as discussed under criterion B1.1, the New DAPs plan sets out detailed milestones and timelines for the development and implementation of quality assurance policies and processes. This includes the creation and implementation of an academic design manual defining staff roles in the design of academic provision and setting out the consultative and decision-making routes for academic design, through the academic governance structure.
157. The manual will include guidance on external referencing of other UK higher education providers, review of programme specifications and feedback from stakeholders such as staff, students, external examiners and the PAG. As also noted under criterion B1.1, the team reviewed the NIoT Live updates log and found it specified updates to the QAM necessary to add information on how the views of external experts such as employers or academics are taken into account in the setting and maintaining of academic standards.
158. The team reviewed the terms of reference of the PAG. It noted that the group's membership comprises individuals with expertise in designing and delivering education programmes and practice experts.

159. According to its terms of reference, the role of the PAG includes aims to:

- provide independent, expert advice on the development and implementation of the NIoT's programme design and delivery strategy
- offer informed external perceptions of teacher education in a national and international context
- offer guidance on potential improvements to learning and teaching practice with respect to current and potential future programme offerings
- test and validate new programme ideas
- provide independent, expert advice on the NIoT's programme quality and standards assurance processes
- discuss and share best practice in respect of programme design and delivery.

160. The assessment team noted this group as a source of external and independent expertise. As discussed under criterion A1.1, the New DAPs plan sets out detail and milestones regarding the work of the PAG. This includes the PAG undertaking a review of academic standards twice per academic year as well as a review of the Academic design manual every other year. The PAG will also provide advice to SEQA and the Academic Board in line with processes to approve programme or module specifications. The team formed the opinion that the further development and implementation of QAM processes, together with the planned work of the PAG, would ensure that the setting and maintaining of academic standards takes appropriate account of relevant external points of reference and external and independent points of expertise

161. To test whether programme approval, monitoring and review arrangements are robust, are applied consistently and explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved, the team reviewed a range of evidence including the Quality and standards assurance outline guide and supporting manuals, the programme and Academic Board terms of reference, the NIoT programme review process document and validation agreement between the NIoT and the University of Birmingham.

162. The team found that the principles and some processes for programme approval, monitoring and review are set out in the Quality and standards assurance outline guide and the QAM. For example, section 1 of the QAM provides guidance to staff on elements of designing academic provision such as marking criteria, the development of learning outcomes, and completion of module descriptors. The QAM section 2 sets out the stages to approval of new and modified academic provision and points to relevant templates for completion, and the section 4 manual is designed to cover the evaluation, monitoring and review of the NIoT's higher education provision.

163. As noted under criterion B1, the planned further development of QAM processes and procedures is designed to ensure that programme approval and modification arrangements achieve and maintain UK threshold academic standards are. This includes development of the NIoT outcomes framework, referencing the sector-recognised standards for FHEQ Level 7.

164. Section 4 of the QAM sets out a number of ways in which the NIoT reviews its higher education provision. These include analysis of student responses to module evaluation surveys, annual programme monitoring, and periodic programme reviews every five years. The team was aware that the 2023-24 annual programme review has been operated under the validator's arrangement for programme review. Furthermore, the NIoT has not yet been

delivering higher education long enough to have undertaken any periodic review of its provision. However, the team did see that the annual programme monitoring report template provides space for programme teams to give a detailed reflection on the operation of the programme including academic standards. The team also noted that the section 4 manual states the intent of the periodic review process is to 'ensure that the NIoT can have confidence in the quality of the learning experience and standard of achievement across its academic provision.' The section 4 manual also sets out that periodic review panel membership ordinarily includes external advisers and a student reviewer. The team noted that the New DAPs plan includes milestones and timelines for activities related to annual and periodic programme review. These include:

- timings for the annual review of each programme, which includes feedback from external examiners
- timings for the periodic review of programmes
- programme, SEQA and Academic Board consideration of annual programme review reports
- an annual report to the Academic Board on how external examiner feedback is being incorporated
- termly reports to the Programme Board, with the development, regular review and update of a programme improvement plan (the programme development document (PDD)) as part of the programme review process
- advisory groups to provide feedback into the annual programme review process.

165. The team also reviewed the NIoT programme review process document and found that it clearly sets out the NIoT's approach to programme evaluation and improvement including the in-year, annual and periodic programme review processes. The document reflects the New DAPs plan in that it clarifies programme review activities and that actions falling out of programme reviews are recorded in and monitored via the PDD. Furthermore, the PDD contains specific priorities and actions for each NIoT region and is proactively reviewed on a termly basis by the Head of ITE and the ITE Programme Board.

166. The document states that, in reviewing the efficacy of the annual programme review process, the NIoT has identified a need to make the requirement for external benchmarking more explicit. The team saw that the change had been captured in the NIoT Live updates log, to specify that periodic programme reviews should include reference against other institutions' academic standards for equivalent or adjacent programmes.

167. A review of the ITE Programme Board minutes evidenced consideration of student survey responses, with some feedback from students being designated for further action. The section 4 manual provides guidance on how programme or module leaders should analyse student responses and prepare a summary and response document to close the feedback loop. The team did not see a full range of evidence with regard to the analysis and actioning of student feedback, although it noted that the New DAPs plan includes milestones and timelines for the collection and analysis of student survey data to feed into Programme Board reports and the annual programme review. The team recommends this as an area for further review during the New DAPs probationary period.

168. As NIoT has only recently completed one full year of delivery of its higher education provision, the assessment team was unable to test whether its processes for programme approval

monitoring and review are applied consistently. Consequently, the team considers that the robustness and consistent application of programme approval, monitoring and review arrangements should be an area of monitoring during the New DAPs probationary period.

169. The team saw that the NIoT has a set of student assessment policies, including the Quality and standards assurance manual section 5, the academic regulations 2024-25 and the academic misconduct and academic integrity policies. Scrutiny of the first of these demonstrated to the team that the NIoT has developed guidance on how assessments will be conducted, and that this includes provision for internal and external moderation of marks. The team saw that the award board terms of reference include a remit to 'confer academic awards to eligible students,' and the 18 July 2024 ITE external exam boards minutes evidenced receipt and approval of marks and qualifications.
170. The team was content therefore that approaches to assessment are designed to ensure that credit and qualifications will be awarded only where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes have been demonstrated through assessment.
171. To test how assessment processes operated in practice, the team reviewed the PGCE student handbook, together with an internal moderation report for the PGCE module two (secondary) and an external examiner report for PGCE module two (primary). It also noted the outcomes of a review of a sample of assessed student work, undertaken as part of the assessment of Quality and standards (OfS initial conditions of registration B7 and B8). The PGCE student handbook outlines the names, credit values and learning outcomes of the three assessment modules. As set out in the Quality and standards (initial conditions B7 and B8) assessment report, a review of a sample of assessed student work found evidence that students are demonstrating key skills as required by the sector-recognised standards for Level 7. The internal module moderation report indicates that the moderator agreed with the majority of marks awarded in the sample. The external examiner report states that the assessment grading appeared consistent with the rubric provided, although the external examiner commented that 'there should be a clearer breakdown of how grades are derived from the three assessment criteria'.
172. Taken together, this evidence indicated to the team that the NIoT has developed a process for ensuring credit and qualifications will be awarded only where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated. However, the team recommends that a further review of assessed student work across the PGCE programme be undertaken during the probationary period, to further test that all learning outcomes correspond with the relevant levels of the FHEQ and that, where students are achieving learning outcomes, UK threshold academic standards are also being achieved.
173. The evidence reviewed by the team demonstrated that the NIoT's quality and standards framework provides for the use of external and independent expertise, and that this is required before a decision is taken about whether to approve or modify academic provision. The quality manual and the terms of reference for the Academic Board, programme board and programme advisory board show that the NIoT is using these boards to ensure that any new or modified provision is subject to a full review process before a decision to approve is taken. This includes feedback from students, external examiners, other partners and external stakeholders.
174. The team also saw that the academic regulations and the Quality and standards assurance framework set out the requirements for external examiners to provide feedback and comment on the NIoT's higher education provision. The Quality and standards outline guide states that

external examiners are crucial in helping the NIoT maintain academic standards. The ITE external exam board minutes reviewed by the team showed that external examiners are fully engaged with the exam board process, offering commendations for the quality and rigour of the programme as well as recommendations for enhancement. The team also saw evidence of external examiner input in the assessment, marking and moderation process.

175. The team noted that the programme board terms of reference include a remit to ensure 'ongoing maintenance and enhancement of academic quality and standards including enacting the recommendations of internal and external moderation or regulatory recommendations.' Scrutiny of the ITE programme board minutes evidenced consideration of student feedback. The minutes also commented on plans for external moderation. Furthermore, the New DAPs plan makes provision for the Academic Board to receive an annual report on how external examiner feedback is being incorporated.

Conclusions

176. The assessment team concluded that the NIoT has demonstrated an understanding of criterion B2, because the evidence demonstrates that the current validated provision corresponds to the relevant level in the FHEQ.
177. The team noted that to further ensure academic standards are set at FHEQ Level 7, all staff involved with the delivery and assessment of provision have undergone appropriate training, and that further training and support are planned to ensure staff understand FHEQ benchmarks and are appropriately equipped to effectively design programmes that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ.
178. The team concluded that the NIoT has in place, and is further developing, processes and mechanisms for the design, approval and review of new or modified provision to ensure qualifications continue to be offered at the relevant levels of the FHEQ. This includes using external and independent points of expertise in the programme design and approval stages and opportunities for receiving and reflecting on student feedback.
179. The team was satisfied that NIoT has developed processes for assessment that are designed to ensure that credit and qualifications will be awarded only where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes have been demonstrated. However, as the team only undertook a review of assessed student work for two modules, it recommends that a further review of assessed student work be undertaken during any New DAPs probationary period.
180. As the team found that the New DAPs plan is credible because it contains sufficient detail to demonstrate how the NIoT will meet criterion B2 by the end of the probationary period, it did not identify further changes to the New DAPs plan in respect of this criterion. However, the team identified the following key developments and requirements that should be monitored throughout NIoT's probationary period:
- that programme approval, monitoring and review arrangements are being robustly and consistently applied
 - the analysis and actioning of feedback from student surveys
 - a further review of assessed student work to test that, where student are achieving learning outcomes, UK threshold academic standards are also being achieved.

Criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience

Advice to the OfS

181. The assessment team's view, based on its consideration of the supporting evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside other relevant information, is that the NIoT has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion B3 and its New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience.
182. The team's view is based on its review of evidence showing in summary that the NIoT is developing processes that ensure it can design and deliver courses and qualification that provide a high quality academic experience to all students from all backgrounds. It is also developing processes to ensure that learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured.

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

183. To determine whether NIoT has demonstrated 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 – the team reviewed the following documents:
- the New DAPs plan
 - NIoT Quality and standards overview document
 - NIoT Quality and standards assurance manuals
 - module outlines
 - programme specifications
 - Staff development and Academic design benchmarks
 - Staff development and academic design
 - the Quality and standards assurance framework
 - the Associate college due diligence process
 - the terms of reference for the Academic Board, the Programme Board, the Programme Assessment Board and the PAG.

Design and approval of programmes

184. As noted under criterion B1, the NIoT has developed a QAM, designed to cover a range of key processes. For example, QAM sections 1, 2 and 4 provide guidance on programme design, approval, monitoring and review. Also as discussed in detail under criteria B1 and B2, the New DAPs plan sets out key milestones and timelines for the development and

implementation of processes related to the design, approval and review of programmes. Furthermore, the team saw that the ongoing planned development of quality assurance processes is intended to ensure that academic standards are secured and maintained through design and development processes for new or modified provision.

185. The team found that the NIoT operates effective processes for the approval of programmes, which are set out in section 2 of the QAM. The process to approve the NIoT's programmes is initially considered by the NIoT's senior management team, taking into consideration the following factors:
- student demand
 - expressions of interest from interested stakeholder such as employer organisations
 - feedback from students studying related programmes
 - resource requirements.
186. Once the senior management team approves a new programme, it undergoes further development and is subsequently reviewed by the NIoT's Academic Management Group. Following this review, the programme is formally presented to the NIoT's Academic Board. The terms of reference for the Programme Board and Academic Board indicate that they include two and four student members, respectively. Both boards are involved in the programme review and approval process, ensuring that students are consulted before any decision to approve or reject the proposed provision is made. It was not clear to the team how or how far external expertise is currently employed in the programme design, development or approval process as there are no external personnel in any of the groups at each stage of the design or approval process.
187. The NIoT's Academic benchmarks in programme development and professional development of staff document states that the provider has been 'very cognisant of ensuring that we are using expertise from other higher education providers to inform design.' It contends that it has achieved this by employing staff with experience of programme design for other higher education institutions, but these are now NIoT staff and therefore cannot be deemed as external expertise. However as noted under criterion B1.1, the New DAPs plan does set out detail and milestones for the development of mechanisms to ensure external expertise contributes to programme design and development including creation of an academic design manual.
188. As set out under criterion B2, principles and some processes for programme approval, monitoring and review are currently set out in the Quality and standards assurance outline guide and supporting manuals. This includes guidance to staff on elements of designing academic provision, the development of learning outcomes, and completion of module descriptors. There is also guidance to staff on the stages to approval, monitoring and review of new and modified academic provision, with pointers to relevant templates for completion.
189. The team also saw that the New DAPs plan provides information on the development of further support and guidance for staff on processes for programme design and approval and their responsibilities in relation to them. Milestones and timelines set out in the New DAPs plan include:
- a. Communication of quality assurance changes to staff, together with training and guidance on how to put the QAM into action.

- b. Annual staff training on Quality assurance framework and academic design manuals, to include ensuring staff understand the FHEQ benchmarks when developing programmes and are appropriately equipped to design programmes effectively at FHEQ Level 7.
 - c. Developing processes to provide academic staff with opportunities to participate in external academic review or as external examiners for other higher education providers. This will include proposals for incentives for academic staff to participate.
190. The responsibilities for approving new and modified provision are outlined in the relevant sections of the QAM. This includes gathering external and independent feedback and advice before a decision to approve or reject is taken. This is evidenced in an appendix to section 2 of the QAM, which makes provision for external examiner consultation. Evaluation and review process are also set out in the QAM, which outlines the process for ongoing monitoring of provision. Section 4 of the QAM states that 'Wherever possible, the views of schools and trusts are sought on the NlOT's academic activities.' It also states that 'Where appropriate and practicable, the NlOT seeks to invite schools and trusts to provide comments on the curriculum for a programme prior to its approval'. As noted under criteria B1 and B2, the team found key timelines and milestones in the New DAPs plan for the development of processes for ensuring the involvement of external expertise in the design and approval of programmes.
191. The PGCE programmes offered by the NlOT have two distinct elements, academic assessments and classroom-based practice. Knowledge and skills from the practice elements of the course are required for students to complete the assessment modules successfully, and the assessments provide the theoretical underpinnings for the practice elements. For example, understanding how learners learn is a key skill for trainee teachers, and skills and understanding in this area would meaningfully aid students as they complete assessment module one. The academic calendar for 2023-24 shows course content is structured so that key professional practice skills are introduced at appropriate points of the course to ensure they support student understanding when completing the assessment modules.
192. The NlOT programme of study demonstrates that course content is mapped against the professional practice requirements outlined in the Core content framework. These skills are necessary for students to gain QTS. The programme of study presents a clear map of the skills delivered by the NlOT, and shows that key concepts are covered systematically, with the skills, knowledge and understanding building coherently over the duration of the course.
193. The NlOT delivers its teaching to students via a single core training day per week, with full-time students spending the remaining weekdays in their school placements. Part-time students attend each training day but spend fewer days per week in their placements, with the extended timeframe providing the same number of placement days as their full-time counterparts. The team considered that, while the overall coherence of the programme is maintained, students who are at different stages of the course are being taught together, and that part-time students are therefore likely to have less practical teaching experience to draw on than their full-time colleagues at most points during the course.
194. In the April 2025 meeting between members of the assessment team and the NlOT senior management team, the NlOT set out how it ensures parity of the student experience is maintained and monitored across cohorts and the national mode of delivery. In summary, the team heard that this is achieved through delivery of a standardised curriculum, with tutors on each campus who quality assure delivery of provision and oversight of the student experience monitored via the SEQA. This approach is further discussed under criterion D.

195. The team reviewed the Students' needs and support document to determine whether close links are maintained between learning support services and the organisation's programme planning and approval arrangements. SSCC meetings are scheduled each term, followed by a national Academic Board meeting where student representatives can provide feedback. The documentation reviewed by the team shows that student feedback is considered and acted upon where appropriate.
196. For example, during the Academic Board meetings in April and June 2024, students requested additional support for module two and writing at Level 7. In response, the NIoT included support for these areas in weekly core sessions. The team reviewed a PowerPoint slide deck from this session, which included guidance on critical thinking and writing at Level 7. A further example was seen in the December 2023 Academic Board meeting minutes, which demonstrated the NIoT's action on student feedback from an earlier meeting by implementing a new VLE.
197. The team found that feedback mechanisms, such as the SSCC and student membership of the Academic Board, provide students with the opportunity to communicate their learning support needs, thus informing the NIoT's programme planning arrangements. The team also noted that the New DAPs plan sets out actions and timelines for the creation of a template to facilitate the consideration of student support requirements in programme approval or modification processes. Furthermore, the NIoT Student Support and Welfare Manager will have input into academic staff training, to ensure programme design and development take account of students' learning support needs. A fuller consideration of students' learning support needs and how they are met is discussed under criterion D.

Learning and teaching

198. To determine whether the NIoT is able to deliver courses that provide a high quality learning experience, the team reviewed the following documentation:
- the New DAPs plan
 - Strategy refresh 2024 to 2027
 - NIoT's Design and development principles
 - the NIoT's Learning and teaching strategy
 - minutes from Academic Board and SSCC meetings
 - trainee end of year survey analysis
 - the associate college overview 2023-24
 - feedback and continuous improvement document
 - overview of student development and achievement documents
 - handbook code of conduct
 - the NIoT's Digital systems: Progress review paper
 - the NIoT's Digital library: Implementation plan paper.
199. The evidence reviewed demonstrated to the team that the NIoT articulates a strategic approach to learning and teaching, which is consistent with its stated academic objectives. As discussed under criterion A1, its vision is to be a 'school system that nurtures the talents of teachers and leaders at all stages of their career, so that they can provide children with the excellent education they deserve'. Its mission is to 'improve the quality of teacher training and

leader development at a system level,' through generating and interpreting research and applying these learnings to the development, design and delivery of its programmes.

200. The team found that the Design and development principles for programmes clearly outline an approach to teaching and learning that is likely to result in students developing the skills and understanding necessary to become teachers in their specific subject at either primary or secondary levels. This is reflected in the Learning and teaching strategy, which sets out how the NIoT will deliver the strategic approach set out in the development principles. The Learning and teaching strategy outlines the NIoT's strategic objectives to 'help shape the developments of rich and creative educational experiences for everyone studying and working at the Institute'.
201. The team found that the Learning and teaching strategy provides a high-level summary of how the NIoT will approach the teaching of its students. In particular, it makes a commitment to provide learning that reflects student, staff and future employer expectations and requirements, and states its intention to work closely with students to ensure the student voice is heard during the development of programmes and teaching and to provide opportunities for staff development.
202. The team found that in its New DAPs plan, the NIoT has set out an intent to deliver staff development on learning and teaching changes to inform academic delivery and, as discussed further under criterion C1, this demonstrated to the team one way in which the NIoT will implement the objectives of its Learning and teaching strategy. In addition, the team considered that one of the 'design and delivery principles' set out in the strategy is to 'take a uniquely school-led approach to learning,' and found that this was reflective of the NIoT's teaching model and curriculum.
203. Overall, the team considers that Learning and teaching strategy outlines a comprehensive, detailed and credible strategic approach, which is consistent and supportive of the NIoT's academic objectives. The team noted that, at the time of the assessment, the NIoT was revising its Learning and teaching strategy for the 2024-25 academic year, and therefore noted that the development and implementation of the new strategy should be monitored through the probationary period.
204. The NIoT operates a blend of in-person and virtual delivery. Because of the structure of the PGCE programme, attendance at the in-person core training day is mandatory, and recorded lectures and other training materials are provided online to enable students to engage in asynchronous learning outside core teaching hours. The NIoT arranges timetabled options in core training for students to access specific lecture materials according to their learning needs.
205. Each of the NIoT's campus sites is based in a school operated by a NIoT founding member, and each site conforms to accessibility and safety standards applicable to school premises. The NIoT reported that all sites provide spaces for individual and group study, as well as social areas, and on-site learning is supplemented by online learning.
206. Two members of the assessment team visited the South, East and London campus located in Bermondsey, London, in March 2024 as part of the Quality and standards assessment for registration with the OfS. During this visit the team members observed two teaching sessions (one primary and one secondary) and viewed a demonstration version of the NIoT's proposed new VLE, which was planned to be implemented from the start of the 2024-25 academic year. The campus the team visited was due to move to a new location in Peckham for the start of

the 2024-25 academic year, as the host school has grown and requires the return of the space used by the NIoT. The NIoT reported that the Peckham location will have larger teaching spaces, with additional smaller student and learning spaces available.

207. During the visit, the team met with resource and facilities staff and heard how the NIoT had set out plans to support students through the transition to its new site to enable students to access more teaching materials and content. Members of the team also met with a current student representative who had experience of the Bermondsey campus. The team heard a positive account of the change in site, and that the student representative felt the larger space and additional smaller learning spaces would be beneficial and provide better opportunities for students to create their own learning and support groups. While the team did not visit the new Peckham site, through its visit of the previous site in Bermondsey and its meetings with staff and students it considered that the NIoT has appropriate plans to ensure it maintains physical learning and social environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for all students. However, the team considered that this is an area that would need to be monitored during the probationary period.
208. The team reviewed a Digital infrastructure map which depicts how the NIoT's virtual and digital learning environments and support provisions are set up and interconnect, and how students have access to the multiple interfaces, including the NIoT's website, Microsoft Office functionalities and the proposed new VLE. In addition, during the visit in March 2024, members of the team met with key staff and learned of the NIoT's plans for the new VLE to be implemented from September 2024, a demonstration of which they viewed. The team considered that, once implemented, the VLE would provide a comprehensive and secure virtual learning environment which contains all study materials available to students, including prerecorded materials for asynchronous online delivery as well as live lecture materials.
209. The VLE will be the mechanism for students to submit assessments and track and monitor their progress through assessment feedback and grades. The team also observed how reading lists and links to online resources and journals will be provided, with research materials made available via links to the validating partner's library. The support provided to students in accessing the VLE is discussed under criterion D1.
210. The team noted that the New DAPs plan included key milestones and timelines for the implementation of the VLE and for monitoring its effectiveness. These included:
- a. The launch of the VLE to all staff and students in September 2024, with post-launch review and additional development for 2025-26 academic year.
 - b. Integration of the VLE with NIoT's student records system (SRS), to be completed in time for the start of the 2025-26 academic year.
 - c. Training and guidance for students and staff to ensure they can make effective use of the VLE. This training will be repeated annually and will include virtual training sessions, guidance documents and drop-in sessions with the Digital team.
 - d. The establishment of a VLE gatekeeper role to ensure that any issues and queries are resolved quickly and efficiently.
 - e. The conduct of an external review of the VLE, with proposals for change being considered by SEQA and Academic Board.

- f. Student feedback on the VLE for SSCCs to receive and monitor student, with a summary report to SEQA and an annual action log of VLE issues to be included in the annual report to SEQA.
 - g. Regular audits of the VLE conducted to maintain data quality and safety, ensuring the integrity and security of user information.
211. The team also reviewed the NIoT's Digital systems: Progress review paper, presented to ExCo in January 2025, which provides an update on key areas of digital development including the VLE. The team found that the paper provided a clear and helpful overview of the key VLE developmental milestones, and reassurance on progress against these. The paper also clarified arrangements for the ongoing monitoring of the VLE, including a proposal for an external review conducted by Jisc and an intention to maintain a continuous dialogue with all stakeholders 'essential in maintaining the relevance and functionality of the systems'.
212. The team reviewed minutes of the summer 2024 SSCC meeting for all four NIoT areas and noted that feedback regarding the physical aspects of the programmes' school-based practice elements was generally positive, and that no specific issues regarding virtual and social learning environments were raised. The team saw in its review of minutes of the Academic Board meeting from December 2023, that issues had previously been reported regarding access to the students' progress tracker tool and to the University of Birmingham's e-library. However, the team also saw that there had been appropriate discussion and remediation of these issues. For example, it was agreed to move back a summative assessment deadline to accommodate the impact of the e-library access issues on students.
213. The team was assured through the demonstration of the VLE, its review of evidence and discussions with appropriate staff, that the NIoT has appropriate plans in place to maintain virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student. However, the team considered that implementation of the VLE and ongoing monitoring of its effectiveness should be monitored during the probationary period.
214. The team found that the NIoT does not currently have its own library resources or facilities and relies on library access provided via its validating partner, the University of Birmingham. However, the team also saw that the New DAPs plan sets out key milestones and timeline for the development and implementation of the NIoT's plans to provide its own online library resources for students. These include:
- a. The procurement, onboarding and launch of digital library services.
 - b. Delivery against key milestones of the Library implementation plan.
 - c. Provision for the Digital team and academic staff to determine the reading list content, online journals and access to research materials needed for the initial implementation. Also, an annual review of reading lists.
 - d. Creation of a specification for reading list requirements, to be embedded and considered in programme approval or modification processes.
 - e. Training and guidance for students and staff to ensure they can use the digital library.
 - f. Review of the digital library and its student engagement, including feedback from students and staff. Findings to be reported to the SEQA, and any adjustments to the platform and licences made in time for the next academic year. This will be repeated annually.

215. The team also reviewed the NIoT's Digital library: Implementation plan paper, presented to ExCo in May 2024, which provides an overview of the implementation plan and an update on progress. The paper sets out that, in seeking to develop its digital library services, the NIoT has engaged and consulted with Jisc, the Department for Education's ITE digital team and experts from other higher education institutions. The paper also states that the NIoT aims to apply for affiliate academic membership in Jisc's library collections programme, which will allow access to Jisc's library support and streamline the contractual licensing process.
216. The team also reviewed the NIoT's Library implementation plan and was satisfied that it gave a clear and comprehensive breakdown of the activities, resourcing and timings for implementation of the digital library. The plan runs from June 2024 to December 2025, when a review of the library will be presented to the Academic Board. It indicates 1 September 2025 as the 'go live' date of the digital library, and that training for staff and students on the new system will also begin in September. The team also noted that the Digital library: Implementation plan paper provides details of a contingency plan to maintain offline library access to students via the VLE in case of need.
217. However, the paper also states that the contingency option is unlikely, as the implementation plan allows sufficient time to design and implement the digital library. The team considered that the plan will be a helpful additional tool in monitoring progress of the library implementation workstream through any New DAPs probationary period. The team recommends that the launch and implementation of the new digital online library and the ongoing monitoring of its effectiveness should be monitored through the New DAPs probationary period.
218. The team reviewed the NIoT's 2023-24 Code of conduct handbook, which sets out behaviour requirements for students, such as maintaining professionalism when communicating with other students and staff at the NIoT and children, staff, parents and guardians in placement settings. The team noted that the guidance covers online and in-person communication, use of social media and mobile phones, and the requirement to act with the integrity expected of teachers. The code of conduct also refers to the Department for Education Teachers' standards part 2: Personal and professional conduct and sets out the NIoT's expectations of its students to adhere to them.⁷ These standards are designed to maintain a high level of professional and personal conduct, and include among other things:
- treating pupils with dignity, building relationships rooted in mutual respect, and always observing proper boundaries appropriate to a teacher's professional position
 - having regard for the need to safeguard pupils' wellbeing, in accordance with statutory provisions
 - showing tolerance of and respect for the rights of others.
219. The NIoT assesses its students against these standards as part of its QTS assessment, and they form part of the programme of study to ensure they are embedded across the entire course. This evidence demonstrated to the team that the NIoT takes seriously the conduct and behaviour of its students and promotes dignity, courtesy and respect in the use of its physical, virtual and social learning environments. As discussed above in this section, the team recommends that the use of both the NIoT's physical and virtual environments is monitored through the probationary period.

⁷ See Gov.UK, [Teachers' standards overview](#).

220. The team found that the evidence showed that students can monitor their progress and further their academic development through various mechanisms. All students have a tracker tool and activity journal that they complete weekly, alongside weekly meetings with their assigned mentors. The progress tracker enables students to identify the key learning points from the previous week's core training, and their individual learning. Students can also record how they have demonstrated key teaching skills and keep a record of reflective practice. In addition, the activity journal sets students a series of tasks to complete, which test practice skills.
221. Tutors and students have a record of attainment across the programme, which can be used to identify gaps in skills, knowledge and understanding. Students have access to these records and can discuss them with their tutors at any time. In addition, all students undergo a termly review involving their mentor and tutor, which is formed of an assessment against the taught curriculum and results in a termly report. Through this process, students and their mentors audit the curriculum elements that have been taught during the term, to assess student progress. Tutors then review the reports. Students who are not making sufficient progress are identified during this process and plans are put in place to provide more specific objectives and support. Further discussion of academic support and monitoring of progress is set out under criterion D1.
222. The structure of the PGCE curriculum includes formative and summative assessment points, which provide an additional opportunity for students to monitor their progress by receiving and reviewing feedback. Feedback on assessments is supplemented by meetings with tutors. Assessment feedback is discussed further under the 'Assessment' section below.
223. The team noted that the development and implementation of the NIoT's VLE will provide further tools and mechanisms for students to monitor their progress and academic development. In summary, the evidence reviewed demonstrated to the team that the NIoT has in place appropriate mechanisms to ensure that every student is enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development. The team considered that further evidence of these mechanisms operating in practice, and the students' experience of them, would be provided throughout the probationary period.

Assessment

224. To determine whether the NIoT has developed valid and reliable assessments processes, including for the recognition of prior learning, the assessment team reviewed a range of evidence including the academic regulations, the Quality and standards assurance manual section 5, and programme and award board minutes. The academic regulations outline the approach to assessment, including the operation of programme assessment boards and award boards. Programme assessment boards have responsibility for oversight of student assessment, including determining the final outcome of assessment. The award board's terms of reference include a remit to confer academic awards to eligible students and determine degree classifications. The QAM section 5 provides further detail on assessment processes, including reasonable adjustment procedures, assessment marking and feedback, and guidance on academic integrity.
225. The team also reviewed programme and exam board minutes to determine whether these operate in line with the processes set out in the academic regulations and the QAM. The ITE Programme Assessment Board minutes of 11 July 2024 indicated a robust consideration of student assessment outcomes and discussion of extenuating circumstances and assessment extension cases. Similarly, the award board minutes showed the board receiving and approving marks and awards, and discussion of award classifications. The minutes also

evidenced discussion of assessment feedback and design. The team was assured that the NIoT operates robust and reliable assessment board processes and was confident that it would continue to do so under its own DAPs authorisation if granted.

226. Arrangements for the recognition of prior learning are also set out in the QAM. The manual offers clear guidance on the NIoT's approach to the accreditation of prior learning, including definitions of prior certified and experiential learning, how the value of such learning will be calculated and how it will be applied to a student's learning record. The manual also clarifies that prior learning will only be accredited where evidence of achievement is provided and assessed by the NIoT in relation to module and level equivalence.
227. Overall, the team considers that the NIoT does have credible plans to ensure all modules have learning outcomes and that there are robust and appropriate plans for assessment calibration and standardisation. The team found that the PGCE student handbook gives students a clear overview of the programme, including the learning outcomes and the assessment strategy. The handbook also includes detailed information regarding the marking schemes and assessment criteria applicable to each module. The marking schemes demonstrate that the assessment for these modules will be valid and reliable. The PGCE student handbook is made available to students at the start of their course. This means students have an early awareness of the levels of attainment required to demonstrate achievement of learning outcomes.
228. The module three assessment is a review of a student's professional practice. The module information in the PGCE handbook advises that this module is assessed holistically across various evidence bases including a progress tracker, formal reports, trainee evidence, observations and reflective tasks. The NIoT's Student development and achievement document provides further detail on the approach to the overall assessment strategy. For example, it sets out how mentors, tutors and departmental heads work together to support student development and achievement. It also states that external examiners assess the reliability and validity of marks and how the academic knowledge and skills of a sample of students are developing. The team formed the opinion that there are opportunities for students and tutors to record the practice skills demonstrated across the year, and for additional support to be given to students who are not making sufficient progress.
229. To determine how consistency of assessment is maintained for module three, including how the recording of practice skill is subjected to additional scrutiny, the team reviewed the 2024-25 student handbook. This sets out that the assessment regime for module three consists of a 15-minute presentation and 15-minute viva. In response to queries, the NIoT confirmed to the team that standardisation for module three assessments follows a similar pattern to modules one and two. Staff receive training, test mark exemplar assessment panel videos, and agree marks and feedback to ensure alignment to the marking rubric before the marking process begins. Staff are also provided with guidance documents to support the marking of each module.
230. The NIoT also confirmed to the team that, in line with its moderation policy, there is more than one marker present for module three marking because marking takes place at the time of the assessment. Furthermore, there is a formal record of how each student's mark is arrived at, with reference to the marking criteria, and an audiovisual recording of the assessment, which is used for moderation purposes by internal and external examiners.
231. The team reviewed an example proforma for marking of module three and considered that it provided a comprehensive marking rubric, indicating a clear alignment between assessment

criteria and marks. It also reviewed the January 2025 external examiner's module three moderation report and noted the external examiner's comment that 'the assessments adhered to Level 7 standards demonstrating that markers consistently applied the established criteria for knowledge, critical evaluation and communication'. The team was therefore assured that there is a robust standardisation and moderation policy for all modules including module three, and that this is effectively applied.

232. The team noted in minutes of the SSCC meetings that students had voiced some dissatisfaction with elements of module three and had requested more training on the use of progress trackers. However, the team also noted that the New DAPs plan sets out key milestones and timelines for activities related to the standardisation and moderation of assessment marking across all modules. These include:
- a. Updating the NIoT's existing moderation policy to include detail around standardisation and the process for updating it, in line with the NIoT's operating context and academic regulations.
 - b. Finalising a new standardisation and moderation policy for the 2025-26 academic year.
 - c. The annual review of the standardisation and moderation policy conducted by the Assessment and Awards Manager.
 - d. Communication to staff each July, with annual training and guidance on how to adhere to the standardisation and moderation policy.
 - e. Training and guidance delivered before each module is assessed, to ensure academic staff are appropriately equipped to enact the standardisation and moderation policy and can mark effectively at Level 7.
 - f. Review by the Programme Assessment Board of external examiners' comments for each module (three times a year) with recommendations to feed into the next module's training.
233. In consideration of the evidence, that team was content that the NIoT operates valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.
234. To test whether staff and students engage in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made, the team reviewed the PGCE student handbook, the Quality and standards assurance manual section 5, the Fundamentals of marking document, minutes from various SSCC meetings and the academic appeals policy.
235. As mentioned earlier in this report, the PGCE student handbook sets out the marking schemes and assessment criteria. This provides guidance to students on the attributes being tested in assessed work and the criteria used to measure student performance. Students are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the marking criteria grid and consult with staff if they have any questions. Students receive regular feedback on assessed work, and the Quality and standards assurance manual section 5 sets out the requirements for student feedback, including timelines for written feedback on coursework.
236. The NIoT's Fundamentals of marking training document sets out the principles for marking student work and also covers the provision of assessment feedback to students. The team formed the opinion that the document evidences the provision of clear instruction and guidance to markers regarding the form and content of assessment feedback. The team noted

that the document imposes certain constraints on feedback, which could be a barrier to ensuring all students have a full understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made. For example, it states that number of annotations should be no more than six per page, and markers are directed to comment on grammar and spelling for the first two pages only. Furthermore, the 'feed forward' targets designed to provide feedback specifically to support future academic writing are limited to two per script. The team considered that a more flexible approach might be appropriate to ensure all students are enabled to fully develop their knowledge and skills. A more detailed discussion of the NlOT's approach to assessment feedback is set out under criterion C.

237. A review of the minutes of SSCC meetings demonstrated to the team that students have opportunities to give feedback on their educational experience. For example, students requested further guidance on critical analysis of literature and additional support with referencing. The team was content that SSCC meetings provide a valuable forum for staff and students to engage in dialogue around assessment and promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made. The team noted that the New DAPs plan includes an intention to share feedback from SSCC meetings with the SEQA. The team recommends this as an area for further monitoring to ensure that such feedback is being fully considered, and that actions taken are relayed to students to further support their understanding of assessment strategies and the basis on which academic judgement are made.
238. The NlOT has a formal academic appeals process, which enables students to appeal against a decision of the NlOT Assessment Board. Section 5 of the Quality and standards manual sets out guidance on the NlOT's academic appeals process, including the grounds on which academic appeals can be made. Grounds for academic appeal can be summarised as evidence of procedural or administrative irregularity, or previously unknown factors that materially affected a student's performance. The team noted that the New DAPs plan sets out activities for the review of the academic appeals process. The team welcomes such a review to ensure that the academic appeals process further supports a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made, and recommends this as an area for further monitoring during any New DAPs probationary period.
239. In terms of how students are provided with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice, the team saw that students are required to attend a Flying start programme introduction session. This session gives students an overview of the course structure, its aims and the approach to assessment. It also introduces students to the progress tracker and outlines the requirements of the special educational needs and disabilities code of practice, including the public sector equality duty, General Data Protection Regulations and the Equality Act 2010. This introductory session is detailed and supports students to have an early understanding of their academic and professional responsibilities as students and trainee teachers.
240. The team saw that the Student needs and support document sets out the NlOT's processes for ensuring students are equipped with the 'necessary skill sets, experiences and strategies to enable success in their placement school and in their academic studies'. This approach includes the allocation of a personal tutor to each student, to provide support with academic matters such as PGCE assignments and review student progress and development needs.
241. The team also found that the QAM section 8 sets out the NlOT's approach to supporting students' academic achievement. The manual details the various sources of academic support

available to students, and states that the development of academic skills is embedded in programmes and modules. It advises that support is available from the central support team and the NIoT lecturers on areas such as academic writing, reflective learning and academic integrity and referencing. The team was made aware that students would be able to access additional support materials via the VLE on demand. The team also saw that the New DAPs plan makes provision for the review of the engagement and effectiveness of additional academic support, and the reporting of the outcomes of the review to the programme board. The team recommends this as an area for further review through the New DAPs probationary period.

242. The PGCE student handbook outlines the programme of study and includes the marking schemes and assessment criteria to promote student understanding of the skills required to achieve success in assessment. The handbook also provides explanations of academic integrity and how this is integral to the assurance of quality and academic standards in the NIoT awards. It provides guidance to students on conventions they are required to follow when completing assessments. These include acknowledging all sources of information, declaring when work has been used in a previous assessment, and complying with all applicable regulatory, legal and professional obligations and ethical requirements.
243. The handbook also provides guidance on the use of artificial intelligence (AI). It acknowledges that in some instances AI might be used as a learning tool or study aid, and it directs students to ensure they are aware of when use of AI is permissible in assessments. The team noted that the New DAPs plan includes an activity to communicate with students on how to avoid academic malpractice. The team recommends that this be an area of further monitoring during any New DAPs probationary period.
244. The team formed the view that students are provided with good opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice. However, the team recommends that any New DAPs probationary period incorporates a review of the effectiveness of additional academic support materials, including communication to students on how to avoid academic malpractice.
245. To test whether the NIoT operates processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice, the team reviewed the academic misconduct policy and the academic integrity procedure document.
246. The academic misconduct policy sets out the NIoT's approach to academic misconduct, including definitions, and procedures for addressing suspected cases of academic misconduct. This includes details regarding the operation of academic misconduct panels. Broadly, the policy defines academic misconduct as 'any attempt by a trainee to gain an unfair advantage in assessment'.
247. The academic integrity procedure document sets out staff and student responsibilities regarding academic integrity and provides additional detail on the NIoT's approach to identifying and investigating academic misconduct such as plagiarism.
248. In terms of identifying academic misconduct, the NIoT deploys software that identifies plagiarism, the use of essay mills and AI-generated text. The team was content that the academic integrity procedure document sets out detailed guidance to students on how the NIoT will identify and tackle instances of alleged, suspected or proven plagiarism, and includes provision to deal with poor academic practice including incomplete or missing citations or instances of unintentional plagiarism. The document clarifies the various stages of

the investigations process and the potential consequences of academic misconduct. Consequences range from a capped mark in cases of moderate plagiarism to referral to an academic misconduct panel in more serious cases. The team reviewed a redacted example of a potential plagiarism form, which showed how action may be taken in instances where plagiarism is suspected. The policy is aligned with the requirements of the NIoT's validator, but the team considers there is enough detail in the policies for them to function as intended without the support of the validator.

249. The team considered that both the Academic misconduct policy and the Academic integrity procedure document provide significant detail on how the NIoT operates processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice. The team felt, however, that the volume of detail provided across both documents did not necessarily align and could lead to confusion among staff and students about the overall process for dealing with academic misconduct, and consequently a lack of engagement. The team recommends that the NIoT consider bringing these two documents together into one policy that might provide even clearer guidance to staff and students.
250. The team found that processes for marking assessment and for moderating marks are set out in the QAM section 5. This details the NIoT's requirements for marking assessed work, such as the requirement that marks are usually determined by a first and second marker. It also clarifies the arrangements for the submission of sample assessments to external examiners for moderation.
251. The team's review of an internal module moderation report indicated that internal moderation had been conducted in line with the requirements set out in QAM section 5. Moderators had reviewed a sample of assignments covering the full range of marks and had provided detailed commentary regarding the first marks assigned, even where marks were agreed. The internal moderation form also contained details of the external examiner's feedback on the module. A review of external examiner module moderation reports indicated that external examiners are provided with a sample of student work for each assessment method for the module under review, and that the assessment sample is taken from across the full mark range. External examiners are invited to comment on the suitability and consistency of marks awarded. In completed moderation reports, the team also saw that external examiners provided detailed commentary on the assessment strategy and the quality of feedback to students.
252. Internal and external moderation reports demonstrated a level of consistency in the operation of processes for marking and moderation of marks. Also, as set out under paragraph 231 it was clear to the team how the NIoT uses the marking matrix in the assessment of professional practice for module three to ensure that students are demonstrating achievement at the required level. The team formed the opinion that there is a robust standardisation and moderation policy is effectively applied for all modules including module three.
253. The NIoT ensures that staff with responsibility for marking student work receive appropriate training. This training is designed to ensure that each marker understands the requirements of the assessment they are marking, and that there is consistency in the application of the marking rubric across all assessments and regional campuses. This training also covers the provision of assessment feedback to students, and clear instruction and guidance to markers regarding the form and content of this feedback. Each assessment script is subject to internal moderation in each region and nationally, and reviewed by external examiners, with feedback being considered at programme assessment board and academic board level. The NIoT also undertakes standardisation training, which all internal and external markers attend. The slide

deck for this training shows how real-time marking exercises are used to provide practical examples, creating a shared understanding between markers regarding the application of the marking scheme.

254. It was not clear to the team whether staff have open access to training materials relating to the standardisation of marking. However as set out in criterion C, the team noted that, in its paper The role of academic and professional staff, NIoT sets out specific plans to develop academic staff, and that future staff development includes 'teaching and assessing at Level 7'. Also as set out in criterion C, the team considered staff development to be an important area of focus during any New DAPs probationary period.

External examining

255. To assess the NIoT's external examining processes, the team considered the following:

- various examples of external examiner moderation feedback
- Feedback and continuous improvement document
- standardisation session for markers module
- Quality and standards assurance manual section 4
- external exam board minutes
- Academic Board minutes
- Programme Assessment Board minutes.

256. To assess whether the NIoT makes scrupulous use of external examiners, the team reviewed the Feedback and continuous improvement document. This states that feedback is gathered from external examiners after every module and visit. This feedback is presented to various boards, including programme boards and interim assessment boards. A final external examination board meeting is held, and a verbal report is provided to inform the annual review and continuous improvement plan.

257. An example of this process was observed by the team in the ITE Examination Board minutes from the meeting on 18 July 2024. Two external examiners attended this meeting, during which they reviewed students' marks and awards for various subjects in both primary and secondary programmes. During the meeting, external examiners provided verbal reports, praising aspects of the programme and suggesting improvements in areas such as assignment support and structure, feedback and grade transparency. One examiner also recommended increasing the number of external examiners to reduce individual workloads. It is unclear whether these recommendations have been implemented, but the document states that feedback is analysed and responded to throughout the year. Additionally, the Feedback and continuous improvement document mentions that feedback from external examiners contributes to the annual ITE development plan as part of the improvement cycle.

258. The team also reviewed an external examiner's report for the PGCE module two for the primary programme. This document provides a brief overview of the range of work that external examiners will be moderating and includes a sample of student work for each module assessment method. The external examiners are asked to comment on 'the consistency and accuracy of marking standards'. The external examiner moderation feedback submitted by the NIoT shows that external examiners can give comprehensive feedback, including disagreeing with the marks given by other markers. They are asked to comment on whether they consider

the internal mark reflects consistency of marking across the set of assessment scripts they are reviewing. They can also provide a view on the quality of internal marker feedback to students.

259. All external examiners are given training using the same training materials as those received by internal markers. This provides a consistent understanding of the marking matrix being used, and enables the external examiners to provide meaningful commentary that recognises student attainment at the levels specified in the matrix.
260. However, as the NIoT has only had one cohort of students pass through the award process, evidence of external examiner input is limited. Therefore, the team is not able to fully consider the extent to which the NIoT considers the comments made by external examiners and provides them with responses to that commentary. However, the team considers the processes currently in operation are sufficient to meet this requirement, and that further evidence will become available for review during the probationary period monitoring.

Academic appeals and student complaints

261. To test whether the NIoT has effective procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints, the team reviewed a range of documentation including:
- the ITE complaints policy
 - the academic appeals procedure
 - an example of a potential plagiarism interview
 - an example of an admission of academic misconduct AI form
 - a PGCE module outcome letter
 - an anonymised complaint example
 - an example academic appeal submission.
262. The team considers the ITE complaints policy to be comprehensive and clearly explained, with the definition and type of complaints which may be handled under the policy clearly outlined. These include:
- misleading or incorrect information in prospectuses or promotional material and other information provided by the provider
 - failure by the provider to meet obligations, including those outlined in course and student handbooks or the NIoT's Student charter
 - concerns about the delivery, teaching or administration of a programme including, where applicable, that provided by a partner provider
 - poor quality of facilities, learning resources or services provided directly by the provider or any partners
 - complaints involving other organisations or contractors providing a service on behalf of the provider.
263. The policy sets the type of action that may follow a complaint, and sets out the process to be followed, moving from an informal to a formal process should the complaint not be resolved.
264. The policy advises students where they should direct complaints relating to allegations of bullying, harassment or victimisation, and the policy under which such complaints will be considered. Students with complaints relating to the school-based mentor or the NIoT tutor are also signposted to the appropriate contact.

265. The team noted that the New DAPs plan makes provision for the Student Support and Welfare (SSW) manager to review how students can access advocacy to support them through the complaints procedure. In the April 2025 meeting between members of the assessment team and the NIoT senior management team, the former requested further detail about what advocacy for students would look like. It was confirmed to the team that the SSW Manager will have a role in providing advice and guidance to students on complaints procedures, including access to advocacy. The NIoT also advised that advocacy arrangements are still in development, and various options are being considered for this, including the use of an independent advocacy service. It was also confirmed that in developing advocacy arrangements, the NIoT will follow as far as possible the best practice guidelines of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education.
266. The team formed the view that the accessibility of the complaints procedures should be monitored during the New DAPs probationary period.
267. The example complaint and academic misconduct forms show that the NIoT takes appropriate action in response to complaints. In the complaint example provided, actions are clearly signposted to the student, each step of the process is clearly outlined and actions that had been taken are reported and discussed. The academic misconduct AI form considered by the team shows that the student was interviewed, and informal action taken. The action required by the student was clear, as were the consequences if they do not complete the required action. The potential plagiarism form considered by the team shows that the student was interviewed before a judgement regarding the plagiarism was taken. The next steps were communicated to the student, and they were given sufficient opportunity to explain their actions.
268. The team considers that the examples reviewed demonstrate that the NIoT operates an effective complaints procedure, and that appropriate action is taken following an appeal or complaint. However, the evidence presents a very limited sample, and the team expects further evidence to be available for review during probationary monitoring.

Conclusions

269. The assessment team concluded that the NIoT has demonstrated an understanding of criterion B3, because the evidence shows that the NIoT has begun to develop a Quality and standards assurance framework that sets out processes and procedures across a number of key areas, including the design, development and approval of new or modified higher education provision.
270. The team also concluded that the evidence demonstrates that the NIoT articulates a strategic approach to learning and teaching, which is consistent with its stated academic objectives. At the time of the assessment, the NIoT was revising its Learning and teaching strategy for the 2024-25 academic year, and the team therefore noted that the development and implementation of the new strategy should be monitored through any New DAPs probationary period.
271. Campus visits undertaken by the team in 2024 as part of the Quality and standards assessment for registration with the OfS led it to conclude that the NIoT has appropriate plans to ensure it maintains physical learning and social environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for all students. The NIoT also has appropriate mechanisms and strategies in place to provide a high quality learning experience, although the team considers that the effectiveness

of the new VLE and online library resources should be monitored during the probationary period.

272. The team found that the NIoT is putting mechanisms in place to ensure that learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured, with plans to ensure ongoing coherence between the learning experiences of full-time and part-time students.
273. The team found that the Quality and standards assurance manuals provides a good level of detail on assessment processes such as reasonable adjustment procedures, assessment marking and feedback.
274. The team was satisfied that NIoT operates robust and reliable assessment board processes, including consistency in the operation of processes for marking and moderation of marks. Although assessment board processes currently operate under the validator's arrangements, the team concluded that the NIoT would continue to operate similarly robust assessment board processes under its own DAPs authorisation if granted.
275. Through its review of assessment board minutes and external examiner reports, the team concluded that feedback and comment from external examiners are embedded into the NIoT's quality assurance processes. However, as the NIoT has only had one cohort of students pass through the award process, evidence of external examiner input is limited, and consequently how the NIoT responds to this feedback will need to be further monitored during the New DAPs probationary period.
276. The team also concluded that the NIoT has a credible New DAPs plan, which can be reasonably expected to enable it to meet criterion B3 in full by the end of the New DAPs probationary period. As the New DAPs plan meets the requirements of this criterion, the team did not identify any specified changes to it.
277. The team considered that the following areas should be monitored through the New DAPs probationary period:
- the development and implementation of the NIoT's revised Learning and teaching strategy
 - the NIoT's plans to ensure it maintains physical learning and social environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for all students
 - implementation of the NIoT's new VLE
 - implementation of the NIoT digital library
 - outcomes of the review to ensure that the academic appeals further support a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made
 - the effectiveness review of student engagement with additional academic skills support materials
 - the accessibility of student complaints policy and procedures.

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

Criterion C1: The Role of academic and professional staff

Advice to the OfS

278. The assessment team's view, based on its consideration of the evidence requirements for this criterion alongside other relevant information, is that the NIoT has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion C1.1, and that its New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion C1: The Role of academic and professional staff.

279. The team's view is based on its review of evidence showing in summary that the NIoT is committed to ensuring that everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, is appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the levels and subjects of the qualifications to be awarded. Furthermore, the NIoT has mechanisms in place to ensure it has appropriate numbers of staff to teach its students.

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

280. To assess the NIoT's approach to the scholarship and pedagogical effectiveness of its staff and its plans to develop this during the probationary period, the assessment team considered a range of evidence including:

- the NIoT Strategy 2024 to 2027
- the New DAPs plan
- the NIoT's proposed Learning and development strategy paper
- the Staff development and academic design paper
- the Role of academic and professional staff paper
- evidence of staff development tools for assessment
- evidence of staff review and appraisals
- a sample of staff CVs, which provided an overview of their qualifications, teaching and professional experience, membership of professional bodies, publications and research.

281. To understand the NIoT's strategic approach to the scholarship and pedagogical effectiveness of its staff, the team reviewed the NIoT strategy 2024 to 2027, which sets out its mission and vision including its strategic approach to staff development. For example, the strategy sets out a commitment to 'Research-practice integration' and ensuring 'porous boundaries between the profession we serve and our academic faculty'. In its self-assessment, the NIoT also set out that it is developing a people strategy for 2024 to 2028, which will 'equip the institute to deliver its strategic goals' by attracting and developing a talented and diverse workforce. The

team found that the New DAPs plan sets out that the People strategy will include talent acquisition, retention and development. It will also incorporate performance management and professional development frameworks, promote staff wellbeing and engagement, and ensure alignment with the NIoT's strategic objectives, regulatory requirements, and broader cultural values. The New DAPs plan also states that delivery of the people strategy will be monitored by the Executive Committee with regular updates given to the Board of Trustees.

282. The team saw that, alongside the People strategy, the New DAPs plan included milestones and timings for:

- procuring, launching and building a new HR system to hold all people information
- developing and launching a new staff engagement process to build on existing staff consultation processes
- establishing and continuing a staff Wellbeing Group
- operating the staff annual and mid-year review process.

283. While the team considered the New DAPs plan to be credible in terms of ensuring that staff are appropriately qualified, supported and developed, it considered that the plan would benefit from further detail on specific milestones and timings for the development and implementation of the people strategy. The team recommended that the plan be updated with further detail on the People strategy at the start of any New DAPs probationary period, to fully enable continued monitoring during the probationary period.

284. The team reviewed the proposed Learning and development strategy paper that was submitted to the NIoT's ExCo in April 2024 and saw that the proposed approach is based on the Education Endowment Foundation's implementation model of 'explore, prepare, deliver and sustain'. The paper outlines a plan to engage with staff in the 'explore and prepare stages' of the strategy by July 2024, and the plans included developing a skills audit and competency framework.

285. The team also reviewed the NIoT's Learning and development strategy update paper, presented to ExCo in September 2024. The paper provides an update on the learning and development work strand, including its launch at a staff away day and the establishment of a learning and development working group with a remit to 'develop an effective [learning and development] strategy for the NIoT'. The paper also provides an overview of the three strands of the learning and development plan: new starter training, universal training and academic and professional development, together with the initial implementation timelines for each strand.

286. The team saw that the New DAPs plan includes details and milestones for the development and launch of the Learning and development strategy, as well as processes for updating it in line with the NIoT's operating context. Alongside the development and launch of the Learning and development strategy, the New DAPs plan includes milestones and timings for:

- a. Developing further processes to provide academic staff with the opportunities to participate in external academic review or as external examiners for other higher education providers.
- b. Developing a process to offer staff paid-for external academic and professional development.

- c. Identifying learning and development needs for all staff across the NIoT and developing a plan to deliver relevant training using internal and external knowledge and expertise.
- d. Developing processes to provide staff with opportunities to develop their evaluation skills capacity. This will be led by the Head of People in partnership with the Executive Director of Programmes. The output will be presented to the Academic Board for approval.
- e. A review of academic staff development opportunities, to be undertaken by the Head of People in partnership with the Executive Director of Programmes and the Director of Teacher Development. This will present a set of proposals for academic staff to have opportunities for academic study.

287. The NIoT provided an update to the team on how initial staff consultation and feedback are informing development of the Learning and development strategy. This includes the working group and senior management analysis of staff self-assessed learning and development needs and feedback, to further refine and shape the strategy. The team considered the proposed Learning and development strategy and plans for a skills audit and competency framework to be appropriate and credible methods to ensure all staff are appropriately qualified, supported and developed. The team considers that the further development and implementation of activities related to the Learning and development strategy and Academic staff development plans should continue to be monitored during the probationary period.

288. Overall, the team's view is that the evidence demonstrates that the NIoT is developing credible strategic approaches and plans to ensure that all staff involved in teaching, 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. The evidence reviewed, together with NIoT's plans for a proposed people strategy and learning and development strategy, also demonstrate an understanding of criterion C1.

289. To assess whether staff are provided with opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their learning, teaching and assessment practice and to assess whether relevant learning, teaching and assessment practices are informed by reflection, evaluation, subject-specific and educational scholarship, the team reviewed the NIoT's Staff development and academic design paper. This outlines the NIoT's current and planned approach to staff development, including a summary of the experience of staff in programme design and delivery. The paper also provides evidence illustrating how the NIoT's current approaches have been put into practice to date.

290. For example, the paper sets out the use of expertise from the NIoT's validating institution the University of Birmingham, together with external references such as the QAA benchmarks, informed the design and development of its PGCE programme. The paper also sets out how professional development through practice and research has informed the development of the curriculum and continues to inform teaching and assessment practices. For example, the NIoT reports that its Programme Design Team meets weekly to discuss how relevant research publications could inform enhancements or developments to the programme.

291. The Staff development and academic design paper sets out how the NIoT identifies the learning and development needs of staff through the appraisal process, which includes a mid-year review of staff contributions to student success and academic community. The team reviewed evidence of a redacted mid-year review document that demonstrated this, and provided an effective example of reflection on and evaluation of professional practice and scholarship, through the appraisal process.

292. Regular academic staff development days provide an opportunity for professional practice reflection and development. The team noted that the NIoT intends for such days to occur monthly as it felt this would be a more effective approach. The team also noted that the New DAPs plan includes a specific focus on staff objectives relating to performance, teaching and contribution to scholarship, as well as the appraisal process. Therefore, the team was satisfied that staff are provided with opportunities to reflect on and evaluate their learning, teaching and assessment practice. Furthermore, the team considered that there is sufficient evidence to show that relevant learning, teaching and assessment practices are informed by reflection, evaluation and subject-specific and educational scholarship.
293. The team reviewed evidence demonstrating that the NIoT is committed to providing development opportunities aimed at enabling staff to enhance their practice and scholarship, and has appropriate plans in place to further develop these opportunities. The team considered that evidence of individual staff's knowledge, practice and scholarship, found through CVs, is supplemented by the NIoT's Research and Best Practice team, which provides regular updates on sector developments as set out in the Research and best practice division paper. The team also reviewed evidence of appropriate staff development sessions that focus on assessment practices, through the slide deck of a development session titled Fundamentals of marking at M level.
294. Currently, the NIoT's staff have access to a wide range of learning and development resources through its validating institution, the University of Birmingham. In its self-assessment the NIoT noted that it is 'exploring opportunities' to continue this relationship, should it be awarded New DAPs. The NIoT also sets out its approach to deliver similar opportunities through the proposed Learning and development strategy and programme. For example, in its paper The role of academic and professional staff, the NIoT sets out specific plans to develop academic staff to an appropriate level of qualifications. One area of development included is for 'teaching and assessing at Level 7,' which the paper states will be compulsory for all new teaching staff. The team considered this to be an important focus for the NIoT and its staff development during the probationary period because of the recent validation of the Level 7 PGCE. The team therefore recommends that development opportunities aimed at enabling staff to enhance their practice and scholarship, with a focus on Level 7 teaching and assessment, should be monitored throughout the NIoT's probationary period.
295. The team considered further details of the NIoT's planned new approach to learning and development, set out in The role of academic and professional staff and the Staff development and academic design paper. This includes a learning and development programme that covers three key areas:
- mandatory training from September 2024, covering training and reading for organisational compliance.
 - academic learning and development, focusing on the Teacher Educator and Research Reading Group.
 - non-academic learning and development, covering a range of training such as management training.
296. The team considered that these reflect appropriate and credible plans for staff learning and development and align with the milestones set out in the New DAPs plan around the development and launch of the Learning and development strategy.

297. The team reviewed a sample of staff CVs, which provided an overview of staff qualifications, teaching and professional experience, membership of professional bodies, publications and research. They also provided evidence of staff engagement with subject-specific and educational scholarship. For example, staff are members of their subject or academic associations, such as the British Society for Research into Learning Mathematics and the Chartered Management Institute. Furthermore, there is evidence of professional qualifications and accreditation, for example through the National Centre for the Excellence in the Teaching of Mathematics and evidence of scholarship through PhDs and research publications. The team found that this provided further evidence to demonstrate that relevant learning, teaching and assessment practices are informed by subject-specific and educational scholarship.
298. In its self-assessment, the NloT sets out how it plans to further enhance its staff development opportunities through the development of its new People strategy, which will explore how additional resources could support the development and research and advanced scholarship across the NloT. As noted in paragraph 283, the team identified that the New DAPs plan would benefit from more detail on specific milestones for the development of the People strategy. However, the team noted that the New DAPs plan does include objectives to run regular ITT faculty development days and an annual teaching and research evaluation symposium, which the team considers will provide further development opportunities to support staff to enhance their practice and scholarship. It will also provide an opportunity for reflection on their practice: for example, the inclusion of staff sharing, updates to pedagogy and presentation of research findings.
299. The New DAPs plan also includes the observation of new staff in both teaching and practice-based roles, as well as peer observation and management-led observations. Based on the team's experience, it considered that such peer observations will provide effective opportunities for staff to reflect on, evaluate and enhance their professional practice. However, the evidence reviewed does not set out details of the observation process or how it will support the development of professional practice. The team considered that it would reasonably expect such details to be set out in the NloT's new Learning and development strategy and programme, as discussed earlier in this section.
300. The team considers that the evidence shows the NloT has demonstrated a commitment to provide appropriate opportunities for staff to engage in reflection on and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice, and intends to develop these further through a new strategic approach. Furthermore, the team saw evidence that relevant learning, teaching and assessment practices are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship. The team found that the NloT's current approaches are to be further developed and demonstrated through its new People strategy, Learning and development strategy and associated development programmes and plans. The team also concluded that the provider has credible plans to offer development opportunities for staff aimed at enabling them to enhance their practice and scholarship.
301. To assess whether all staff at the NloT have appropriate academic and professional expertise, the team reviewed evidence including:
- ITE tutor advert and job description
 - ITE tutor shortlisting document
 - the NloT's Role of academic and professional staff paper
 - the University of Birmingham's Recognised lecturer guidance

- the University of Birmingham's Recognised lecturer nomination form
- evidence of recognised lecturers from the NIoT
- a sample of staff CVs.

302. The NIoT states in its Role of academic and professional staff paper and self-assessment document that over 90 per cent of current staff have a degree qualification at Level 6, with nearly 50 per cent of staff holding a Level 7 qualification and 15 per cent holding a Level 8 qualification. The team tested this through its review of a sample of staff CVs, which demonstrated that all staff in the sample are qualified to Level 7 and have successfully been verified through the University of Birmingham's recognised lecturer approval process. The team reviewed the University of Birmingham's recognised lecturer guidance and associated recognised lecturer nomination form and found the process requires consideration of individual qualifications and experience by the University's School of Education and approval by the University's Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The team considered that this process ensures appropriate academic and professional expertise of teaching staff.

303. The team noted that the NIoT did not set out whether it intended to follow a similar approach should it be awarded New DAPs. However, the team was assured that, based on the NIoT's current staffing base and experience, together with evidence of the ITE tutor advert and job description, that it will continue to ensure that all newly recruited staff have appropriate academic and professional experience. The team also noted that it would reasonably expect such plans or requirements to be detailed in the NIoT's proposed People strategy.

304. The team found that the ITE tutor advert and job description set out the academic qualifications and professional experience in teaching required for the role. The team found this included academic qualifications at Level 7 or 8 as desirable criteria, in addition to professional practice and experience in teaching as essential criteria. The team reviewed the provider's ITE tutor shortlisting document, which outlines how, in addition to meeting the essential criteria, candidates are required to respond to scenarios drawing on their professional experience. The team considered that this evidence reflects appropriate expectations of academic and professional expertise for teaching on programmes at Level 7.

305. The NIoT reported in its self-assessment the following approximations of staff experience relating to school teaching and higher education delivery:

- 55 per cent have experience as a teacher.
- 50 per cent have experience as a school leader.
- 60 per cent have a recognised teaching qualification.
- 50 per cent have experience of delivering higher education.
- 30 per cent have a National Professional Qualification or other related teaching experience.

306. The team triangulated this with its review of a sample of staff CVs, and found that staff have appropriate professional experience and qualifications in teaching and educational leadership. The team noted that the sample of CVs did not provide evidence of staff with higher education teaching qualifications, or Fellowship of Advance HE, which are typically considered to be good practice across the sector. However, in its Role of academic and professional staff document, the NIoT outlined its intention to become an institutional member of Advance HE and to support staff to attain Advance HE Fellowship, with targets for engagement for the next

two years. The team saw in later evidence submissions that the NIoT had become a member of Advance HE and that academic staff have been given the opportunity to apply for Advance HE Fellowship. The NIoT also confirmed to the team that, to date, 11 staff have expressed an interest in completing the fellowship at a range of levels.

307. The team also noted that the New DAPs plan includes details and milestones for:
- a. Communications with staff on how they will be supported to apply for and complete the Advance HE Fellowship.
 - b. Academic staff to register their interest in completing their Advance HE Fellowship to ensure they can be appropriately supported with managed workload.
 - c. The first cohort of academic staff to be enrolled to the Advance HE Fellowship with support from HR to ensure they receive the appropriate level of support to complete their fellowship. This will be repeated each year.
308. Based on its own academic experience, the team considers that institutional membership of Advance HE and support for staff to attain Advance HE Fellowship will aid the development of professional expertise in teaching in higher education across the academic staff.
309. In addition, the team noted that the NIoT maintains a tutor development log, which provides a 'snapshot' of the academic levels of staff and allows for staff to record any relevant learning and development undertaken. The team reviewed a screenshot of the log and found it to be a useful tool that could be used to demonstrate ongoing records of staff experience and development during the probationary period.
310. The team found that the NIoT currently ensures that all staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and the assessment of student work, have academic and professional expertise. The team was assured that the NIoT has credible plans to ensure this continues should it be awarded New DAPs.
311. The team considered whether all staff involved in teaching, supporting student learning, and the assessment of student work, have active engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge. As discussed earlier in this section, the Staff development and academic design paper states that academic staff have regular formal full days for staff development. The team found that evidence that such development sessions have covered a range of themes, including academic and practice elements, and have focused on best practice sharing of individual support for students. For example, sessions have included tutors developing their academic discourse and reflecting on their practice, as well as the effective 'deconstruction and reconstruction of lessons' for future development. The team found these to be evidence of ways in which staff are engaged in the pedagogic development of their discipline.
312. The team observed that the NIoT's current validation arrangement with the University of Birmingham provides access to a wide range of pedagogical development resources for staff, allowing for the bespoke development of provider's staff according to needs. As set out earlier in this section, the NIoT is in the process of creating its own pedagogical focused learning and development resources in readiness for being awarded New DAPs, while possibly continuing its relationship with the University of Birmingham. The team considered this to be a credible plan and approach.
313. The team assessed further evidence of current staff engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline and noted that in its self-assessment the NIoT states that

approximately 60 per cent of staff have a recognised professional body qualification, over 40 per cent are members of a professional body, and over 50 per cent are engaged in other professional engagements. These engagements include specialist advisory group membership, national committees and groups, and governing body membership. The team triangulated this with evidence from its review of the staff CVs sample and found that a number of staff are active members of their subject or academic associations and, through this, are actively engaged with the pedagogical development their discipline.

314. The team found that individual staff knowledge, practice and engagement with pedagogic development through professional and academic associations are supplemented by the NIoT's Research and Best Practice team, which provides regular updates to all staff on relevant and appropriate sector developments. The NIoT's self-assessment document sets out that the Research and Best Practice team also assists with the development and enhancement of learning and teaching pedagogy, 'through the circulation of research synopses and targeted training sessions'. The team considered this to be an example of institutional-level good practice, supporting staff to be actively engaged with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge. The team concluded that all staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, have active engagement with the pedagogic development of their discipline knowledge, and that the NIoT has credible plans in place to ensure this continues through the probationary period.
315. The team also considered that the evidence reviewed demonstrated that staff have an understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline, and that such knowledge and understanding directly inform and enhance their teaching. Through its review of the staff CVs sample, the team found evidence that several of the NIoT's academic staff are closely engaged with academic and professional organisations and associations and, through this, are at or near the leading edge of their discipline through research. The CVs showed that some staff are engaged with research and scholarly activity including mentoring, for example through attending conferences and delivering presentations at conferences. Further examples of scholarly engagements across the NIoT's staff include engagement with the Chartered College of Teaching and its journal, the British Educational Research Association, ResearchEd and its published outputs, as well as the work of the Education Endowment Foundation. The team considered these to be appropriate examples of engagement with current research and advanced scholarship.
316. In addition, the Staff development and academic design paper states that the provider's current staff development offer includes greater engagement in research and practice. This includes a Teacher Educator and Research reading group, an academic book club, engagement in intensive teaching and practice, and the communication and dissemination of findings of research across the sector through attendance of conferences. Furthermore, the Research and best practice division paper sets out how the Research and Best Practice team supports research-informed programme delivery and uses the skills and expertise of academic staff. For example, through this team, the NIoT developed and piloted a new series of Intensive Training and Practice sessions, which it evaluated, and shared its findings with the sector.
317. The Research and Best Practice team also explores ways in which delivery staff can become involved with research and advanced scholarship activities, and the team noted that this is set out in the New DAPs plan through the inclusion of faculty development days and the planned annual teaching and research evaluation symposium. This demonstrated to the team how the

NIoT ensures that current research and advanced scholarship directly inform and enhances the teaching of staff. Furthermore, the Research and best practice division paper sets out the advanced research credentials of members of the Research and Best Practice team, which further demonstrated to the team that staff's engagement with research and advanced scholarship is commensurate with the level and subject of the qualifications being offered.

318. The NIoT plans to further develop and enhance how it supports staff to engage with current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline and therefore plans to ensure this continues to inform and enhance its teaching. As discussed earlier under this section, this will be set out in the proposed people strategy and learning and development strategy. For example, the NIoT's Role of academic and professional staff paper details that it is committed to supporting staff in undertaking further academic study and is exploring how it can best support staff to undertake further formal academic study including at master's and doctoral levels. The proposed People strategy will include a plan for the further development of staff, including further academic study, and the team noted that New DAPs plan includes milestones to 'review of opportunities for academic staff to undertake further academic study'.
319. The team therefore concluded that there is evidence of the NIoT's staff demonstrating an understanding of current research and advanced scholarship, and of active engagement with research and advanced scholarship to a level commensurate with the level and subject of the qualifications being offered. The NIoT has credible plans in place, through its proposed People strategy and Learning and development strategy, to enhance how it supports this further and to ensure that such knowledge and understanding directly inform and enhance its teaching. As noted earlier in this section, the team would reasonably expect the details of the NIoT's new staff development approach to be further set out and detailed in these two strategies once finalised.
320. The team reviewed the NIoT's self-assessment document, Staff development and academic design paper and The role of academic and professional staff paper to determine the opportunities for staff to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design and to engage with the activities of other higher education providers. The team reviewed this evidence, together with the staff CVs sample, to determine whether staff with key programme management responsibilities have experience of curriculum development and assessment design and engagement with the activities of other higher education providers. The team found that the Staff development and academic design paper states that the objectives and outcomes of the NIoT's programme modules were developed alongside University of Birmingham staff and modelled on current units in the University of Birmingham PGCE course and therefore provided opportunities for staff to be involved in curriculum development and assessment design.
321. Furthermore, the NIoT identifies that some staff have previous experience in curriculum design and approval at other higher education providers and have acted as external panel members. For example, one member of staff team was formerly the Deputy Director of the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and a deputy vice-chancellor at an English university.
322. Through its review of the NIoT's self-assessment and the sample of staff CVs, the team was assured that there is evidence of appropriate experience of curriculum development and assessment design among staff with key programme management responsibilities. However, the team noted that it is not clear that this experience in curriculum development assessment design is evident among all staff with key programme management responsibilities beyond the

executive team. However, the NIoT has set out, in its QAM and Staff development in relation to quality and standards paper, how it intends to offer continued support to relevant staff through curriculum development and assessment design. For example, relevant members of the NIoT's academic staff underwent training via the University of Birmingham to understand benchmarking and academic standards, and received support from University of Birmingham colleagues when developing module descriptor and assessment criteria. The NIoT states that it intends to run 'workshops for all academic staff' in spring 2025 to continue this development and knowledge.

323. Through the development of the People strategy, the NIoT is exploring other ways in which more staff members can gain experience of higher education curriculum design and approval and assessment processes. However, the team noted a lack of detail regarding how these opportunities will be developed and achieved and would reasonably expect that this is set out in detail in the People strategy or Learning and development strategy. The team did note, as discussed under criteria B2 and B3, that the New DAPs plan includes milestones and timelines for training and guidance for staff on changes to the QAM and the new Academic design manual. This is to ensure staff are appropriately equipped to design programmes effectively, in line with FHEQ levels. Therefore, the team concluded that, while there is evidence of experience of curriculum development and assessment design among senior staff, the NIoT does not yet have clear plans in place to provide opportunities for all staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design. The team therefore recommends that these are included in the People strategy or Learning and development strategy.
324. The NIoT reports, in its Role of academic and professional staff paper, that 4 per cent of academic staff currently engage with other higher education institutions as external examiners, validation panel members or external reviewers. The team also found that other members of academic staff, particularly members of the executive team, have undertaken such roles. The NIoT sets out that it intends to increase this proportion of staff engaged with other higher education providers, and in its self-assessment document it states that the proposed People strategy will include a commitment to developing opportunities to allow staff to sit on internal validation panels and to actively promote involvement with external panels in other higher education institutions, as well as encouraging staff to undertake external examining duties in other institutions. For example, an external reviewer opportunity was advertised internally on behalf of a university that is reviewing its offer in educational leadership and teacher preparation. The team considers this to be an appropriate and effective approach to supporting staff in finding opportunities to engage with other higher education providers.
325. The team noted that the development of opportunities for staff to engage as external examiners is identified in the New DAPs plan. The team concluded that there is evidence of staff with key programme management responsibilities engaging with the activities of higher education providers. In addition, the team found that the NIoT has credible plans in place to provide opportunities for all staff involved in teaching or supporting students learning to engage with the activities of other higher education providers through, for example, involvement as external examiners, validation panel members, or external reviewers.
326. To assess whether staff have expertise in providing feedback on assessment that is timely, constructive and developmental, the team reviewed the NIoT's current approach to

assessment and feedback. To date, the NIoT's assessment tasks, accompanying marking rubrics, assessment practices, module outcomes profile and feedback provided have been managed and overseen by the University of Birmingham's quality assurance processes, including external examiners appointed by the University of Birmingham. The team noted that the 2023-24 academic year is the first cohort of the NIoT's own PGCE programme, and therefore the NIoT is implementing assessment procedures for the first time this academic year.

327. The team found that the NIoT has developed 'quality rubrics' to inform the objective assessment of academic writing and it ensures that all assessment markers are provided with appropriate training on assessment and feedback to ensure all staff follow the same set principles. The team reviewed the NIoT's Fundamentals of marking document, which sets out the principles for marking student work. These principles have been designed to ensure consistency across all assessments and across all campuses and regions. The NIoT expects all staff involved in the assessment of student work to undertake this training and follow these guidelines to ensure consistency in the application of the marking rubric across all assessments and regional campuses. This training also covers the provision of assessment feedback to students and provides clear instruction and guidance to markers regarding the form and content of this feedback.
328. The team found the training approaches to be effective and appropriate, but identified some guidelines that could be prohibitive, such as setting a fixed limit on the number of annotations an assessor can make on one page.
329. The team reviewed a sample of eight students' assessed work from the 2023-24 cohort, relating to module two. This included the feedback provided to the students. The team found the assessed work reflected assessment and feedback in line with the rubrics and principles. The team noted that assessment feedback to students can be viewed electronically on the student's assessment script, though it was unable to ascertain whether the feedback was provided in a timely manner. The team also reviewed previous external examiner reports from the same module and found recommendations to improve the feedback provided to students, such as 'feedback on failing assignments needs to include more comprehensive guidance for resubmission, outlining specific steps the student can take to improve.' The team did not find evidence of how this view has informed or supported developments in student feedback. However, the team noted that, in its New DAPs plan under criterion E, the NIoT intends to receive external examiners reports and 'forward action plans' in response to these during the first quarter of each academic year.
330. The team noted that the New DAPs plan identifies standardisation and moderation of marking activities during the first year of delivery, as well as the opportunity for marking with peers. These activities will be overseen by the Head of Programme and Course Lead, which the team considered to be appropriate and credible. Therefore, the team concluded that the provider has credible plans in place to ensure that staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning have expertise in providing timely, constructive and developmental feedback on student assessment.
331. The team considered whether the NIoT has appropriate staff recruitment practices. The team reviewed the Recruitment and selection policy, Safeguarding policy and Safer recruitment policy and found that these were reflective of appropriate staff recruitment practices in line with sector practice. The Recruitment and selection policy outlines the NIoT's approach to the recruitment process, along with the associated Recruitment guide. This includes typical

procedures such as appropriate approval of job descriptions, advertising of roles and the shortlisting, interview and assessment process. The team considers that the policy provides transparency of the recruitment process from initial request for the role, to interview and appointment, and roles and responsibilities.

332. The team also considered the Safeguarding policy and found that section 10 outlines the NIoT's safer recruitment process to ensure all appropriate checks are carried out on their staff. This is supplemented by the NIoT's Safer recruitment policy, which outlines its approach to safer recruitment including the requirement to undertake, and record on the single central record, statutory pre-employment checks on prospective staff. The team considered that the evidence reviewed provided appropriate safer staff recruitment processes. For example, the Safeguarding policy states that all staff who work directly with participants or in schools to support the delivery of programmes will be expected to complete tailored safeguarding training once a year, although the team did not see evidence of the numbers of staff who are safer recruitment trained. Overall, the team concluded that the provider has appropriate staff recruitment practices.
333. As discussed earlier in this section, the team reviewed a sample of staff CVs, which, together with evidence of staff recruitment practices, demonstrated that the staff recruited have appropriate academic and professional expertise. For example, in addition to demonstrating appropriate academic qualifications and experience directly relevant to the intended academic role, the selection processes are designed to test a candidate's ability for critical reflection and engagement with scholarship and research. Furthermore, those appointed to teaching roles are reviewed by the University of Birmingham for Recognised lecturer approval. The team was assured that the NIoT has made a rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise required to teach all students, and that it will continue to ensure that all newly recruited staff have appropriate academic and professional experience.
334. In its self-assessment document, the NIoT reported that it operates a learning delivery ratio of 1:25, which is 'augmented by subject or phase specific tutors' with relevant subject or age-phase expertise. The NIoT has intentions to grow its staff base in line with the forecast growth in student numbers set out in its business plan, and will ensure it 'broadly maintains' this ratio, which the team found to be appropriate. The team noted that, further to the planned growth in student numbers, the New DAPs plan includes detail on the monitoring of staff-student ratios. The plan sets out that:
- a. Monitoring will be undertaken by the Head of People in collaboration with the Executive Director of Programmes and Director of Registry on a termly basis, to ensure sufficient coverage exists across the academic staff team.
 - b. Monthly monitoring and reporting of regional staff-student ratios are to be presented to ExCo as part of the monthly management accounts produced by the Finance Director. This will also be reported to the Finance Committee each quarter.
335. The team therefore concluded that the NIoT has made a rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise required to teach all students, and has credible plans to ensure appropriate staff to student ratios throughout its probationary period. The team recommends that how the NIoT's ensures appropriate staff-student ratios will be secured and monitored in line with its planned growth in student numbers should continue to be monitored during the probationary period.

Conclusions

336. The assessment team concluded that the NIoT has demonstrated an understanding of criterion C1.1, because the evidence reviewed demonstrated that staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, can be reasonably expected to be appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the levels and subjects of the proposed programmes.
337. There is evidence of appropriate academic and professional expertise and engagement with pedagogic development and reflection and evaluation of learning and teach practice.
338. The team concluded that the NIoT has a credible New DAPs plan, which can be reasonably expected to enable the NIoT to meet criterion C1 in full by the end of the probationary period. As the New DAPs plan meets the requirements of this criterion, the team did not identify any specified changes to the plan.
339. The team also concluded that the following key developments should be monitored throughout the New DAPs probationary period:
- the further development, approval and implementation of the People strategy
 - the development, approval and implementation of the Learning and development strategy, programme and associated development plans
 - the development of opportunities for staff to enhance their practice and scholarship, with a focus on Level 7 teaching and assessment
 - the mechanisms in place for how NIoT will maintain and monitor staff to student ratios.

Assessment of DAPs criterion D: Environment for supporting students

Criterion D1: Enabling student development and achievement

Advice to the OfS

340. The assessment team's view, based on its consideration of the supporting evidence requirements for this criterion, alongside other relevant information, is that the NIoT has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion D1 and that its New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion D1: Enabling student development and achievement.
341. The team's view is based on its review of evidence showing in summary that the NIoT is developing arrangements and resources to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The NIoT has also provided sufficient evidence to demonstrate how its administrative systems will enable it to monitor student progression and performance accurately and provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs. Furthermore, the NIoT has submitted evidence of how it intends to provide opportunities for all students to develop skills to make effective use of its digital and virtual environments.

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

342. To consider whether the NIoT will have in place 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 the NIoT Teaching and learning strategy. This document outlines the NIoT's strategic objectives to 'help shape the developments of rich and creative educational experiences for everyone studying and working at the Institute'. The team noted that, at the time of the assessment, NIoT was revising its Learning and teaching strategy for the 2024-25 academic year.
343. To implement the NIoT's strategic approach to student development, the Teaching and learning strategy sets out an intention to:
- help students' transition into and through higher education study into successful employment
 - champion the progression and success of all students and continually seek to enhance student achievement and outcomes
 - encourage all students to actively engage with their study programmes through continually seeking to provide imaginative approaches to teaching, learning and assessment
 - work in close partnership with students to help ensure programmes are stimulating, engaging and of continuing high quality

- recognise the need to enhance students' graduate employment opportunities
- support staff in developing their learning and skills
- recognise the importance of providing appropriate learning and development environments and students and staff.

344. Alongside this, in its self-assessment document, the NIoT reported that its student support services provision is guided by the following principles:

- all students have equal access to support, experience consistent standards, and their requirements are recognised
- all students are signposted to, and can access, appropriate wellbeing or mental health services
- the safety and security of all students is protected at all times
- communications with all students are effective, ensuring that they have timely and accurate information concerning their studies, extracurricular opportunities, and the welfare support that is available to them.

345. To assess how the NIoT's Teaching and Learning Strategy is currently operationalised, the team reviewed the following evidence:

- the New DAPs plan
- section 8 of NIoT's QAM
- an overview of student development and achievement
- the Student needs and support document
- the ITE Support services overview 2023-24.

346. Section 8 of the NIoT's QAM sets out its practices and approach to how it supports students' academic achievement. This document, together with the Overview of student development and achievement, and Student needs and support documents, comprehensively cover the NIoT's structures and provisions in place to determine, plan and evaluate student development and achievement. The evidence shows that NIoT is developing a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to enable student development and achievement, supported by a network of staff including school-based mentors, tutors, the Head of Initial Teacher Education and the Head of Faculty for Initial Teacher Education. In these documents, the NIoT sets out how the different roles of mentor, managing mentor and the named NIoT ITE tutor collectively ensure that students are supported throughout their learning journey – including time spent during placements.

347. In addition, the team found that the ITE support services overview 2023-24, which is a student-facing document, sets out a summary of support services in place for students. These include mental health and wellbeing support, medical support, disability support, academic support and financial support. The team noted that the information in this document sets out the third-party companies that provide the support for mental health and wellbeing and medical support.

348. Overall, the team considered that the NIoT is developing mechanisms to take a comprehensive, strategic and operational approach to determine and evaluate how it enables student development and achievement for its diverse body of students. The team considered that the provisions do not currently appear cohesive, as the evidence showed that the

information is provided through various forms and formats, with differing terms and support provisions set out throughout different documents. However, the team noted that the New DAPs plan includes an intent for the NIoT to create a single source of information that details all student support and welfare services, and details of referrals to external services that are available to students. Students will be able to access this information through the VLE. The New DAPs plan also sets out that the NIoT will undertake an annual review of student delivery and the support environment. The team considered that such a review would resolve any instances of inconsistency.

349. The team reviewed the NIoT's website along with the Flying start programme introduction, and Student needs and support documents, to consider whether effective information and advice about students' study programmes are provided and whether course induction materials take account of different students' choices and needs. The NIoT reported that induction for students begins soon after a student receives their offer letter, and that students are provided with pre-course reading before an induction week in July. These materials, called Flying start, guide students through the structure of the programme, the NIoT's expectations and what students can expect from the programme. The team found that the areas covered during the induction week are thorough and support students well when commencing teaching programmes. For example, Flying start includes:

- an overview of the PGCE curriculum and assessment
- an overview of the NIoT's tutor support and structure
- an introduction to the Progress tracker
- an overview of professional duties for teachers.

350. The team also reviewed the Support services overview 2023-24 document and 2024-25 PGCE student handbook provided as part of students' welcome packs. The handbook includes:

- the NIoT's learner charter
- an overview of the PGCE programme
- mark schemes and assessment criteria
- the NIoT's policies and procedures
- academic wellbeing and social support.

351. This document outlines the structure of the PGCE programme, provides assessment guidance and includes mark schemes to support students to successfully complete the programme. Currently the handbook is tailored to the programme required by NIoT's validating partner, the University of Birmingham, and the team would therefore expect the NIoT to provide evidence of an updated PGCE student handbook during the probationary period. The team also reviewed the ITE part-time student handbook and found it provided course information for part-time students including course structure, assessment and working hours.

352. The NIoT's self-assessment document states that students with previously undisclosed additional needs will be identified during the Flying start week, and agreed academic support plans put in place to ensure that they can be successful on the programme. The team reviewed the Student needs and support document, which outlines the process, and a redacted Learning support plan illustrating a specific case. The team found that the Student needs and support document outlines the roles and responsibilities for pastoral and academic

support and details how students are signed up to the Mental Health Champions Foundation programme offered by a third party, Place2Be. This programme fosters the wellbeing of the school pupils who students will be teaching in their placements but also works to support the mental health and wellbeing of students themselves. Furthermore, students complete a Student inclusion survey to assess whether there is any further support needed throughout their studies.

353. The team found that the Student needs and support document also sets out that students who are new to the UK education system or are non-native English speakers are offered bespoke training sessions throughout the year, including five English additional language sessions. For those students who need further support in English or maths proficiency, extra training sessions are provided and the progress of students in each geographical region is tracked.

354. The NIoT website outlines options for full-time and part-time study and information on the routes available for ITT. In its self-assessment document, the NIoT recognises that those undertaking part-time and apprenticeship routes may have different learning needs, and that such students are supported to identify the safeguards they require to aid their academic success. However, the team is not clear how students are advised of the different routes leading to the PGCE, and was unable to assess whether the NIoT provided evidence of how different students' choices and needs are taken into account. The team considers that the NIoT's published documentation should be clearer to prospective students and recommends that this is monitored throughout the probationary period.

355. To consider whether the effectiveness of student and staff advisory, support and counselling services are monitored by the NIoT and whether arising resource needs are considered, the team reviewed the following evidence:

- the NIoT's self-assessment
- the New DAPs plan
- ITE trainee end of year Survey analysis
- ITE Programmes Board minutes from 29 January 2024
- ITE Support services overview 2023-24
- Overview of student development and achievement
- redacted Learning support plan June 2024
- Student needs and support document
- the NIoT's Digital systems: Progress review paper
- Customer relationship management and student record system implementation plan
- the NIoT's Student support and welfare plan.

356. As discussed earlier in this section, the team noted that the New DAPs plan includes an intent for the NIoT to undertake an annual review of student delivery and the support environment. The team found that, in the Student needs and support document, the NIoT reports how feedback from students is captured through SSCC meetings and that these are one way in which the NIoT monitors the effectiveness of its student advisory and support provisions. As discussed fully under criterion A1, each NIoT region has an SSCC termly meeting, followed by a national Academic Board meeting with student representatives from each region. The NIoT sets out that it uses the feedback from these committees and boards to monitor its delivery

and feed into its continuous improvement strategy. The team noted that, based on student feedback during 2023-24, there have been changes to the NIoT's student advisory and support provisions. For example, it has increased the size of its administrative team to improve the speed of response to student messages, and that of its tutor team to support a wider range of students' needs.

357. The team also reviewed evidence of student feedback provided via surveys. Through this the team found that there was a mixed response in terms of students' experience of support provisions. For example, in the ITE trainee end of year survey, the least positive responses from students were around student wellbeing and mental health support. Students were asked to score their experience (with either 'strongly agree', 'agree' or 'do not agree') in the following areas:

- 'I am aware that my mental health has been considered across the year and I have been helped to manage the demands of the course'
- 'The ITE programme has provided me with some strategies to manage my mental health and wellbeing across the year'
- The ITE programme has provided me with strategies to manage my workload across the year'

358. Over a fifth of students responded 'do not agree' in each of these areas, and approximately a third answered 'strongly agree'. For comparison, with regard to academic support, 77 per cent of students responded 'strongly agree' to both the following questions:

- a. 'My ITE tutor has been available to offer support and guidance (regularly)'.
- b. 'My mentor was able to model/demonstrate pedagogical strategies through deliberate practice (regularly)'.

359. The team reviewed the ITE Programmes Board minutes from January 2024, which showed that survey participation was discussed, and actions assigned to ensure students understood how this feedback was used by the NIoT. For example, it was noted in the Programme Board, that an area 'for development for the Faculty team is to feedback to Trainees results from the survey weekly.'

360. Furthermore, the team noted that the NIoT reported that its Academic Registry will monitor individual student needs plans and allocate appropriate resources to this. The team considered that this provided further evidence of how the NIoT intends to consider resource needs of its student support services. As the NIoT is still developing its academic governance structures and student support provisions, the team identified this as an area that should be monitored throughout the New DAPs probationary period. The team considered that the NIoT has in place and is further developing appropriate mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness of student and staff advisory, support and counselling services. However, the team considered that further evidence should be provided throughout the probationary period to demonstrate how such monitoring leads to changes or enhancements to its services.

361. The team reviewed the NIoT's self-assessment, together with evidence of minutes from its Programme Assessment Board meeting and the Overview of student development and achievement document, to consider whether its administrative support systems enable it to monitor student progression and performance accurately and provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management needs. As discussed under criterion B3, students monitor their own progress through a weekly tracker

tool and meet weekly with their mentors, who also set objectives and observe them on a fortnightly basis. Mentors write termly reports on their students, which are quality assured by tutors. Tutors also actively monitor students' development through delivery and assessment, together with tutor meetings, which are held at least six times a year. Evaluation of student development and attainment is then reported to the Head of Initial Teacher Education who is responsible for line managing tutors.

362. The team reviewed an example of the weekly progress tracker, an extract from the Mentor handbook in the Overview of student development and achievement document, an extract from the trainee handbook and an example of a termly report. This evidence demonstrated to the team that the termly report provides a detailed map of students' learning journey across the three terms of the programme with links to aspects of the Core content framework. The team also reviewed an example of termly student attainment data tracking in the March 2024 ITE Programme Assessment Board meeting documentation. This provided an overview of students' progression across the following curriculum strands:

- behaviour and relationships
- subject and curriculum
- planning and teaching
- how learners learn (adaptive teaching)
- assessment and responsive teaching
- professional behaviours.

363. The team found that the data presented in this way enables tutors, the Head of ITE and ITE leads to collectively monitor progress of the cohort. Alongside this regular monitoring of students' progression, section 4 of the NIoT's QAM sets out the procedures for the evaluation, monitoring and review of its academic provision. The QAM sets out that this includes annual programme monitoring, which will 'use a range of data sources to consider, design, implement and track the impact of initiatives intended to enhance the academic experience of students studying on the NIoT's programmes.' The programme monitoring reports are to be discussed at various committees, including the SEQA committee and the Academic Board. The QAM also notes that 'where appropriate, feedback will be provided to programme teams and matters requiring intervention will be drawn to the attention of the NIoT's management team.'

364. The team considered that while the QAM sets out a high-level description of an appropriate monitoring process, together with details of its periodic review procedures, it does not provide details of the types of data to be used, or how this would be produced. However, the team noted that the DAPs self-assessment document sets out that the NIoT is in the process of developing data systems to ensure that student records are held in a single platform, which will integrate with its new VLE. This new student records system will allow staff to monitor progress, interventions and compliance at individual and cohort level and ensure provision of appropriate and timely support to students. It will also enable the identification of issues and barriers that may hampering the academic progress of students.

365. The team found that the New DAPs plan sets out key details, milestones and timelines for the development of the SRS. These include:

- a. Development of the Dynamics software to:
 - i. Hold all student records in time for the September 2025 intake.

- ii. Include integration with the VLE to ensure a single source of truth is held in Dynamics.
 - iii. Allow staff to monitor progress, interventions and compliance at individual, sub-group and cohort level.
 - iv. Enable launch of the student record systems in four stages during the 2024-25 year to include user testing at each stage. The live system is to be fully in place for the 2025-26 academic year.
- b. Delivery against key milestones of the SRS implementation plan.
 - c. The setup of the Student records function in the Registry team and staff accordingly.
 - d. Development of management information from Dynamics to provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic needs. This will include, but not be limited to, student attendance, needs, progression and performance. Data and management information will be reviewed consistently after initial launch.
 - e. Reporting management information relating to student attendance, needs, progression and performance to programme boards, SEQA, the Academic Board and ultimately the NIoT Board.

366. The team also reviewed the NIoT Digital systems: Progress review, paper which provided an update to ExCo on the SRS implementation plan. The paper advises that to ensure seamless implementation, the NIoT 'engaged a Microsoft Gold Partner with a proven track record in supporting specialised start-up higher education institutions.' The team found that the paper provides a clear and detailed outline of the activities and timings for the key phases of the SRS work stream and progress to date. This includes successful integration with the Department for Education ITE systems, and the development of data infrastructure schemas designed to accommodate Department for Education, Higher Education Statistics Agency and Student Loans Company reporting requirements.

367. The paper also sets out that post-implementation activities will include comprehensive staff training sessions delivered by experts from the Digital team and Registry function, and followed up with standard operating procedures and guidance documents. There will also be a 'robust monitoring framework to track usage and usability of the SRS'.

368. The team also saw that the Digital systems: Progress review paper reflects information in the New DAPs plan, specifically that the SRS will hold a comprehensive and holistic record of each student and will be used to track both academic and non-academic data to monitor and support students through their student journey. The paper also sets out that this data will be reported via the NIoT's academic governance structure including the Programme Board, SEQA, the Academic Board and the ExCo. The team noted that the New DAPs plan also includes details for termly reporting from Head of Faculty to the Programme Board on student attainment, support plans and completion data.

369. The team also reviewed NIoT's Customer relationship management and student record system implementation plan, and was satisfied that it provides a detailed and comprehensive breakdown of the activities, resourcing and timings for implementation of the NIoT SRS, indicating current progress status against key milestones. Examples of key activities included in the plan are:

- migration of the current 'tracker of trainees' database into the SRS

- user acceptance training
- staff training
- development of reporting functionalities
- development of a school placement app.

370. The team considered that the plan effectively captures and tracks the work involved in developing and implementing the NIoT's SRS. Furthermore, the team considers the plan will be a helpful additional tool in monitoring progress of the SRS workstream through any New DAPs probationary period. The team was therefore content that the NIoT is developing systems that will enable it to monitor student progression and performance accurately and provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs.
371. The team considered the NIoT's student support provisions to assess whether it provides opportunities for all students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression. As discussed earlier in this section, the NIoT has a range of staff to enable student development and achievement, including school-based mentors, managing mentors and a named NIoT ITE tutor. Collectively, these staff ensure that students are supported throughout their learning journey. For example, tutors provide both pastoral and academic support to students. Tutors may also refer students to the assistance programme and discuss serious cases with the head of ITT for their region, who may provide further service referrals. The team observed that, through SSCC meetings and the ITE end of year survey, students appear content with the support provided through these mechanisms as noted above.
372. A further way in which academic support opportunities are provided by the NIoT is through reading and writing retreats for students studying at Level 7. In the Student support overview 2023-24 document, these retreats are described as covering 'all aspects of academic writing, use of research, referencing using the Harvard style, academic tone and many other key areas'. The team reviewed evidence of the January 2024 reading and writing retreat, together with evidence of a training session on critical reading and found that both demonstrated effective delivery of appropriate academic support topics. Alongside this, the NIoT reported that students' knowledge and teaching practice is 'built over time' using the Deans for Impact Building Blocks model, which helps trainee teachers develop through four common elements: modelling, practice, feedback and alignment. These opportunities are underpinned by mandatory 'core training' on campus one day a week, which provides an opportunity for students to learn new techniques and to reflect on their teaching practice.
373. The NIoT does not currently have a library of its own, but students have access to its validator's online library via its validation agreement, as discussed under criterion B3. Also as discussed under criterion B3, the New DAPs plan sets out key milestones and timeline for the development and implementation of the NIoT's plans to provide its own online library resources for students.
374. As set out earlier in this section, the NIoT has in place a Student inclusion survey, which is sent to all students before commencing their programme and which helps the NIoT to identify which students require additional support or training during their studies, such as for additional learning needs, or reasonable adjustments needed for placements. The team reviewed a redacted Learning support plan, which demonstrated how the NIoT currently reviews, records and monitors the academic support an individual needs during their studies. The support plan

is designed to provide support when a student is already experiencing either practice or academic difficulties, and states that if concerns are raised, 'additional specific support will be put in place'. An action plan is completed if additional support measures are required, or if there are recommended actions from the placement provider or school to support the student's development, and this covers categories of wellbeing, teaching, professionalism and academic. The Academic Registry monitors these plans, and the allocation of appropriate resources, to ensure that the plans are effectively operationalised.

375. In addition, in its self-assessment, the NIoT reported that its recently appointed academic registrar will enhance its student welfare and support function by developing plans for formal needs assessments for students. The team saw that the New DAPs plan includes details and milestones related to formal needs assessment for students, including:
- a. The further development of SSW processes to include formal needs assessments and through reasonable adjustment and learning support plans, and to ensure adequate provision for management of student needs and that services and information are coherent.
 - b. Communication to staff, stakeholders and students each year of changes to SSW processes, with annual training and guidance for academic staff on how to engage with the SSW process, including information on the implementation of reasonable adjustments. This will include virtual training sessions, guidance documents and drop-in sessions with the SSW Manager and Director of Registry.
 - c. The annual audit of reasonable adjustments and risk assessments to ensure that they are in place and that any student with identified needs has been reviewed. A summary report of the audit is to be presented to SEQA.
 - d. The creation of a template for student support requirements to be embedded in the processes for programme approval or modification, ensuring that student support is considered in these proposals.
376. In addition to the above information related to formal needs assessment for students, the team also saw that New DAPs plan includes milestones and timings for additional SSW activities. These include:
- a. The review of specialist study skills and mentoring offering.
 - b. The review of counselling services.
 - c. The development of the Wellbeing recovery action plans process to help develop wellbeing goals and enable trainees to develop key skills, such as resilience and self-care.
 - d. The development and delivery of wellbeing workshops for students.
 - e. An annual review of SSW policies.
 - f. Annual communication of SSW process to trainees, mentors, placement schools and staff. These are to be included in all student handbooks and onboarding processes, to ensure all students are aware of support available and where to access it.
 - g. An annual report on SSW services including feedback from students, staff, benchmarking and data from external third parties providing support, to be presented to SEQA for review and discussion, with recommendations presented to Academic Board.

- h. Annual training and guidance for academic staff on how to engage with the SSW process, including information on the implementation of reasonable adjustments.
- i. Student support requirements to be embedded in processes for programme approval or modification, to ensure student support is considered in these proposals.
- j. The creation of a single source of information that details all available SSW services and details referrals to external services that are available, to students to ensure this information is easy to access for students, staff and stakeholders. Ensuring also that students can access this through the VLE.

377. The team also reviewed the NlOT Student support and welfare service plan 2025-26, which outlines the NlOT's vision, mission and key priorities for enhancement of student support services. Key priority areas set out in the plan include learning support and disability, mental health support and counselling services. For each priority area, the plan details the milestones and timings for delivery of underpinning activities. The team observed that headline priorities set out in the Student support and welfare plan are also reflected in the updates to the New DAPs plan noted above. The NlOT clarified to the team that the Student support and welfare service plan is a draft plan, scheduled to be submitted to SEQA for approval in July 2025, and that alongside the Student support plan, it has a working draft implementation plan, which will also be presented to SEQA in July 2025.

378. As mentioned under criterion B3, in the April 2025 meeting with members of the NlOT's senior management team, the assessment team asked how, in terms of enabling student development and achievement, parity of the student experience is being monitored and maintained across cohorts and across the national mode of delivery. The NlOT confirmed that it delivers a standardised curriculum across all sites and associated colleges, and that the curriculum is quality assured to the same standard, based on same content.

379. Furthermore, tutors are situated in each campus and are able to quality assure delivery of provision in practice at each site. Members of the team also heard that oversight and governance of student experience feeds through the governance structures via SEQA, the Programme Board, the Programme Assessment Board and Academic Board. Programme data is captured in the PDD, which is an amalgamation of self-evaluation and planning. This data is reviewed at regular points throughout the year to monitor progress against national priorities and milestones.

380. The team formed the opinion that the NlOT's Student support and welfare service plan, together with the key milestones set out in its New DAPs plan, demonstrated a detailed and appropriate consideration of support and welfare services essential to enabling students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. The team was also satisfied that the Student support and welfare service plan will be a helpful additional tool in monitoring the development of student support services through the New DAPs probationary period.

381. The NlOT has in place a Mitigating circumstances policy and procedure, which covers circumstances that may adversely affect student performance during assessments and is set out in section 5 of its QAM. The team reviewed the policy in the QAM and the information included in the PGCE student handbook and found that they contained the appropriate guidance and information for students on how to follow the procedure. However, the team noted some discrepancies between the two documents. For example, the policy is referred to as 'Extenuating Circumstances' in PGCE student handbook whereas in the QAM it is referred to as 'Mitigating Circumstances'. However, the team noted that the NlOT Live updates log

identifies the requirement to update section 5 of the QAM to reference 'Extenuating Circumstances' in line with the programme handbook.

382. The team found that the NIoT has in place its own reasonable assessment adjustments procedures, which enable certain adjustments to be made in response to individuals' known learning needs for the duration of their studies. The policy and procedure are set out in section 5 of the QAM, which details that students can contact the Student support service to seek reasonable adjustments. The PGCE student handbook advises students with reasonable adjustment plans in place on how to seek an extension for an assessment submission. The team noted that the policy in the QAM sets out that there are two categories of reasonable adjustments available for assessment – 'standard' or 'non-standard'. However, it was unclear to the team what would warrant a standard or non-standard adjustment.
383. In addition, the team noted that the ITE support services overview 2023-24, which is a student-facing document, states that reasonable adjustments are available, and is set out from the perspective of disability support. The team considered that presenting the reasonable adjustments support in this way may discourage students without a disability from seeking a reasonable adjustment.
384. In the Student needs and support document, a case study of the reasonable adjustment policy was provided. The team considered that the case study reflected reasonable adjustments being made, but that it did not fully reflect the policy and procedure set out in the QAM. Therefore, the team was unable to fully assess the NIoT's approach to reasonable adjustments. However, as set out earlier in this section, the team noted that the New DAPs plan makes provision for an annual audit of reasonable adjustment plans and risk assessments, to ensure that they are in place and that any student with identified needs has been reviewed.
385. The New DAPs plan also sets out the NIoT's intention to conduct an annual review of its academic regulations. The team recommends that, as part of the NIoT's plans to review and update its academic regulations, it should ensure there is consistency and clarity among its formal policy documents and manuals and information shared with students. The team also recommend that further detail and clarity should be provided to students about what types of circumstances might require a student to seek reasonable adjustments.
386. The team found that personal and professional development opportunities appear to be embedded in the NIoT's PGCE model, as students spend four days a week in their partner schools, modelling experienced mentors' teaching practice, and the third module of the programme is centred around professional studies and behaviour. In its self-assessment, the NIoT outlines how it supports students to find employment through employability sessions on topics, such as interview techniques and making effective applications. Students are also informed of opportunities that could support their professional development, such as the National Professional Qualifications. The team also noted that the New DAPs plan makes provision for the Head of Faculty to plan and organise career management sessions to support employability, and considered that this is an area that should be monitored through the New DAPs probationary period.
387. To determine whether the NIoT provides opportunities for all students to develop the skills needed to make effective use of the learning resources provided, including the safe and effective use of specialist facilities and digital environments, the team reviewed the NIoT's self-assessment and the following evidence:

- the New DAPs plan
- example support for students to access online learning resources
- guidance on how to access subject resources
- IT: how to use Teams and SharePoint guides
- ITE learning management system: Update document
- summary of access and tasks for trainees September 2023
- Overview of student development and achievement
- the NIoT's Digital systems: Progress review paper

388. As discussed under criterion B3, the NIoT operates a blend of in-person and virtual delivery. Because of the structure of the PGCE programme, attendance at the in-person core training day is mandatory, and recorded lectures and other training materials are provided online to enable students to engage in asynchronous learning outside of core teaching hours. Two members of the team visited the South, East and London campus located in Bermondsey, London, and toured the facilities during an earlier assessment of the NIoT for its quality assessment for OfS registration. The team members also observed a demonstration version of the NIoT's proposed new VLE, which was due to launch in September 2024.

389. The team found that the New DAPs plan makes provision for training and guidance for all students to enable them to make effective use of the VLE. Milestones and timelines set out in the plan include:

- a. The launch of VLE to all staff and students, with post-launch review and additional development for 2025-26 academic year.
- b. Training and guidance for students and staff to ensure they can make effective use of the VLE. Training (to be repeated annually) will include virtual training sessions, guidance documents and drop-in sessions with the Digital team.

390. The team also reviewed the NIoT's Digital systems: Progress review paper and saw that as well as providing an update on development of the VLE, it sets out that 'extensive training sessions will be conducted for both students and staff to ensure they are proficient in utilising the new tools and platforms'. Training will include tailored workshops and online modules to guarantee comprehensive understanding and confidence in system usage. Furthermore, the paper advises that feedback loops will be created to gather input on user experience, with regular meetings scheduled to discuss and inform potential enhancements.

391. The team also reviewed the NIoT's Training and guidance for VLE document. This provides step-by-step guidance to mentors on how to construct Formal report 1 in the VLE, and highlights additional support resources including a recorded walkthrough of the process. The team considered that the guidance document was clear and appeared easy to follow, and would therefore be a useful training support tool for this particular element of VLE functionality. However, the team considered that in-depth and comprehensive training as indicated in the New DAPs plan Digital Progress Review paper would be essential to enabling students to make effective use of the VLE.

392. As discussed under criterion B3, the New DAPs plan and the Digital library implementation plan confirm that students will also receive training and guidance to ensure they are fully enabled to use the digital library service. The team also found that as part of the induction,

students are guided in the safe and appropriate use of online resources and in how to ensure the safety of their online presence, given the professional responsibilities of being a teacher. This is in addition to safeguarding training provided to all students. In addition, the NIoT reported that its digital team provides support to students experiencing IT challenges, whether this be on an NIoT campus or while on school placements.

393. Each of the NIoT's campus sites is based in a school operated by an NIoT founding member, and each conforms to the accessibility and safety standards applicable to school premises. In its self-assessment document, the NIoT reported that learning facilities such as laboratories or computer suites are provided at all its campus sites, and guidance in the use of these is included within the curriculum, as well as through students' inductions. During the team members' visit of the Bermondsey campus, the team toured the facilities and found them to reflect the statements made by the NIoT, although it did not observe support in the use of specialist facilities and therefore recommends that evidence of this is provided and monitored during the New DAPs probationary period.
394. In considering the above evidence, the team formed the opinion that the NIoT provides opportunities for all students to develop skills to make effective use of its digital and virtual environments and specialist facilities. Furthermore, it has credible plans to continue to provide such opportunities. The team recommend that the further development and implementation of activities related to training and guidance for students on the NIoT's digital and virtual environments, and the impact of this training, should be monitored during the probationary period,
395. The team considered whether the NIoT's approach is guided by a commitment to equity and found the Learning and Teaching strategy is underpinned by inclusion. The strategy aims to 'enable all our students and staff to achieve their potential in an inclusive and innovative environment underpinned by close partnership, open dialogue and mutual respect'. The Learning and teaching strategy goes on to state that the NIoT is seeking to 'understand the diverse needs and expectations of all our students and provide inclusive programmes that reflect these differing situations.' Commitment to equality, diversity, social inclusion and mobility is also set out in the NIoT's Learning charter, which is included as a section of the PGCE student handbook.
396. The team also reviewed the Equality, diversity and inclusion policy, which outlines the principles, roles and responsibilities and governance related to equality, diversity and inclusion. It is stated that 'at the NIoT, the definition of diversity encompasses and goes beyond the characteristics protected by law to include everything that makes us who we are,' and that 'the NIoT will proactively identify and remove barriers to inclusion.' An example of how the NIoT operationalises its equality, diversity and inclusion policy is through the Flying start programme introduction, which includes an introduction for students to statutory guidance, such as the Equality Act 2010.
397. The team also noted that the NIoT's commitment to equity is evidenced in many of its policies discussed throughout this report, such as the reasonable adjustments policy and the Code of conduct handbook, which sets out behaviour requirements for students. The team also noted that, in its New DAPs plan, the NIoT intends to undertake an annual review of its Equality, diversity and inclusion policy. The team therefore concluded that there is evidence to demonstrate that the NIoT's approach is guided by a commitment to equity.

Conclusions

398. The assessment team concluded that the NIoT has demonstrated an understanding of criterion D1, because the evidence reviewed shows it is developing arrangements and resources that will enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. Furthermore, the NIoT is developing administrative systems that will enable it to monitor student progression and performance accurately and provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs. The team also concluded that the NIoT has credible plans to provide opportunities for all students to develop skills to make effective use of its digital and virtual environments.
399. The team further concluded that the NIoT has a credible New DAPs plan, which can be reasonably expected to enable the NIoT to meet criterion D1 in full by the end of the probationary period. As the New DAPs plan meets the requirements of this criterion, the team did not identify any specified changes to the plan.
400. The team considered that the following areas should be monitored through the New DAPs probationary period:
- a. The clarity and information of the NIoT's published documentation for prospective students, and how different student choices and needs such as part-time study and apprentice routes into the programmes are taken into account.
 - b. The NIoT's mechanisms for monitoring the effectiveness of support and advisory services and how these lead to changes and enhancements.
 - c. The development, approval and implementation of the NIoT's student records system, to ensure it supports the monitoring of student progression and performance.
 - d. The NIoT's digital and virtual environments, and the support provided to students to make effective use of them.
 - e. Employability support and professional development opportunities for students.
 - f. The NIoT's Extenuating circumstances policy and approach to reasonable adjustments, to ensure there is clarity and consistency across all guidance and policy documents.

Assessment of DAPs criterion E: Evaluation of performance

Criterion E1: Evaluation of performance

Advice to the OfS

401. The assessment team's view, based on its consideration of the supporting evidence requirements for this criterion alongside other relevant information, is that the NIoT has demonstrated a full understanding of criterion E1 and that its New DAPs plan is credible in relation to criterion E1: Evaluation of performance.
402. The team's view is based on its review of evidence which shows in summary that the NIoT has developed structures that enable it to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths.

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.

Reasoning

403. To test whether critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the NIoT's higher education provision, the assessment team reviewed a range of documentation including:
- the NIoT's Executive and deliberative committee structure
 - Board of Trustees terms of reference
 - Academic Board terms of reference
 - the NIoT DAPs self-assessment document
 - the New DAPs plan
 - the NIoT Research Advisory Group terms of reference
 - the NIoT PAG terms of reference
 - the NIoT College Advisory Groups terms of reference
 - College Advisory Groups minutes
 - the NIoT's Quality and standards assurance framework: An outline guide, section 4
 - the NIoT Quality and standards assurance manual: The evaluation, monitoring and review of the institute's academic provision
 - the Continuous improvement: Responding to feedback document.
404. The team noted from the Board of Trustees' terms of reference that the Board's primary responsibilities include requirements to:
- a. Monitor the NIoT's medium and longer-term academic and business plans and associated key performance indicators.
 - b. Ensure that appropriate processes are in place to monitor and evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the NIoT against agreed forward plans and approved key

performance indicators, thereby enabling the board to benchmark its performance against other comparable providers of teacher education.

- c. Establish processes to monitor and evaluate the performance and effectiveness of the Board of Trustees itself, with a formal review taking place at least once every four years. Such reviews are to have regard to extant guidance on reviewing board effectiveness.

405. Although Board of Trustees meeting minutes were heavily redacted, the team saw some evidence of the board discharging its monitoring responsibilities. Minutes indicated that an update on the ITE programme was submitted to the board, including consideration of key performance indicators such as retention, withdrawal and deferral data. The team also saw that the New DAPs plan sets out milestones and timelines for regarding the board's responsibilities for monitoring and evaluating the performance and effectiveness of the NIoT. These include:

- a. Developing annual operating plans (aligned to board-approved strategy), with attention to academic standards, student experience and achieving the DAPs criteria. Operating plans are to include targets and key performance indicators related to academic performance, financial and non-financial metrics. Progress against operating plans will be presented to every board meeting via the CEO report.
- b. Receiving an annual evaluation report summarising successes and challenges to inform future year operating plans.
- c. Developing a protocol document to sit alongside the board terms of reference, detailing how the board receives and tests assurances that academic governance is adequate and effective. The protocol will explicitly reference how the board discharges its actions through scrutiny of the Academic Board's annual report and through receipt of management information, including student outcomes data, student survey results, complaints and appeals data and external examiner recommendations. The board will also be provided with benchmarking information for comparable institutions.
- d. Receiving an annual report from the Academic Board, highlighting key findings or recommendations from the outcomes of the annual programme review process. Trustees are to scrutinise the report to ensure the performance and effectiveness of the NIoT and to seek assurances on discharge of actions arising from annual programme review.
- e. Receiving the outcomes of any periodic programme reviews reviewed by Academic Board, including external benchmarking against relevant academic standards and reputable comparator institutions. Trustees are to scrutinise the report to ensure the performance and effectiveness of the NIoT and to seek assurances on discharge of actions arising from periodic programme review.

406. The Academic Board terms of reference state that it has devolved authority from the Board of Trustees for oversight of all academic matters, and that it delegates some of its responsibilities to subcommittees. Through a review of Academic Board agendas and meeting minutes, the team saw evidence of the NIoT reflecting on its own performance. For example, each programme has operational oversight from a programme board. Reports and updates from programme boards are a standing item on the Academic Board agenda. Academic Board minutes are evidence of discussions of key programme performance data and the identification of areas for improvement, such as solutions to increase mentor involvement and the exploration of innovations in digital systems.

407. The team noted that the NIoT's DAPs self-assessment document states that 'Students are actively and systematically involved with all deliberative committees from the Board of Trustees through to the Academic Board and its subcommittees'. The team saw that discussion of student feedback brought by student representatives to Academic Board meetings is also a standing item on the board agenda. In reviewing these minutes, the team found that student feedback covered a range of issues, including programme structures, timetables and access to additional support. The minutes also captured responses to student feedback in terms of developments in training or further actions to be considered.
408. The team saw evidence of actions taken in response to matters raised at the Academic Board meetings. For example, one set of board minutes noted that students had raised issues regarding access to University of Birmingham e-library facilities. The minutes showed that in response to this issue, students were granted an extension to the submission deadline for an upcoming summative assessment. The programme team also advised student representatives in the meeting that it would further explore the underlying e-library licensing issues. The team also saw evidence that the chair of the Academic Board requests progress updates regarding development areas discussed at previous meetings.
409. The team reviewed the NIoT Quality and standards assurance framework: An outline guide, and formed the opinion that it provides a comprehensive overview of ongoing activities to enable the NIoT's self-assessment and continuous improvement of its higher education provision. The framework details various mechanisms for obtaining and reflecting on student feedback, such as student surveys and staff-student liaison committees. The framework also describes programme review processes including annual monitoring, external examiner review and a five-yearly programme review process. Section 4 of the Quality and standards assurance manual provides further information on the self-assessment, monitoring and review processes.
410. The team also noted that Quality and standards assurance framework: An outline guide provides a sound level of detail on the approach to gathering and responding to student feedback. For example, the guide underlines the importance of student feedback and closing the feedback loop by communicating programme teams' responses to issues raised. The NIoT also sets out its approach to the consideration of student and wider stakeholder feedback in its Continuous improvement: Responding to feedback document. This document states that feedback mechanisms included weekly surveys completed by students and analysed by regional heads of ITE, as well as the establishment of regional SSCCs, whose chairs are members of the Academic Board.
411. From its review of SSCC minutes, the team was satisfied that students have clear opportunities to deliver comprehensive feedback on a range of issues. SSCC minutes had been highlighted to indicate to the team which concerns had been resolved. The team saw evidence of the resolution of some of the issues raised by students in previous Academic Board minutes.
412. In terms of actions taken by the NIoT in response to external monitoring and review, the team noted from its DAPs self-assessment document that in addition to the deliberative committee structure, the NIoT has established three advisory groups with extensive external membership, and that these advisory groups contribute to programme development and enhancement. These are a programme advisory group, a research advisory group and regional consultation groups, referred to as college advisory groups. Advisory group

membership includes senior leaders from academy trusts and other educational institutions and partnerships.

413. The team reviewed the terms of reference of each of the advisory groups and saw that their remit included providing independent, expert advice and oversight across a range of areas including the development and implementation of NIoT's programme design and delivery strategy. For example, the terms of reference of the college advisory groups notes a remit to 'share regular and open communications between the Founding [multi-academy trusts] and Associate Colleges [...] and any other local/regional delivery partners'.
414. In scrutinising college advisory group minutes, the team found evidence of robust reflection and discussion of areas for development, including mobilising the collective power of founding multi-academy trusts and associate colleges to learn from each other, and maximising partnership opportunities. The team was aware from evidence submitted for the quality and standards assessment that the NIoT plans to use the programme and college advisory groups to build a body of research, advice and feedback, which will influence course design and development. The team also understood that these advisory groups will act as a forum for testing and discussing new programme ideas and designs, and will enable the NIoT to review the educational challenge of its courses and make modifications and amendments if necessary.
415. The team saw evidence of arrangements in development to enable the wider dissemination of feedback from advisory group discussions, and for advisory groups to be involved in the development and enhancement of academic provision. For example, as discussed under criterion A1, the New DAPs plan makes provision for the PAG to undertake twice-yearly benchmarking reviews of academic standards, and for PAG minutes to be reported to the relevant programme board to ensure its views on academic standards are embedded within programme design and delivery.
416. The team also saw that Quality and Standards assurance framework: An outline guide sets out NIoT's approach to external examiners. It states that 'External Examiners provide a crucial element of objectivity and externality in helping the Institute to maintain [...] academic standards.' The framework also clarifies that external examiners are full members of relevant exam boards. The NIoT DAPs self-assessment document sets out that feedback from external examiners is actioned through the programme boards and reported through to the Academic Board as part of NIoT's annual review of academic quality and standards. Scrutiny of a set of exam board minutes shows that external examiners have an opportunity to report their view of programme content and assessment. The exam board minutes showed the external examiner offering suggestions for improvement across a range of areas, including the consistency and transparency of feedback and grading.
417. The team did not see evidence of action plans resulting from external examiner feedback or how programme teams consider which suggestions for improvement should be implemented. However, the team found that the New DAPs plan made provision for how action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review, across the DAPs criteria and in relation to various workstreams. Examples include milestones and timings for:
- a. The Academic Board to receive an annual report on how external examiner feedback is being incorporated.

- b. A detailed review of QAM incorporating student feedback and external review from staff at UK universities. The output of the review, with proposed changes to the QAM, is to be reported to SEQA and approved by Academic Board.
- c. The annual review of each programme to include feedback from external examiners and the annual report to be discussed at the Programme Board and SEQA.
- d. The creation of processes for the review, every two years, of academic regulations, to include gaining insight from other institutions as part of the process. Changes to academic regulations are proposed to SEQA for recommendation to Academic Board for approval before being communicated to staff and students.
- e. The collection of data from termly student surveys. Results are to be analysed by the research team and reported to next available Programme Board, with the report being received by SEQA and Academic Board. The report is to contain breakdown by characteristic, route, phase, subject and geographic location, and will be factored into termly updates to the PDD and annual programme review.

418. The team considers that the NIoT's response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review should continue to be monitored during the probationary period.

419. The team noted that the NIoT's DAPs self-assessment document states that the policies and procedures that flow from the Quality and standards framework are being developed and enhanced in the light of operational experience in 2023-24. It also states that the NIoT plans to further develop its evaluation skills and capacity and to make greater use of evaluation in its work by 2026-27. The team found that the New DAPs plan includes a milestone with timings for the development of processes, to give staff opportunities to develop their evaluation skills capacity.

420. The team formed the opinion that the work of the Board of Trustees, the Academic Board and its subcommittees is key to ensuring the quality of the NIoT's higher education provision. It concluded that the NIoT has a stated commitment to continuous improvement, and that the critical self-assessment integral to the operation of its higher education provision is to be enabled through the various monitoring and review processes set out in the quality and standards framework and manual. The team also noted some actions taken in response to matters raised through internal feedback from students. The team was satisfied that NIoT's New DAPs plan includes information regarding the Academic Board's approach to the evaluation of performance. It also contains credible plans for the development of arrangements that will enable the NIoT to fully evidence that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of its higher education provision, and that action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review.

421. To assess whether the NIoT has clear mechanisms for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision, the team reviewed a range of evidence including:

- the NIoT's Quality and standards assurance framework: An outline guide
- section 4 of the NIoT's Quality and standards assurance manual, The evaluation, monitoring and review of the institute's academic provision
- the NIoT SEQA committee terms of reference
- the NIoT programme boards terms of reference.

422. Quality and standards assurance framework: An outline guide provides an overview of the NIoT's approach to ensuring the quality and standards of its academic provision. This includes the quality assurance and enhancement mechanisms it has in place. The framework states that the Academic Board has formal accountability for quality and standards and that its responsibilities in this regard are discharged with the assistance of the NIoT's SEQA committee. These responsibilities are confirmed in the terms of reference for each committee. The framework also clarifies that responsibility for quality and standards is shared with 'all staff engaged in the delivery and support of learning, teaching and research degree supervision'.
423. The team found that section 4 of the Quality and standards assurance manual sets out the processes for the scrutiny and monitoring of academic provision, including assigning and discharging related actions. For example, the manual describes the annual programme monitoring process as a key mechanism for ensuring quality and standards. It stipulates that programme teams are responsible for undertaking annual programme monitoring, which it states should be an evidence-based, action-focused programme evaluation.
424. The team saw a programme monitoring report template, which includes provision for an action plan drawn from issues identified in the programme report, and requires that actions are owned by a named individual. The report template also includes a section for an update on actions from the previous year's programme monitoring. The Programme Board is responsible for producing the annual programme monitoring report, which is considered by the NIoT's SEQA committee before being reviewed by the Academic Board. Where appropriate, Academic Board provides feedback on annual programme reports to programme teams.
425. Similarly, the team saw that Section 4 of the Quality and standards assurance manual provides guidance on the ongoing evaluation and monitoring of modules and the periodic review of programmes intend to be scheduled on a rolling five-yearly cycle. The manual sets out clear responsibilities for both these monitoring activities, as well as mechanisms for the assignment and discharge of related actions. For example, it sets out the requirement for teaching staff to provide guidance to students on the purpose, value and completion of module evaluations, and to draw analysis of student responses into a module summary report and action plan. The manual also states that coordination of the periodic review of programmes is the responsibility of the academic registrar and that the output of the periodic review panel will be a report of the panel's key findings, recommendations and actions. Periodic review reports are to be discussed at the SEQA committee, and the outcomes of those discussions are then reported to the Academic Board.
426. As discussed under criterion B2, the team was aware that the 2023-24 annual programme review was operated under the validator's arrangements for programme review. Furthermore, the NIoT has not yet been delivering higher education long enough to have undertaken any periodic review of its provision. Consequently, programme or module monitoring reports were not available to the team, meaning it could not judge the effectiveness of these process in practice. However, as also set out and discussed under criterion B2, the New DAPs plan includes milestones and timelines regarding the NIoT's approach to in-year, annual and periodic programme review. These plans will enable the team to test through the New DAPs probationary period whether programme review processes are being consistently applied and operated, and whether actions in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of academic provision are being discharged as appropriate.

427. The team also saw that, further to the development and implementation of mechanisms for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of academic provision, the New DAPs plan includes milestones and timings for:
- a. The Programme Assessment Board to review external examiners' comments for each module (three times a year) with recommendations to feed into next module's training.
 - b. The PAG to carry out twice-yearly benchmarking review of academic standards with outcomes to go to the Academic Board. PAG minutes also to be reported to the relevant programme board, to ensure PAG's views on academic standards are embedded in the design and delivery of the programme.
 - c. A periodic programme review process to be undertaken as outlined in the QAM, with the addition of at least one external reviewer from UK higher education.
 - d. Programme review results to be reported to the Academic Board and actions taken to inform programme boards.
 - e. The Academic Board to receive an annual report on how external examiners' feedback is being incorporated.
428. From its review of the evidence, the team concluded that the NIoT has made provision for assigning and discharging actions in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision, and has credible plans in place to further develop these mechanisms. The team saw some evidence of this happening in practice, through the Academic Board's consideration of programme board reports and actions taken in response to student feedback, and considers this an area for further scrutiny during the New DAPs probationary period.
429. To test whether ideas and expertise from within and outside NIoT are drawn into arrangements for programme design, approval, delivery and review, the team reviewed a range of evidence including:
- the NIoT's Quality and standards assurance framework: An outline guide
 - section 1 of the QAM, The design of the institute's academic provision
 - section 4 of the Quality and standards assurance manual, The evaluation, monitoring and review of the institute's academic provision
 - the 18 July 2024 external exam board minutes
 - external examiner moderation reports
 - the 29 January 2024 ITE Programme Board minutes.
430. As discussed under criterion B2, the team noted that the NIoT Quality and standards assurance framework sets out approaches for the assurance of NIoT's academic standards. These include programme approval procedures that make appropriate use of external subject specialists and the use of external examiners, 'to ensure that academic standards are consistent with external reference points and comparable institutions.' The framework also stipulates that consideration of the development of new programmes should be undertaken in consultation with a range of stakeholders, including students, employer organisations and any relevant professional, statutory or regulatory bodies.
431. As discussed under criteria B2 and B3, section 1 of the NIoT QAM sets out guidance on the design of NIoT's academic provision and provides additional guidance on procedures for the approval of NIoT's programmes. For example, it sets out the approval procedures for new or

modified programmes and modules, and includes the requisite templates for the proposal, approval or modification of modules and programmes of study. The team saw that the new programme approval form includes space for commentary about demand from employers and students for the proposed new programme, as well as a statement of support from relevant external examiners. Similarly, module proposal forms invite comment from external examiners and provide space for a summary of student feedback on the module under development. As noted under criteria A and B2, the team's review of the PAG terms of reference noted this group as a source of external and independent expertise, and the New DAPs plan makes provision for its feedback to feed into programme design and development

432. The team found that there was currently insufficient detail in the NIoT's Quality and standards assurance framework regarding the operationalisation of the design, development and approval procedures for academic provision, such as the membership of programme design teams or validation panels. However, as has been discussed at various points in this report, including under criteria B1 and B2, the New DAPs plan includes milestones and timelines for the detailed review of the Quality and standards assurance framework, and the development of arrangements to support the implementation of quality assurances process and procedures. These include arrangements to accommodate input from internal and external expertise. As set out under criterion B2, development of these arrangements and evidence of the procedures operating in practice should be monitored during the New DAPs probationary period.
433. The team found that section 4 of the QAM provides guidance on processes for the scrutiny and monitoring of academic provision and makes adequate provision to include ideas and expertise from internal and external stakeholders. For example, annual programme monitoring draws on input and feedback from programme delivery teams, students and external examiners. Periodic programme review panel membership normally includes an internal academic reviewer from a programme other than the one being reviewed, an external adviser, a recent graduate and a current student. However, programme monitoring and periodic review reports were not available at the time of the assessment, and therefore arrangements for the review and monitoring of the NIoT's academic provision through its academic governance mechanisms should be monitored throughout the New DAPs probationary period.
434. The team was satisfied that the evidence reviewed demonstrated ways in which internal and external expertise contribute to ongoing programme delivery via several routes. These include external examiner moderation reports and exam board minutes, which capture external examiners' comments on programmes and assessments. The team saw several instances of external examiners commenting on assessment design and student feedback and offering suggestions for improvement. For example, in a PGCE module moderation report, the external examiner suggested more comprehensive guidance be given on failing assessments, to help students further improve their grade. Similarly, the ITE exam board minutes evidence the external examiner offering positive feedback on the report and suggesting some areas for improvement, including the involvement of mentors in co-constructing the programme. However, as noted earlier in this section, the team did not see evidence of action plans resulting from external examiner feedback or how programme teams consider which suggestions for improvement should be implemented.
435. The team concluded that the NIoT has made provision, through its Quality and assurance framework and manuals, for internal and external ideas and expertise to contribute to the scrutiny, monitoring and ongoing delivery of academic provision. Furthermore, the team found

that provision for internal and external expertise to contribute to programme design and approval was set out in the New DAPs plan.

Conclusions

436. The assessment team concluded that the NIoT has demonstrated an understanding of criterion E1, because the evidence demonstrated that the NIoT has a clear commitment to critical self-assessment and has begun the work of ensuring that action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review. The team also concluded that the NIoT has developed several opportunities for ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation to contribute to the continuous improvement of its academic provision. The NIoT's Quality and standards assurance framework and manuals make good provision for assigning and discharging actions in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision.
437. The team further concluded that the NIoT has a credible New DAPs plan, which can be reasonably expected to enable the NIoT to meet criterion E1 in full by the end of the New DAPs probationary period. As the New DAPs plan meets the requirements of this criterion, the team did not identify any specified changes to the plan.
438. The team considered the following areas should be monitored through the New DAPs probationary period:
- the NIoT's response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review
 - that programme review processes are being consistently applied and operated and that actions in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of academic provision will be discharged as appropriate.

New degree awarding powers overarching criterion

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

Advice to the OfS

439. The assessment team's view, based on a consideration of the evidence requirements for the DAPs criteria alongside other relevant information, is that NIoT meets the overarching criterion for New DAPs, because the evidence shows it can be reasonably expected to meet the underpinning criteria in full by the end of the probationary period.
440. The team's view is based on its review of the NIoT's New DAPs plan, self-assessment and evidence, which shows in summary that the NIoT's New DAPs plan is credible because it contains sufficient detail, such as key milestones or timelines, to demonstrate how the NIoT will meet the DAPs criteria in full by the end of the New DAPs probationary period.
441. The team found that the NIoT does have credible plans to develop a self-critical and cohesive academic community. It is also developing a clear commitment to the assurance of standards supported by quality systems that can be reasonably expected to be effective.

Reasoning

442. The assessment team found that the NIoT is developing credible mechanisms and plans to demonstrate self-criticality. The evidence demonstrated that the NIoT has a clear commitment to critical self-assessment and has begun the work of ensuring that action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review.
443. The team found that the NIoT has an emerging cohesive academic community. The evidence reviewed demonstrated that staff involved in teaching or supporting student learning, and in the assessment of student work, can be reasonably expected to be appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the levels and subjects of the proposed programmes. There is also evidence of appropriate academic and professional expertise and engagement with pedagogic development.
444. The team found that the NIoT is developing a clear commitment to the assurance of standards through benchmarking against relevant external points of reference, including the FHEQ. Its approach to programme development, approval and review is intended to take appropriate account of internal and external independent expertise to confirm those academic standards. Furthermore, its approach to assessment is intended to ensure that qualifications and credit are only awarded where relevant learning outcomes are achieved.
445. The team found that the NIoT is developing clear and appropriate quality systems, which are expected to be effective. Its quality systems are underpinned by clear governance structures and reporting lines, with policies for monitoring, review and engagement with external reference points.

Conclusions

446. In conclusion, the assessment team finds that the NIoT meets the overarching DAPs criterion, as the evidence demonstrates that it has an emerging self-critical, cohesive academic community with a clear commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective (in prospect) quality systems.

New DAPs test conclusions

Advice to the OfS: Credibility of the New DAPs plan

447. The assessment team's view is that the NIoT does have a credible New DAPs plan which will provide a suitable basis for monitoring and further assessment.
448. The team's view is based on its review of the evidence, which shows in summary that the NIoT's New DAPs plan demonstrates how it will meet the DAPs criteria in full by the end of the probationary period, and that these plans are comprehensive and appropriate.
449. The team considers that the NIoT's New DAPs plan is credible in relation to the DAPs criteria and the overarching criterion, such that the NIoT should be able to demonstrate that it will fully meet these criteria by the end of the probationary period.

Advice to the OfS: Understanding of the DAPs criteria

450. The assessment team's view is that the NIoT has demonstrated a full understanding of the DAPs criteria.
451. The team's view is based on its review of the evidence, which shows in summary that the NIoT has made good progress towards establishing a framework of academic governance to oversee a coherent higher education mission. This framework is underpinned by academic policies and there is evidence of a self-critical approach to evaluating its own performance.
452. The NIoT has developed, and has plans to continue to develop, transparent academic frameworks and regulations to govern the award of academic credit and qualifications. It intends to develop mechanisms for setting and maintaining the standards of its qualifications. The team considered that these will meet the expectations of the FHEQ and are comparable with those of other higher education providers.
453. The NIoT operates programme approval processes to design programmes that will provide its students with a high quality academic experience, which are evaluated by a range of assessment processes. These processes will be quality assured by internal and external monitoring.
454. The student learning experience will be underpinned by the recruitment of staff who are appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the levels and subjects of the qualifications to be awarded, and by the establishment of policies and procedures that should enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

Advice to the OfS: Academic standards

455. The assessment team's view is that the standards set by the NIoT for the proposed courses are at an appropriate level.
456. The team's view is based on its review of the evidence showing that the NIoT is developing regulations, policies and procedures that will support the setting and maintenance of academic standards and the security of the award of credit and qualifications.
457. Furthermore, the evidence shows that processes for the development of new or modified provision will ensure that qualifications continue to be offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ.

458. The evidence reviewed shows that the setting and maintenance of academic standards will take account of the appropriate reference points and external and independent points of expertise.

Conclusions

459. The assessment team therefore concluded that the NIoT's New DAPs plan is credible and should enable the NIoT to demonstrate that it will meet the DAPs criteria in full by the end of the probationary period.

Annex A: Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
AI	Artificial intelligence
CEO	Chief executive officer
ExCo	Executive Committee
FHEQ	Framework for Higher Education Qualifications
HERA	Higher Education and Research Act 2017
ITE	Initial Teacher Education
ITT	Initial Teacher Training
KPI	Key performance indicator
New DAPs	New degree awarding powers
NIoT	National Institute of Teaching
OfS	Office for Students
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills
PAG	Programme Advisory Group
PDD	programme development document
PGCE	Postgraduate Certificate in Education
QAA	Quality Assurance Agency
QAC	Quality Assessment Committee
QAM	Quality Assurance Manual
QTS	Qualified Teacher Status
SEQA	Student Experience and Quality Assurance
SSCC	Staff-student consultative committee
SSW	Student support and welfare
VLE	Virtual Learning Environment



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