



# Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of BIMM Limited

January 2016

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at BIMM Limited (also known as the British and Irish Modern Music Institute). The review took place from 19 to 21 January 2016 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Laila Halani
- Associate Professor Alan Howard
- Dr Simon Jones
- Mrs Kanyanut Ndubuokwu (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by BIMM Limited and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code)<sup>1</sup> setting out what all UK [higher education providers](#) expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

In Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - the setting and maintenance of threshold academic standards
  - the quality of student learning opportunities
  - the information provided about higher education provision
  - the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- provides a commentary on the selected theme
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

A check is also made on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG) with the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure.

In reviewing BIMM Limited, the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The [themes](#) for the academic year 2015-16 are Student Employability, and Digital Literacy,<sup>2</sup> and the provider is required to select, in consultation with student representatives, one of these themes to be explored through the review process.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 6.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.<sup>3</sup> A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).<sup>4</sup> For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code)

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Review themes: [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2859)

<sup>3</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us).

<sup>4</sup> Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx)

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about BIMM Limited

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at BIMM Limited.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of its awarding bodies **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities is **commended**.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at BIMM Limited:

- the extensive use of music industry practitioners in course design and development. (Expectation B1)
- the use of music industry professionals in providing masterclasses, guest lectures, mentoring and careers advice to support student learning (Expectations B3 and B4)
- the engagement of staff at all levels in the preparation and consideration of annual monitoring reports (Expectation B8)
- the diversity of work placement opportunities, supported by highly informative guidance in handbooks for staff, students and employers (Expectation B10).

### Recommendations

The team makes no recommendations.

### Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that BIMM Limited is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students:

- the work being undertaken to improve student retention (Expectation B4)
- the steps being taken to improve the response rates of student surveys (Expectation B5).

### Theme: Student Employability

BIMM Limited has well-organised and effective arrangements for developing and enhancing student employability. Several factors contribute to this. Teaching staff have current experience of the music and creative industries which they are able to use in teaching. The Industry Advisory Panels held at each college formalise the extensive links with the music industry. The Careers Service is proactive and well-used by students. BIMM provides an extensive and varied programme of work-based learning supported by clear documentation for students, staff and employers.

### Financial sustainability, management and governance

There were no material issues identified at BIMM Limited during the financial sustainability, management and governance check.

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

## About BIMM Limited

BIMM Limited is a provider of modern music education and training in music performance, music production, songwriting, music business, event management, music journalism and live sound. There are four colleges in the UK: in Brighton, Bristol, London and Manchester. There are also colleges in Dublin and Berlin which were not part of this review. BIMM Limited's primary aim is to enable students to progress into successful and sustainable careers within the creative industries. All programmes are designed to prepare students with specialist skills and knowledge and connections required to enter the creative industries. There is a wide range of additional opportunities and experiences available to enhance the student experience in the music industry. At the time of the review there were 4,337 undergraduate full-time students in the four colleges. There are 74 full-time academic and support staff: 21 in Brighton, 14 in Bristol, 17 in London and 22 in Manchester.

Since the last engagements with QAA (review in 2014 and a monitoring visit in 2015), the major changes include the consolidation of the UK Visas and Immigration Tier 4 licences into a single BIMM licence in compliance with revised sponsorship guidance. The BIMM Group completed the second phase of its academic management restructure and redrafted terms of reference for committees, including some changes in titles for senior management. There are new buildings for BIMM Institutes in Manchester, Brighton and Bristol to meet growing student numbers and new office accommodation for the central administration in Brighton. It has developed a BIMM Group virtual learning environment (VLE) for all the colleges.

BIMM Limited identified the following key challenges in its Strategic Plan:

- continue to enhance the management of academic standards and quality as student numbers grow
- ensure full engagement with the new and developing regulatory landscape in UK higher education
- implement the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Plan across all BIMM colleges
- share good practice in learning and teaching across all colleges.

BIMM Limited has long-standing partnerships with the University of Sussex, the University of West London and Bath Spa University. Each partnership has a validation agreement. With its university partners, BIMM Limited has developed the BIMM Group's electronic library. There are specific contracts that define BIMM Limited's responsibilities. There are some differences in approach between the universities, which BIMM Limited is well aware of and able to manage.

BIMM Limited has built on the seven good practice points identified at the 2014 review. It has engaged more with external reference points, and student support remains strong. It has developed its links with the music industry and the curriculum is responsive to the needs of the industry. BIMM Limited remains strong in supporting staff development and the management of social media.

The six desirable recommendations from the 2014 review have been met. BIMM has published its quality cycle and strengthened its links with external examiners. Regarding discipline-based annual reporting, this is based at course levels and the REO monitoring team who visited BIMM in summer 2015 accepted that it was not appropriate to pursue this recommendation. The recommendation regarding improved communications with student representatives has been met. BIMM has explained how numerical grades are derived and the management of documentation covers the whole provision.

## Explanation of the findings about BIMM Limited

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a [brief glossary](#) at the end of this report. A fuller [glossary of terms](#) is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the [review method](#), also on the QAA website.

# **1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations**

**Expectation (A1): In order to secure threshold academic standards, degree-awarding bodies:**

**a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) are met by:**

- **positioning their qualifications at the appropriate level of the relevant framework for higher education qualifications**
- **ensuring that programme learning outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptor in the relevant framework for higher education qualifications**
- **naming qualifications in accordance with the titling conventions specified in the frameworks for higher education qualifications**
- **awarding qualifications to mark the achievement of positively defined programme learning outcomes**

**b) consider and take account of QAA's guidance on qualification characteristics**

**c) where they award UK credit, assign credit values and design programmes that align with the specifications of the relevant national credit framework**

**d) consider and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A1: UK and European Reference Points for Academic Standards**

## **Findings**

1.1 BIMM Limited does not have its own degree awarding powers. Courses are validated by the University of Sussex (at BIMM Institute Brighton and BIMM Institute Manchester), Bath Spa University (at BIMM Institute Bristol) and the University of West London (at BIMM Institute London). Respective responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards are agreed at validation and BIMM Limited plays a key role in programme development, review and consideration of modifications.

1.2 New courses are developed and existing courses are reviewed with reference to the FHEQ, through the alignment of level descriptors and learning outcomes and to the appropriate Subject Benchmark Statements. Gap analysis is undertaken on publication of revised Subject Benchmark Statements to ensure curriculum provision remains appropriately aligned. Academic regulations are agreed with university partners to ensure that qualifications are awarded on the basis of the achievement of defined learning outcomes through systematic mapping of the outcomes to assessment tasks and criteria. Link tutors from each university provide guidance and support to course leaders and other senior staff.

1.3 The review team reviewed relevant documentary evidence for course development and approval, including quality assurance policies and procedures, to confirm that these

enable it to meet Expectation A1. The team further tested the approach taken by talking to link tutors, senior Institute staff and others involved in course delivery.

1.4 The review team confirms that courses are mapped against the FHEQ at validation/ approval stage to comply with the academic frameworks of the universities. Course learning outcomes are mapped against the relevant qualification descriptors from the FHEQ and curriculum content is informed by the appropriate Subject Benchmark Statements. Key staff understand their responsibilities for maintaining academic standards, and have a supportive relationship with the universities facilitated by link tutors who attend the College higher education Boards of Study. Effective support is available for staff involved in course design and review. Staff at executive level are kept informed about changes in the regulatory landscape that may affect BIMM.

1.5 Overall, BIMM Limited discharges its responsibilities effectively within the context of its agreements with the three universities. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A2.1): In order to secure their academic standards, degree-awarding bodies establish transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how they award academic credit and qualifications.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards**

**Findings**

1.6 BIMM Limited's programme development teams use the academic frameworks of the universities to establish the credit structure and rules for award. Regulations are formulated and agreed that follow the principles of the universities' frameworks for credit and qualifications. Examination boards are also organised according to the requirements of the universities.

1.7 A new committee structure has been established to re-shape and unify the governance of the BIMM Group following the establishment of a central directorate for Academic Development and Quality Assurance in 2013-15. Academic Board is responsible for strategic oversight and approval of academic policy. The Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee (LTEC) has oversight of annual review and internal approval of major programme changes and sits alongside the Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) and Research and Ethics Committee. These committees receive reports from college-based Boards of Study that have responsibility for operational matters and for minor changes to modules.

1.8 These arrangements and the academic regulations and frameworks agreed with universities, together with the deliberate structures for their implementation, would enable BIMM Limited to meet the Expectation.

1.9 The review team evaluated the effectiveness of BIMM Limited's processes by scrutinising relevant policy and procedure documents and talking to senior management, teaching staff and students.

1.10 Working with three universities across four colleges creates potential complexity, particularly as some courses of the same title are validated by different universities depending on the college delivering the programme. Assessment regulations and misconduct policies for BIMM Institutes Brighton, Bristol and Manchester are devised by BIMM Limited and approved by the University of Sussex or Bath Spa University. At BIMM Institute London the regulations and policy of the University of West London are used. Operation of examination boards also varies between colleges and universities. The revised committee structure should enable consistent and sound governance of policy and process across BIMM Limited. Good communication is evident between colleges and this is formalised through the new committees where each college is represented.

1.11 Overall, BIMM Limited's governance structure and quality management processes are appropriate and enable implementation and operation of academic frameworks and regulations in line with the requirements of the awarding bodies. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**



**Expectation (A2.2): Degree-awarding bodies maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that they approve (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.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards**

**Findings**

1.12 The universities have a variety of validated agreements and have the overall responsibility of approving programme specifications in accordance with the external references such as the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements, assessment regulations of the universities, and organisation and information about accreditation and learning outcomes.

1.13 The academic governance at BIMM Limited follows the universities' regulations and shows clear responsibilities between both BIMM Limited and each universities. BIMM Limited's governance arrangements together with the college policies and procedures would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.14 After completion of approval/validation, course development teams produce definitive documentation that constitutes a reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme. Definitive documents are maintained by the college Heads of Higher Education, audited by the Quality Assurance Manager and archived by administrators. Current programme specifications, including references to Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ, are made available to students and other stakeholders on the BIMM Group website and are included in course handbooks which are provided electronically to students at induction. Subsequent modifications to courses are tracked against these definitive documents.

1.15 The review team tested this expectation through scrutiny of documentation supplied to inform the approval and review of programmes from awarding bodies, external examiner reports and through discussions with college and university staff.

1.16 The review team found that the policies and procedures are clearly effective and concise and within the regulations of the universities. Information on the courses is accurate and accessible. Students are able to identify the credits and learning outcomes of the courses and source the programme specifications on the virtual learning environment (VLE) and in the handbooks.

1.17 Staff engaged in teaching are able to explain and evidence how they contribute to the course reviews, such as annual monitoring forms that include student and employers' contributions. Some of these engagements have led to programme modifications. An example of this is the Collaborative Course Leader's Report supporting the BMus (Hons) Popular Music Performance with Foundation Year from the University of West London, which was deemed as best practice and an exemplar by the University.

1.18 BIMM Limited fulfils its responsibilities and has demonstrated effective procedures and policies both internally and in its relationships with its awarding bodies. The review team found significant evidence of how BIMM Limited demonstrates this, especially in the engagement of stakeholders and the modification process for courses that awarding bodies review and validate/revalidate. The processes, both internally and in accordance with the

regulations of the universities, are clear and informative for all stakeholders. Therefore, the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.1): Degree-awarding bodies establish and consistently implement processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees that ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards**

**Findings**

1.19 The three universities are responsible for securing the academic standards and the outcomes-based approach to academic awards through validation. BIMM Limited uses the procedures set by the universities for approval, validation and review. BIMM Limited uses the procedures set by the respective universities for the design and approval of assessments, which is supported by its own two-stage internal approval process that mirrors the universities' process.

1.20 Internal approval events are documented and reported through the Learning and Teaching Enhancement Committee to Academic Board. Copies of internal approval reports are submitted to the universities as part of their own approval/validation process.

1.21 The review team tested this Expectation through scrutiny of documentation supplied to inform the approval and review of courses from awarding bodies, external examiner reports, and through discussions with BIMM Limited and university staff.

1.22 BIMM Limited operates effectively within the context of the universities, and courses are approved and the academic level checked through the LTEC and by Academic Board. BIMM Limited contributes to academic validation by attending development meetings and events to demonstrate capacity to deliver the provision at the appropriate levels and to confirm partnership arrangements.

1.23 Course documentation is clear on the levels of learning outcomes and assessment processes to ensure that students are able to achieve them. BIMM Limited staff work closely with university link tutors on assessment and moderation matters to ensure academic standards through cross-marking events following approval. BIMM Limited works effectively with the universities to harmonise assessment processes to the point they are understood. A mapping exercise is due once the University of West London's regulations have been revised. In any validation exercise, the universities have sought early clarification on differences regarding other universities. External examiners' reports have identified no issues for concern about the academic standards of students' work.

1.24 The review team considers that BIMM Limited's higher education provision is developed and approved in accordance with the academic frameworks of the universities. The universities ensure that the procedures followed by BIMM Limited align with their guidelines and regulations. The team therefore concludes that Expectation A3.1 is met and the associated risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.2): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where:**

- **the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of qualifications) has been demonstrated through assessment**
- **both UK threshold standards and their own academic standards have been satisfied.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards**

**Findings**

1.25 BIMM Limited works effectively with its university partners to secure academic standards and an outcomes-based approach to academic awards. Regulations are formulated and agreed that follow the principles of the universities' frameworks for credit and qualifications. BIMM Limited's internal approval policy requires it to ensure that it meets the awarding bodies' requirements for module and course outcome. It also ensures that internal and external requirement for course level are met.

1.26 This process would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.27 Course development teams demonstrate that UK threshold standards are met by mapping programme and module outcomes to the FHEQ and to relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. The external approval/validation process and the external examiner reports confirm that academic standards have been met.

1.28 The team tested this Expectation by reviewing documentary evidence such as course and module outlines, internal and university validation reports and external examiner reports. The team also met senior staff and teaching staff to assess understanding of the process.

1.29 Through its policies and practices BIMM Limited shows clear understanding and responsibility towards ensuring that the achievement of learning outcomes is demonstrated through assessment. Assessments, aligned to learning outcomes and approved by the internal and external validation panels, external examiners and by the universities in their reports, confirm the effectiveness of the process.

1.30 BIMM Limited provides ongoing training for staff, with strong inter and intra-college support from experienced colleagues to ensure that module and course learning outcomes are assessed and aligned to UK threshold academic standards and to those of the universities.

1.31 Based on the documentary evidence outlined above, supported by evidence from meetings with senior staff and teaching staff, that these expectations are understood at committee and individual level, the team concludes that the expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.3): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree-awarding body are being maintained.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards**

## **Findings**

1.32 The formal procedures for annual monitoring are set out in the quality assurance documents of the three universities and explicitly address the maintenance of UK academic standards. In general, each university requires submission of an annual monitoring report (AMR) and action plan. These reports are discussed at each college's Board of Study and are then combined to produce an overarching AMR action plan which is considered by QAC.

1.33 The process for annual monitoring for all three universities is the same: BIMM Ltd produces AMRs which are approved by internal committees and then submitted to the university partners for comment and approval.

1.34 The process would allow the Expectation to be met.

1.35 BIMM Limited follows the universities' requirements for annual monitoring. A BIMM Limited-wide action plan is drawn up following the AMRs and tracked through its committees with responsibility for academic standards and quality of learning opportunities.

1.36 The Expectation was tested through the review of documentary evidence, particularly the programme-level, college-level and institution-level AMRs; and meetings with senior staff which included university representatives and teaching staff.

1.37 The process works effectively as the AMRs are detailed, evaluative and reviewed by the universities to ensure that the standards are met. The BIMM Limited 2013-14 AMR report for the BMus (Hons) Popular Music Performance was considered an exemplar by the University of West London.

1.38 Action points from the previous year are tracked over the year by the colleges through the Boards of Study. BIMM Limited is vigilant in monitoring the process for the four colleges. Progress on action points is reported in the following year's AMR, ensuring that the loop is closed.

1.39 The documentary evidence, supported by information and explanation received in meetings with senior staff (which included university representatives) and teaching staff, confirms that universities' requirements for annual monitoring are met, regular reports are prepared and action points following the reports are tracked at the college and provider level by BIMM Limited. The team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.4): In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, degree-awarding bodies use external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards to advise on whether:**

- **UK threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved**
- **the academic standards of the degree-awarding body are appropriately set and maintained.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards**

**Findings**

1.40 External academic advisers are appointed to panels established by the universities to validate BIMM's programmes. BIMM Limited's own Industry Advisory Panels contribute to course development and strategic planning, which is enhanced by close links with the music industry. Link tutors from the universities provide academic support and advice to senior staff and course leaders.

1.41 External examiners are appointed for all courses and report explicitly on the setting and maintenance of academic standards. External examiners' reports are considered at Boards of Studies at the relevant college. Course leaders write a response and the associated action plan. Reports and responses from all courses are discussed at the QAC and the LTEC. A summary document written by the Quality Assurance Manager is considered at Academic Board.

1.42 The use of external expertise to confirm standards through annual external examiner reports and external involvement in validation panels would enable Expectation A3.4 to be met.

1.43 The review team tested the approaches by reading documentary evidence, including validation documents, and external examiner reports and associated responses and action plans. The team met senior staff, employers, and link tutors from each university.

1.44 External examiner reports confirm that threshold academic standards are appropriately set, delivered and achieved across all course areas. A clear process exists through which reports are considered and responded to with monitoring and review undertaken through LTEC. Teaching staff are informed about external examiner reports and resultant action plans. The review team also saw evidence of how Industry Advisory Panels help inform consideration of curriculum developments; in one example the potential relevance of journalism as a new curriculum area was discussed. Documentary evidence confirms the involvement of external academic involvement in course validation processes undertaken by awarding bodies.

1.45 Overall, BIMM Limited engages external expertise in different ways to help support the maintenance of standards. The review team therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations: Summary of findings

1.46 In reaching its judgement about the maintenance of academic standards, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published Handbook.

1.47 BIMM Limited effectively follows the requirements of the universities to maintain academic standards. These processes are supported by the College's own internal procedures and guidance.

1.48 All seven of the Expectations in this area are met and the level of associated risk is low. The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies at the College **meets** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

**Expectation (B1): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes**

### **Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval**

2.1 The universities issue clear guidance for the production of course approval/validation submissions and the criteria on which BIMM Limited's proposals will be assessed. BIMM Limited publishes its internal approval procedures to students and staff in the Academic Development and Quality Assurance (ADQA) Manual. BIMM Limited follows university procedures and staff involved in course development are fully briefed and supported by ADQA. Development teams are able to access support, advice and training from the universities, through the relevant link tutors or quality assurance contacts. A senior member of ADQA staff leads and supports the internal and external approval/validation processes. BIMM Limited works closely with the universities to ensure that courses are designed and rigorously tested through peer review, including external academic, industry and student input at all stages from design to approval.

2.2 BIMM Limited also uses its own internal approval process (modelled on the universities' approval/validation processes) to scrutinise proposals. The new Course Approval Policy and Process for 2014-15 was subject to an initial review to ensure it is operating as intended. All BIMM group academic policies are approved for a four-year period after which they are reviewed to ensure that they remain current and effective. The BIMM Group Academic Board oversees the approval process.

2.3 BIMM Limited reviews its courses annually and reports to the universities. All courses are periodically reviewed and re-approved/revalidated. External advisers, both academic subject specialists and industry experts, are nominated by BIMM Limited for university approval for course development and revalidation panels.

2.4 BIMM Limited cites the revalidation of the BA (Hons) Professional Musicianship validated by Bath Spa University as evidence of good practice in integrating external feedback into course design and the internal validation processes prior to presenting the final revised version proposal to the University. BIMM Limited also identifies the development of the BA (Hons) Music Journalism as good practice, being developed in response to feedback at an Industrial Advisory Panel. The review team agreed with BIMM Limited's views on these developments, and the extensive use of music industry practitioners in course design and development is therefore **good practice**.

2.5 To review the effectiveness of these practices and procedures, the team analysed the provider's documentation and associated supporting evidence. It met awarding body representatives, senior, academic and support staff and subject area leads for higher education.

2.6 All validations and course developments are considered by LTEC, reporting to the Academic Board. The Academic Board oversees the changing regulatory environment and ensures changes to courses are well defined. Module and Course Leaders are involved, and the Dean of Higher Education works with the development team on updates in setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities.



2.7 Course development teams are drawn from full-time and part-time academic staff. On occasion, external subject experts are employed on a consultancy basis to advise course development teams. Teams also have the support of ADQA and link tutors. Staff involved in course development will normally have completed BIMM Group's Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) in Learning and Teaching which includes training on curriculum and assessment design. The internal approval process also includes staff from other BIMM Group colleges.

2.8 The internal process includes a student as a full approval panel member. New course proposals are presented to relevant student representative forums and Boards of Study for comment and recommendations feed into the development process. Students are also invited to university approval events and meet privately with the validation panel. Course development teams use feedback from module evaluations and from student representatives.

2.9 The close relationship and interdependence between BIMM Limited college teaching staff and industry representatives was evident to the review team, and their contribution is demonstrated in the course development process. Employers demonstrated their enthusiasm about BIMM Group's approaches to working with them in developing higher education courses to meet local industry needs in line with BIMM Limited's higher education strategy.

2.10 BIMM Limited records all feedback from internal and external sources through its LTEC and then its Academic Board. The Academic Board is the BIMM Group's senior academic committee with responsibility for maintaining academic standards and quality delegated from the BIMM Group Board, and chaired by the Director of ADQA.

2.11 The team concludes that BIMM Limited operates satisfactory processes for the design, development and approval of courses that support the setting and maintenance of academic standards and assures the enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities. Therefore Expectation B1 is met and the associated level of risk is low because of the strengths in BIMM's academic governance structure.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B2): Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education**

**Findings**

2.12 Admission to BIMM Limited's courses is through UCAS. BIMM Limited has clear admissions policies and procedures, which are in line with current legislation, university policies and the Quality Code. All entry requirements are approved by the universities and published on the BIMM Group's website. The universities receive a copy of the admissions policy for each college, which is included in approval processes. Documents are published in the ADQA Manual. BIMM Limited also sets out an Application Appeal Policy which is available on its website to ensure fairness and is easily accessible. It sets out a clear and precise timeframe for the appeals of admissions' decisions to be responded to.

2.13 The review team met the Managing Director, senior staff, students, employers, teaching and support staff to test the operational effectiveness of the policy and processes.

2.14 Applicants attend auditions and interviews which are conducted by a specialist admissions tutor who have clear guidelines for the process. The Admissions Manager closely monitors and reviews the process to ensure consistency and fairness. Admissions tutors are trained and observed to ensure that they are competent and fair. An applicant offer pack is provided to the successful candidates at the point of offer. A full applicant information pack is circulated, as a follow-up, four to six weeks in advance of the programme start date.

2.15 Candidates who are not successful for a particular course will be given feedback regarding areas of improvements and are advised about alternative opportunities. The Admissions Team communicates to all candidates by phone and in writing (email) should there be any changes to courses offered before enrolment stages.

2.16 There is a two-week induction period and enrolment is conducted according to BIMM Group's Enrolment and Induction Policy. Students are clearly informed of the induction arrangements. They receive student handbooks, explanations about timetables, and are introduced to key members of staff and the facilities at the BIMM Group colleges. The VLE and electronic library are also discussed with students. Students at BIMM Institute London are also given an induction to the University's library to which they have physical and online access as part of the BIMM Institute London validation agreement. BIMM Institute Brighton students have reference access to the University of Sussex Library, with equivalent access to local library resources for students in BIMM Institute Manchester and BIMM Institute Bristol. BIMM Limited operates an annual evaluation of its admissions and induction processes through an enrolment survey and focus group.

2.17 Students met by the review team confirmed that the efficacy of the admissions process and that information provided about their programmes on BIMM's website was comprehensive. They also found the induction helpful and informative, especially the opportunities to meet staff and other students and the talks by heads of programmes. International students have their own induction process, where all rules and regulations regarding UK Visas and Immigration will be discussed. They also meet other international students.

2.18 BIMM Limited is aware of the low retention rates for a minority of areas and currently monitors the entry qualifications of applicants. This is to ensure that applicants are capable of completing the programmes. Retention rates for each college are considered by the Academic Board and the Executive Management Team.

2.19 BIMM Limited's admissions are transparent, reliable and valid, and there are inclusive procedures for recruitment, selection and admission. BIMM Limited manages its admissions with the needs of students clearly identified and processed. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B3): Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.**

### **Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching***

#### **Findings**

2.20 BIMM Limited sees itself as a learning-focused institution and places excellence in teaching and learning at the centre of its strategic plan. BIMM Limited's Learning and Teaching Strategy (LTS) commits to providing high quality teaching and support for its students and sets out the responsibilities of college teams delivering programmes. Supplementary to the strategy is the Learning Teaching Enhancement Plan (LTEP). The LTS includes policies on teaching observation and assessment and feedback. Implementation and delivery of the LTS and its associated LTEP within each college is overseen by the LTEC.

2.21 Most teaching is undertaken by industry professionals working as self-employed hourly-paid sessional tutors for 30 weeks each year. Some tutors are employed on a fractional basis as Heads of Departments and Module Leaders while course leaders are generally employed on all-year contracts. Staff involved in course delivery have significant current or past involvement in the music or wider creative industries. All staff who teach more than an occasional guest lecture or masterclass receive initial induction training and enrol on the PGCert in Learning and Teaching validated by the University of Sussex. Some staff engage in research and scholarly activity.

2.22 Students experience a range of learning opportunities and close links to wider industry. There is the opportunity for all students to attend masterclasses run by creative industry practitioners. Many undertake work experience and placement opportunities. The VLE has been in operation for four years and was consolidated into a single VLE across all colleges for 2015-16.

2.23 These strategic approaches would enable BIMM Limited to meet Expectation B3.

2.24 The review team tested this by reading the relevant strategies, plans and policies and by talking to teaching staff, programme leaders and professional support staff from the four colleges as well as employers and current students.

2.25 College action plans drafted in response to the LTEP are being refined and developed during 2015-16 with support from the Head of Learning and Teaching Enhancement. Potential difficulties with facilitating sessional teaching staff to accept and commit to the LTS were noted in a recent university reconfirmation report. BIMM Limited therefore seeks to engage teaching staff with the LTS and its wider enhancement agenda through supporting tutors to attend an annual training event in September and briefer ones throughout the year. Teaching and professional support staff met by the review team were aware of the LTS and LTEP and conveyed an impression of a collaborative and mutually supportive approach to course delivery that was integrated across the four colleges.

2.26 Induction and initial training for new staff includes sessions on lesson planning and understanding the student perspective and are usually undertaken prior to contact with students. Individual development needs for salaried staff are identified through biannual staff appraisals which feed through to the training planning cycle and are formulated into a Group-

wide Staff Development Plan reported to Academic Board. Teaching staff confirmed that they had experienced teaching observations carried out by course leaders, academic team members and Heads of Department. Key themes arising from observations are collated and reported to LTEC. Sound arrangements for staff development and training exist and are well resourced.

2.27 Opportunity for students to engage with and experience the music industry is a key strength of provision. Students may undertake work experience or assessed placements depending on their programme of study and have opportunity to perform in showcases. Guest lecturers from industry contribute to curriculum delivery and students may attend regular masterclasses delivered by a broad range of music industry personnel, including famous performers who have decades of experience in concert promotion and artist management. Opportunities to perform at external events such as the Glastonbury Festival are sought-after and highly competitive. Students who applied, but missed out, expressed disappointment, but staff explained the use of selection criteria in the process and the availability of feedback to those who are unsuccessful. Overall, students' understanding of the realities of the industry is well managed, and curriculum content includes coverage of business and legal aspects as well as theory and performance. Tutorials to support course delivery enable students to receive direct instruction from tutors who are usually still active industry professionals. Such learning opportunities clearly enrich the student experience and deliver very good student satisfaction. The use of music industry professionals in providing masterclasses to support student learning, guest lectures, mentoring and careers advice is **good practice**.

2.28 Comprehensive student handbooks and links to policies and regulations are available to students on the VLE. New guidance for staff on requirements for module and programme VLE content has been established and access to plagiarism-detection software and online tutorial bookings (for BIMM Institute London) is integrated within the VLE. Students are able to enhance their capacity for more original and creative thinking through completion of independent projects at Level 6. Students will complete the National Student Survey from 2016. The annual enrolment survey indicates high levels of student satisfaction with teaching quality, tutors, tutorials and masterclasses.

2.29 Staff at all levels conveyed to the review team a strong sense of their investment in, and commitment to, BIMM Limited's approach to delivery of effective learning and teaching. There are clear plans to enhance this area further. The team therefore concludes that Expectation B3 is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B4): Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement**

**Findings**

2.30 The comprehensive document Tutorial and Student Support Policies clearly defines the provision of academic, careers, pastoral, welfare and disability support for students. Academic support is provided by teaching staff and tutors with whom students may book face-to-face or email tutorials. Records are kept for each meeting and overall progress and attendance at classes is monitored by student services in line with BIMM Limited's new Student Engagement Policy. Students with low attendance and engagement are monitored by the effective Student Academic Risk Committee. Pastoral, welfare and disability support is coordinated by student support centre staff at each college.

2.31 Students provide feedback on support services and learning resources through Student Representative Forum and Board of Studies meetings and the annual enrolment survey for returning students. Feedback is used strategically to identify and plan additional resource requirements. Careers advice is embedded within course delivery with varied opportunities for students to talk to industry practitioners. Further careers support is provided by careers and industry liaison staff located in new Careers and Industry Hubs at each college.

2.32 The approach taken and range of support provided would allow Expectation B4 to be met.

2.33 The review team tested this by looking at documentary evidence and talking to students, academic staff and professional support staff.

2.34 Low student retention cohort rates are evident on a small number of courses. For example, the 2011 entry for the BA (Hons) Professional Musicianship programme at BIMM Brighton achieved a 59 per cent retention rate. At BIMM Institute Bristol the same course had a retention rate of 45 per cent and for both colleges the 2012 cohort entry retention was 63 per cent for this course. In 2015 the BA (Hons) Music Production course had a retention rate of 33 per cent at year 2. In contrast, retention and completion rates for most other courses are above 80 per cent and in line with sector norms. Students in the first cohort of the BA (Hons) Music Business programme achieved a high number of First Class Honours degrees, as noted by the external examiner. Reasons for variability in retention have been analysed and institute-wide measures, including a new student engagement policy and course-level changes, have been made in response.

2.35 In-year student attendance and retention data is now considered on a monthly basis by each College Management Team and Senior Management Team and is used to identify students and cohorts that are underperforming. Such students are monitored by the Student Academic Risk Committee which meets at least termly to consider additional support interventions to enable students to re-engage with their studies. Retention, progression and achievement data is considered termly and annually by Academic Board and the BIMM Group Board.

2.36 In addition to a small decline in attendance that may account for lower retention, assessment results indicate that some students struggle with more academic elements of their programme such as academic writing and research skills. Further support is being provided to students in year 1 and year 2 in these areas, and in some courses the balance

and timing of theory and practice-based modules have been reviewed and adjusted to help ensure students have the necessary academic skills before engaging with the more theoretical modules. BIMM stresses to students the intrinsic link between attendance and achievement, and the review team **affirms** the work being undertaken to improve student retention.

2.37 Student feedback on learning resources has led to improvements in wireless access and access to onsite bookable recording space. However, students expressed some concern about pressures on practice facilities, particularly at BIMM Institute Brighton and BIMM Institute Bristol, and high demand for particular tutors. In response to expansion, BIMM Limited has invested in new buildings and recruits additional tutors in proportion to student number growth. At BIMM Institute London students may use the library and facilities of its partner university and BIMM Limited has implemented an enhanced VLE that provides study skills materials in addition to formalising guidance on programme and module level content. The student support team in each college provides a range of services to students, including helping students to register disabilities and providing advice and support to international students. Students spoke positively about this provision. A Creative Collaboration and Industry Links Forum comprising senior college staff works to ensure consistency of experience at each site.

2.38 Comprehensive support for careers and developing employability is provided and enhanced by the integral nature of the music and events industry to course design and delivery. Students appreciate the close industry links and spoke positively to the review team about the availability of careers support and the wider support services provided. The accessibility of music industry practitioners to provide guidance to students on careers and CV writing is identified as good practice under Expectation B3.

2.39 BIMM Limited's approach to enabling students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential within the context of expanding student numbers and consequent resourcing pressures is rigorous and proactive. It is clear that BIMM Limited manages the needs of students in a clear and focused manner. The review team therefore finds that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B5): Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement**

**Findings**

2.40 BIMM Limited has a higher education Student Engagement Policy, which is published on the website under the ADQA section, with clear aims and guidelines. For example, the Policy outlines the approach to be taken in each BIMM Limited college to maintain and act upon a Student Academic Risk Register which is used to monitor and encourage high levels of student engagement in learning. This Register identifies students whose engagement in terms of attendance, submission of course work, attendance for examinations, and communication with the college, has fallen below expected levels. Each college has convened a Student Academic Risk Committee as a subcommittee of its Senior Management Team, which will meet termly, or more frequently if required, to review the Risk Register and make decisions on the status of students on the Register. Such arrangements would enable BIMM Limited to meet the Expectation.

2.41 The review team tested the effectiveness of BIMM Limited's approach to student engagement by meeting the Managing Director, senior staff, students, employers, teaching and support staff, and by considering the evidence provided, a student submission, and by evaluating student representative structures and training.

2.42 BIMM Limited addresses the opportunity for student representation at induction and during the first few weeks of the first term. BIMM Limited operates a clearly defined student representation scheme. Student representatives are elected by their peers. All courses have at least one student representative at each level of study. Training for student representatives is given by student services staff. Student services at each BIMM college offer training for student representatives. There is a Student Representative Handbook which sets out the guidelines for student engagement.

2.43 Student representatives are invited to sit on BIMM Group academic committees: Academic Board, LTEC, and Quality Assurance Committee (QAC). Student representatives have also been involved in previous QAA reviews and all of BIMM Limited's validation/ approval and institutional recognition events. BIMM Limited's internal course approval process also now includes a student as a full approval panel member.

2.44 BIMM Limited encourages all students to become engaged, not just the student representatives. There is a Student Representative Forum where all students are welcome to attend. Student representatives are able to bring their concerns to Boards of Study. The Boards are college-specific and chaired by the College Head of Education and attended by academic, managerial and support staff. All student meetings' minutes are put on the BIMM Group VLE website to ensure students are aware of the actions taken to improve their experience.

2.45 BIMM Limited has implemented outcomes from the meetings with students, such as student union provision, an issue that has been partly addressed through provision of associate membership to university Students' Unions, but it is still an issue at BIMM Institute Manchester due to the distance to the University of Sussex. Resources for non-performance students to encourage their engagement, for example, the idea of a student representative newsletter, is facilitated by the Group-wide VLE. This will include a Group-wide student representative forum. All actions and annual academic report are kept at LTEC. Each



College reports on actions from its board of study, module leader reports and external examiners through its AMRs.

2.46 Additionally, BIMM Limited also runs module and course evaluation surveys at the end of the year as well as enrolment surveys. The Student Enrolment Survey has a return rate of 60 per cent. BIMM Limited is aware of the student academic survey low response rates in the past. There was some thought given to using paper surveys, but, with advice from the student body, BIMM Limited will use module surveys earlier in the year rather than the end of the year. Use will be made of class time supported by computer laboratories. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to improve the response rate of the student academic surveys.

2.47 BIMM Limited includes student key performance data in the colleges' AMRs. BIMM Limited also shares external examiner reports, AMRs and QAA reports with the student body through the Boards of Study, LTEC and QAC. Module leader reports are available on the BIMM Group VLE. Student representatives regularly report from academic committees to the student body, and staff also report key points from QAC, LTEC and the Academic Board.

2.48 Furthermore, BIMM Limited carries out focus groups to engage all students in order to seek and address the concerns raised by student representatives. Focus groups run by the BIMM Group Marketing team provided a student view on the development of the new BIMM Group website.

2.49 The team concludes that students understand how the representation system and other mechanisms operate and BIMM Limited monitors and responds effectively to the student voice. Student engagement is widespread and well supported. All colleges actively engage students and provide appropriate platforms for them to communicate with each other and staff, and as such the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B6): Higher education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning**

**Findings**

2.50 BIMM Limited has introduced a new Assessment Policy which follows the key indicators of the Quality Code. This is a thoroughly well-prepared and accessible document with emphasis on formative assessment and providing constructive feedback (including peer group assessment and feedback). It has also introduced audio feedback as an alternative to written feedback for some modules.

2.51 BIMM Limited sees itself as an inclusive provider with an emphasis on recruiting students from non-traditional backgrounds and has policies on the Accreditation of Prior Learning/Prior Experiential Learning - AP(E)L - that are agreed with its universities. Applicants or students who use the AP(E)L scheme are supported and guided through the process by Admissions staff, Student Services and relevant programmes leaders.

2.52 There is provision for regular staff training which is enhanced through additional staff development to ensure that they have the appropriate training to mark papers and provide feedback.

2.53 Due to the awarding bodies' own assessment regulations, BIMM Limited is aware that currently all procedures are either not aligned across all BIMM Limited colleges or are in the process of being introduced in all colleges following a pilot in one site. For instance, some procedures at BIMM Institute London are having to come into line with the rest of the BIMM Group (for example, anonymised marking). A system to check for academic misconduct has been introduced in all colleges from 2015-16 following a trial at BIMM Institute London.

2.54 BIMM Limited's policy on feedback is contained in the ADQA Manual on the BIMM Group website, under the academic regulations for each awarding university. For Bath Spa and the University of West London courses the policy is in the BIMM student handbook. The course handbooks state that all assignments should be returned within 15 working days or direct students to assessment regulations regarding return of work through hyperlinks. Students were clear about this regulation on feedback and stated that work is returned in a timely manner.

2.55 Experienced staff are responsible for designing assessments and receive training and support for the same. Procedures and processes on setting assessments, moderation, double-marking, and the role of the external examiner in relation to assessments are equitable, valid and reliable. Marking is conducted by tutors under the guidance and moderation of module and course leaders. Marks are double-checked prior to entry and confirmed by the academic team before being entered onto the assessment database. Course and module leaders will check the marking by new staff and may moderate or even double mark alongside a new member of staff until they are satisfied that the staff member is marking at the right level. The assessment process is challenging given that most staff are part-time and/or industry practitioners, but BIMM Limited has effective systems in place to ensure the integrity of the process.

2.56 The assessments are aligned to learning outcomes. The assessment requirements of the universities are checked by the validation panels and external examiner.

2.57 This process would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.58 The review team tested the Expectation through scrutiny of the Assessment Policy and other documents related to setting assessments, training and support of staff, relation with and responsibilities towards the universities, external examiner reports and discussions with senior staff, teaching staff and students from all four colleges.

2.59 The same award can be provided by three different universities with their own assessment policies. While this does not prevent BIMM Limited from meeting the expectation, it has worked and continues to work with the universities towards greater harmonisation of the assessment policies. This process of harmonisation can be completed once University of West London, which is currently revising its regulations, completes its own process.

2.60 The teaching qualifications for staff, mentoring and support by course leaders and a systematic approach to setting assignments according to the regulations of the universities and making relevant information available to staff and students in handbooks, VLE and through training sessions ensures that the process works effectively in practice. New teaching staff are given the opportunity to practise marking through the use of video.

2.61 Information on assessments, including deadlines and marking criteria are available on the VLE and is also explained to students by tutors. Though it did not appear widespread, some students have received conflicting information on submission dates and assessment briefs. This was reported to senior managers and resolved.

2.62 Assessment guidelines state that assignments must be returned to students within 15 working days. Normally this deadline is met in all programmes, although the process can be delayed by further moderation and vacations. External examiners approve and sign off assessments. Changes to assessment go to the external examiner and to Academic Board. External examiners approve and sign off assessments.

2.63 Students reported using academic malpractice software and have received information about plagiarism through documents, academic writing guides and classes. Students found feedback on their assignments constructive and formative. Peer assessment has been piloted at one college and, if successful, will be adopted by the other colleges.

2.64 BIMM Limited's clear policies and procedures, which follow the universities' requirements, its meticulous use of external examiners, and its staff support and training as evidenced through documentations and meetings, allows the review team to conclude that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## **Expectation (B7): Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners.**

### **Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining**

#### **Findings**

2.65 External examiners for each programme are nominated by the BIMM Group Academic Board and appointed by the universities. A briefing event is held for new external examiners. External examiners moderate assessment briefs and exam questions, receive samples of marked work for moderation and attend relevant examination boards. External examiners' reports are considered at college Boards of Study and responses are produced by programme leaders, including specific action points that feed into annual programme review. Reports and responses from all discipline areas are discussed at LTEC and the Quality Assurance Manager, on behalf of LTEC, an overarching institutional action plan from this programme-level reporting, which is approved and monitored by Academic Board. Reports are made available to student representatives at college Boards of Study and to all students through the VLE. All current external examiners are academic members of staff at other higher education institutions.

2.66 The process in place would enable Expectation B7 to be met.

2.67 The review team scrutinised selected external examiners' reports, looked at relevant policies on the induction and use of examiners, and minutes of relevant committees, and held meetings with staff and students.

2.68 Where there is more than one external examiner overseeing the same programme with the same validating university being delivered at two different colleges (Brighton and Manchester), BIMM Ltd have now appointed a single lead external for each course.

2.69 Current use of external examiners is robust with clear processes through which external examiner reports are considered and responded to at college levels. BIMM Limited oversight is provided by LTEC and enables wider dissemination of good practice and consideration of key issues. Teaching staff confirmed that they receive the reports and the resultant action plans. Student representatives also confirm that they have access to reports tabled at Boards of Study and all students can access them through the VLE. Examples of actions arising from 2014-15 reports include development of a student engagement policy, and full deployment of plagiarism-detection software. Meticulous use of moderation reporting was noted by the external examiner for the BMus (Hons) Popular Music Performance at BIMM Institute London and this good practice has led to new standardised moderation reports for all courses.

2.70 Overall, the review team is satisfied that BIMM Limited is making appropriate and scrupulous use of external examiners and therefore concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B8): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review**

**Findings**

2.71 BIMM Limited follows a systematic approach to annual monitoring that involves staff at all levels in the process. It follows a cascading approach whereby each module leader prepares a report that feeds into the course report. This in turn contributes to the college-wide report which is discussed at the relevant Board of Study and submitted to the QAC for comment and approval. The college reports are collated into an overall institutional AMR action plan by ADQA, which is considered by QAC. These reports are discussed and actioned at various committee levels and are also shared with the three universities. BIMM Limited prepares AMRs for each university to consider. An action plan is prepared and followed through at committee level and the findings are disseminated among staff.

2.72 ADQA has identified training sessions across a range of full and part-time staff, including module leaders, tutors and heads of department and started to address this through briefings during staff training sessions at all colleges in September 2015.

2.73 The design of the process would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.74 The team considered this evidence on the basis of the documentation provided, including AMRs prepared at various levels, external examiner reports and through meetings with senior staff, teaching staff and the universities.

2.75 The AMRs are detailed and include data on retention, progression and achievement. Student evaluation of modules and external examiners' reports are also considered in the preparation of the report. The cascading model is a very effective process as it involves a sizeable number of teaching staff and leaders. While experienced staff take ultimate responsibility for producing the reports, there is evidence of support provided to new programme leaders whose reports are checked and feedback is provided. BIMM Limited has put in place annual training for module leaders to ensure that the reports written by them are appropriate and effective.

2.76 BIMM Limited provided some good examples of AMRs, for example, one for University of West London. This was regarded as an exemplar by the University for its own practice. The training and support put in place by the college, and the sharing of good practice within and among the four colleges enables staff across colleges to write detailed and comprehensive AMRs. The engagement of staff at all levels in the preparation and consideration of AMRs is **good practice**.

2.77 Because of staff training and involvement for annual monitoring, the quality of the documents provided, particularly, examples of the AMRs and action points emerging from them, the review team concludes that the Expectation is met and that the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints**

**Findings**

2.78 BIMM Limited has Complaints and Academic Appeals policies published electronically on the BIMM Group website in the ADQA Manual. These policies detail the formal procedures, as well as support and resources, available to students. The Complaints and Academic Appeals policies include clear guidelines on time limits for appeals and responses from staff at each stage of the process. Students can raise their issues and concerns at student representative fora and at the Boards of Study which include representatives from each year and course. Students are able to raise matters directly with staff or student services. BIMM's procedures for handling students' complaints and academic appeals are fair, effective and timely and would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.79 The review team met senior staff, students, employers, teaching and support staff to test the operational effectiveness of BIMM Limited's policy and processes.

2.80 Complaints and appeals policies for provision validated by the University of Sussex and Bath Spa University have been consolidated into a single policy. For the University of West London, students must adhere to the University's policy and academic regulations. This is clearly signposted in the ADQA Manual on the BIMM Group website and in documentation for these students.

2.81 Student Services make students well aware of the support available during induction. Students also have access to the complaints and appeals procedures on the VLE and the BIMM Group website. Initially, the Complaints and Academic Appeals procedures were published in the Student/College Handbook, apart from BIMM Institute London. In 2016-17 all policies will be published on the website under the ADQA Manual.

2.82 Complaints and appeals are recorded and monitored using a secure database on the BIMM Group server by ADQA. This information (anonymised) is made available as part of the annual monitoring of provision. In the event that the Complaints and Academic Appeals process is exhausted, students may take their complaint or academic appeal to the relevant university.

2.83 The review team found that the complaints and appeal system operated by BIMM Limited is effective. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B10): Degree-awarding bodies take ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them. Arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations other than the degree-awarding body are implemented securely and managed effectively.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others**

**Findings**

2.84 Arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations other than the degree-awarding bodies are mainly focused on the provision of work placements and work-based learning (WBL) to BIMM Limited's students. BIMM Limited offers courses in culturally engaged cities, which have a proven music industry heritage and infrastructure, namely, London, Brighton, Bristol and Manchester. BIMM Limited is continually developing these relationships for the benefit of its students and colleges are consequently able to facilitate a high number of WBL opportunities and creative industries placements. Assessed WBL is particular to WBL modules on specific courses, including BA (Hons) Music Business, BA (Hons) Music Journalism and BA (Hons) Event Management.

2.85 BIMM Limited has an innovative teaching model where tutors are recruited as industry professionals and then inducted into a bespoke community of practice as teachers through the BIMM Group's own PGCert in Learning and Teaching, providing the foundations of an emergent research culture based on practitioner classroom-based action research. BIMM Limited uses a number of professional venues, and students are encouraged to take up industry-based work placements. Venues and work places are risk-assessed prior to students accessing them.

2.86 These arrangements would allow the Expectation to be met.

2.87 BIMM Limited's relationship with the creative industries is institutionally supported at Director-level with the appointment of a high-level music industry non-executive director who sits on the BIMM Group Board. A variety of work experience/placement and internship opportunities are offered to students through the BIMM Group's extensive network of creative industry contacts. All students are invited to apply and all opportunities are promoted to students via email, the BIMM Group's VLE, and posters at the Colleges.

2.88 BIMM Limited had 1,110 students on placements during the 2014-15 academic year. Each college has dedicated staff generating and promoting industry-facing learning opportunities and BIMM Limited is committed to sustaining its position as a leading provider of WBL. BIMM Group also has a formal partnership with Sony Music on both their Artist and Repertoire Academy and their Digital Partner Development Project. BIMM Limited is also the lead educational partner with the modern music industry's Great Escape Festival in Brighton and the Association of Independent Festivals Congress. Colleges work closely with Music Week Magazine, including sponsorship of the 'BIMM Breaking' performance slot at Music Week Radar showcase nights. Colleges work with regional and local festivals and industry events.

2.89 A Student Creative Career Development Strategy has been developed in 2015-16 through a series of focused Executive Management Team meetings and which has identified a number of potential projects that will enhance the range of career development opportunities available to students. Projects include the appointment of a Group Head of Artist Development, the creation of a Careers and Music Industry Hub at each college and the piloting of a BIMM Junior Academy for eight to 16 year olds, which will also provide students and alumni the opportunity to gain some teaching and coaching experience. Each

of these projects has a sponsor from the Executive Management Team. Progress will be monitored by this Team at its monthly meeting, and reported to Academic Board through the Chair. Students report that they found the work placements in their selective schools extremely helpful and relevant to their courses.

2.90 The review team tested this Expectation through scrutiny of documentation supplied to inform the approval and review of courses from awarding bodies, external examiner reports and discussions with college and university staff and students.

2.91 The review team confirms that BIMM Limited continually monitors and develops all aspects of industry placement opportunities to offer relevant, safe and secure learning environments. BIMM Limited undertakes a surveillance check to ensure the setting is suitable and provides documentation about the course for the employer. It explains how the employer can help facilitate learning and outlines arrangements for visits to the setting.

2.92 WBL takes place formally at Levels 5 and 6 across a range of courses, and all courses have a focus on experiential learning with student-driven work-based projects aimed at developing a range of employability skills, particularly at Level 6. All WBL is governed by policies and procedures detailed in the WBL Policy and handbooks for WBL employers and students. All WBL policies are aligned to UK health and safety and employment legislation. Students are introduced to the regulations in respect of placement or WBL in class and through careers guidance tutorials.

2.93 Prior to WBL placements being undertaken, two documents are issued to the placement provider: health and safety questionnaires and work placement request forms which require specific and detailed information. These are designed to ensure that students' safety and wellbeing are protected at all times and to provide transparency with regard to duties and accountabilities involved with each individual role. Once these forms have been completed they are checked by the college Head of Careers/Head of Estates. If a placement is considered high risk, the Head of Careers/Head of Estates may also undertake an onsite risk assessment. Risk assessments are also carried out for BIMM Limited's concerts and other external events by BIMM Limited's estates teams.

2.94 In addition to health and safety and placement request documents, WBL students are required to complete additional forms as part of their assessment. These include a learning agreement signed by the student and the college Head of Careers and Industry Liaison, which are appended to their assignment submission. The learning agreement includes a section for the employer to feed back on the student's performance, which enables the Head of Careers and Industry Liaison to work with the student on any areas for improvement. It also provides an opportunity to liaise with the placement provider about any areas that BIMM Limited can improve upon in running its WBL programme.

2.95 In order to coordinate work in this key area of enhancement, the BIMM Group has convened a Creative Collaboration and Industry Links Forum led jointly by the two Executive Principals and including staff from the Careers and Industry Liaison departments at each college, plus staff working with alumni. The Forum will steer BIMM Group's engagement and liaison with professional practice across the colleges, ensuring a strategic and deliberative approach on a national and regional basis.

2.96 There are masterclasses for students which are considered by industry to be of the highest quality. BIMM Limited invests considerable resources to ensure that availability is made to all students in all locations and to meet demand with a considerable volume and diversity of experiences. Consequently, a unique student experience provided by BIMM Limited is identified as good practice in Expectation B3.



2.97 The placement handbooks prepared for students, staff and employers are highly informative and are regularly updated with feedback to maintain the currency of guidance available. BIMM Limited makes extensive use of external industry practitioners in course design, guest lectures, mentoring and careers advice. There is a diversity of work placement opportunities and the preparation of students supported by highly informative guidance in handbooks for staff, students and employers. Consequently, the diversity of work-placement opportunities, supported by highly informative guidance in handbooks for staff, students and employers is **good practice**.

2.98 BIMM Ltd has well-established practices for student placements that are aligned with aspects of Expectation B10. There is an established and well-organised support mechanism from tutors to enable student progress. The review team concludes that the Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B11): Research degrees are awarded in a research environment that provides secure academic standards for doing research and learning about research approaches, methods, procedures and protocols. This environment offers students quality of opportunities and the support they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees***

2.99 BIMM Limited does not offer research degrees and therefore this Expectation does not apply.

## The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.100 In reaching its judgement about the quality of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

2.101 BIMM Limited has effective systems in place for course approval, admissions, learning and teaching, student support, student engagement, assessment, course review, complaints and appeals and working with others.

2.102 All 10 expectations are met with low levels of risk. There are four examples of good practice relating to the engagement of music industry professionals, the engagement of all staff in annual reporting, the use of music practitioners in course design and development and the diversity of work placements. There are no recommendations. There are two affirmations regarding the work to improve student retention and the steps being taken to improve response rates of student surveys.

2.103 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at BIMM Limited is **commended** because there are no recommendations, there are plans to enhance learning opportunities, student engagement is widespread and supported and there is a clear focus for managing the needs of students.

### **3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities**

**Expectation (C): UK higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the higher education they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.**

#### **Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision**

3.1 BIMM Limited is aware that the information it provides is crucial in ensuring that students make informed decisions throughout their journey from enquiry to application and finally becoming students at a BIMM Limited college. BIMM Limited therefore places high value on ensuring that the information it provides is accessible, understandable and accurate and that no claims are made about BIMM Limited that cannot be backed up by accurate information.

3.2 Academic Board ensures that the information BIMM Limited provides about its provision is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Marketing and course information is checked by the college Principals and Executive Principals (also members of Academic Board) and their teams before publication. Checks are also made by the ADQA.

3.3 These processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

3.4 BIMM Group provides information that describes its mission and values on the BIMM Group website. Course information is also in each college's prospectus. The ADQA Manual is also available on the BIMM Group website and includes all key policies and regulations for BIMM Limited's higher education provision. BIMM Limited provides information about the nature of its courses and the vocational focus of its provision on its website and in the four individual college prospectuses. In addition, the website also provides information on student support.

3.5 BIMM Limited has a Student Charter which is published to students in the ADQA Manual and discussed at induction. The Charter is reviewed and updated periodically in consultation with student representatives, and Academic Board approves any changes. All BIMM Limited students receive a transcript of achievement upon graduation.

3.6 Students report that the BIMM Group website is easy to use with relevant information for each college and all courses clearly available. The information is up to date and correct, with the list of courses and clear references to each university.

3.7 The review team tested this Expectation through scrutiny of documentation supplied to inform the approval and review of courses from universities, external examiner reports and discussions with college and university staff. BIMM Limited also provided a demonstration of the website.

3.8 Students regard this information as useful, which indicates that the information available to current students is fit for purpose. The student handbook is considered very useful. The provision of a memory stick containing all necessary information provided students with a further source of information. BIMM Limited conducts a survey of student opinion about the information provided after enrolment.

3.9 Students are able to access the VLE after enrolment. This access continues throughout the academic year for key information on assessments. However, students did report inconsistency of information on complaints and appeals processes, although this was resolved at the time of the visit.

3.10 The review team spoke to BIMM Limited senior staff at several staff levels over the production of information. Executive Principals take responsibility for signing off information in their respective areas (for example the prospectus). Information is presented to the Board of Directors for acceptance as part of general committee discussion and approval. Although there is no written policy for the production of information, there is a clear and robust process and all the information read by the review team was accurate, fit for purpose and trustworthy.

3.11 The review team considers the Expectation to be met, and that the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The quality of the information about learning opportunities: Summary of findings

3.12 In reaching its judgement about the quality of information about learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook

3.13 BIMM Limited follows the universities' procedures and uses its own processes to ensure that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.14 The review team concludes that the quality of information about learning opportunities at the College **meets** UK expectations.

## 4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

**Expectation (Enhancement): Deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.**

### Findings

4.1 BIMM Limited has a five-year plan directed at enhancing students' learning opportunities. These include improving student satisfaction with their educational experience and improving student performance, progression and retention. The plan is strategic and initiatives are planned. BIMM Limited has a strong ethos which encourages enhancement, good practice is identified and the quality assurance procedures are used to identify opportunities for enhancement.

4.2 These processes would enable the Expectation to be met.

4.3 BIMM Limited has invested and continues to invest in estates, securing practice facilities and other resources to enhance the student experience. BIMM Limited is aware that it will need to continue to invest in resources to cater for its planned growth in student numbers.

4.4 In keeping with its vocational focus, it also works closely with the music industry to ensure its students get appropriate exposure before they complete their studies.

4.5 BIMM Limited has increased student representation across all four colleges. They are represented at the following forums: Student Representative Forum, Board of Studies, LTEC, QAC and Academic Board and the minutes of the meetings suggest that student representatives participate in these meetings. BIMM Limited has produced a detailed and comprehensive Student Representative Handbook which outlines the roles and responsibilities of students and the terms of their engagement within various levels of the colleges. A detailed 'you asked we did' newsletter for all colleges is a systematic approach to engage students and improve their experiences. Colleges also use posters and posts on the VLE to disseminate outcomes.

4.6 BIMM Limited has invested in a PGCert in Learning and Teaching for most of its tutors and is planning to introduce an MA in Learning and Teaching. This professional development of full-time and part-time staff is testimony to its commitment to enhance the experience of its students. A detailed plan of training for its teaching faculty and the plan to convert the PGCert into a full MA allows it to continue providing quality education to its students. A 'you asked, we did' campaign is a good communication strategy to assure students of its intention to engage with the student body and encourage further engagement.

4.7 The Expectation was tested through the scrutiny of documentation such as the five-year enhancement plan, student representation handbook, 'you asked, we did' posters, staff PGCert details. The documentary evidence was supported by meetings with senior and teaching staff, support staff and students.

4.8 The enhancement plan works effectively in practice with, for example, the staff who have already completed the PGCert as they report an increase in their understanding and skills level for the benefit of students. The investment in resources and the online booking system is acknowledged by students though the nature of the enterprise means that expectations and realities may be difficult to match.

4.9 Based on the evidence provided including BIMM Limited's own documentation, supporting evidence, and meetings with staff, students and members from the industry, it is clear that BIMM Limited is aware of its responsibilities towards its students and is striving towards enhancing this experience through greater engagement, better resources, commitment to responding to student needs and ongoing professional development of staff. This expectation is therefore met and the associated level of risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**



## The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.10 In reaching its judgement about the quality of learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.11 BIMM Limited has a clear enhancement strategy which is strategic and makes use of information from students, annual monitoring and external examiners. The enhancement strategy is well documented and shared by all staff.

4.12 Therefore, the review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

## 5 Commentary on the Theme: Student Employability

### Findings

5.1 BIMM Limited's declared ethos of enhancing employability for its students is less explicitly articulated in its strategic plan, learning and teaching strategy or learning and teaching enhancement plan. Deliberate steps taken to enhance student employability are, however, evident including the involvement of industry practitioners in teaching and curriculum development enabling student employability to be embedded in course delivery and the wider student experience.

5.2 Most staff involved in course delivery have significant current or past involvement in the music or wider creative industries. Modules are taught by industry professionals working as self-employed, hourly-paid sessional tutors for 30 weeks each year. Additionally, BIMM Limited offers a wide range of cocurricular activities, including regular opportunities to interact with industry professionals through masterclasses and talent showcases. Production of an annual album in each college gives some students direct experience of recording and production. Industry professionals and students form a panel that selects the artists to be recorded. The resulting recording provides industry exposure for these acts as BIMM Limited distributes copies of the albums to its contacts in the music industry.

5.3 An industrial advisory panel in each college formalises extensive links with the music and performing arts industries and facilitates industry input into programme design, including aspects of the student experience related to employability. One recent university validation report praised the use of industry links in course design.

5.4 Careers education, information and guidance is available to all students, starting with open days and the BIMM Group website and prospectus, and continuing through career-planning tutorials, masterclasses, in-class guests and work-based learning. Careers and industry liaison staff located in new Careers and Industry Hubs in each college provide additional support to students. Support is available after graduation through the BIMM Group Alumni Network and a mentoring programme where alumni who are working in the industry advise students on developing their careers is in place at each College.

5.5 Effective and meaningful work-based learning is seen as an essential part of BIMM Limited's 'employability mix' and is particularly relevant to the music, events and arts industries. Students on the BMus (Hons) Popular Music Performance and BA (Hons) Creative Musicianship programmes noted that work placements had been extremely helpful and relevant to their course. Students are positive about the experience and felt their education had been enhanced. Overall, students praise the availability of careers support and opportunities to enhance employability through networking opportunities with the wider industry.

5.6 BIMM Limited runs its own survey for destinations of former students. However, the review team noted the diversity of student employability initiatives delivered by BIMM Limited. Students and employers endorse their effectiveness and their role in enhancing the students' experience, particularly given the specific challenges and instability inherent in employment in the music sector.

5.7 In conclusion, BIMM Limited makes varied efforts to promote the employability of students and makes extensive use of music industry practitioners in course design, development and delivery (see also B3 and B10).

## Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 22-25 of the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) handbook](#)

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality: [www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality)

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **Glossary** on the QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx)

### Academic standards

The standards set by **degree-awarding bodies** for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

### Award

A qualification, or academic credit, conferred in formal recognition that a student has achieved the intended **learning outcomes** and passed the assessments required to meet the academic standards set for a **programme** or unit of study.

### Awarding organisation

An organisation authorised to award a particular qualification; an organisation recognised by Ofqual to award Ofqual-regulated qualifications

### Blended learning

Learning delivered by a number of different methods, usually including face-to-face and e-learning (see **technology enhanced or enabled learning**).

### Credit(s)

A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education **programmes of study**, expressed as numbers of credits at a specific level.

### Degree-awarding body

A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the power to award degrees, conferred by Royal Charter, or under Section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or under Section 48 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, or by Papal Bull, or, since 1999, granted by the Privy Council on advice from QAA (in response to applications for taught degree awarding powers, research degree awarding powers or university title).

### Distance learning

A course of study that does not involve face-to-face contact between students and tutors but instead uses technology such as the internet, intranets, broadcast media, CD-ROM and video, or traditional methods of correspondence - learning 'at a distance'.

See also **blended learning**.

### Dual award or double award

The granting of separate awards (and certificates) for the same **programme** by two **degree-awarding bodies** who have jointly delivered the programme of study leading to them. See also **multiple award**.

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

### **Enhancement**

The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in our review processes.

### **Expectations**

Statements in the **Quality Code** that set out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations.

See also **distance learning**.

### **Framework**

A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

### **Framework for higher education qualifications**

A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FHEQIS).

### **Good practice**

A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

### **Learning opportunities**

The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, and resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

### **Learning outcomes**

What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

### **Multiple awards**

An arrangement where three or more **degree-awarding bodies** together provide a single jointly delivered **programme** (or programmes) leading to a separate **award** (and separate certification) of each awarding body. The arrangement is the same as for **dual/double awards**, but with three or more awarding bodies being involved.

### **Operational definition**

A formal definition of a term, establishing exactly what QAA means when using it in reviews and reports.

### **Programme (of study)**

An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

### **Programme specifications**

Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of programmes of study, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

### **Quality Code**

Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of **reference points** for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the **Expectations** that all providers are required to meet.

### **Reference points**

Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

### **Self-evaluation document**

A report submitted by a higher education provider, assessing its own performance, to be used as evidence in a QAA review.

### **Subject Benchmark Statement**

A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

### **Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)**

Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

### **Threshold academic standard**

The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic **award**. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national **frameworks** and **Subject Benchmark Statements**.

### **Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

An intranet or password-only interactive website (also referred to as a platform or user interface) giving access to **learning opportunities** electronically. These might include such resources as course handbooks, information and reading lists; blogs, message boards and forums; recorded lectures; and/or facilities for online seminars (webinars).

### **Widening participation**

Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.

## **QAA1550 - R4976 - Apr 16**

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