

Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students

**Backstage Academy
(Training) Ltd**

Review Report

January 2020



Working as the Designated Quality Body for England

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Summary of findings and reasons

Ref	Core practice	Outcome	Confidence	Summary of reasons
S1	The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications' frameworks.	Met	High	<p>From the evidence seen, the review team considers that the standards set for the Academy's courses it delivers on behalf of the University of Bolton are in line with the sector-recognised standards defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS's regulatory framework. The review team also considers that the standards described in the approved programme documentation are set at levels that are consistent with these sector-recognised standards and the Academy's academic regulations and policies should ensure that standards are maintained appropriately.</p> <p>The review team considers that the standards that will be achieved by the Academy's students are expected to be in line with the sector-recognised standards defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS's regulatory framework. Based on this information, the review team also considers that the Academy's academic regulations and policies will ensure that these standards are maintained. The review team considers that staff fully understand the Academy's approach to maintaining these standards and that the evidence seen demonstrates they are committed to implementing this approach. Therefore, based on its scrutiny of the evidence provided, the review team concludes that this Core practice is met.</p> <p>The review team concludes that the Academy ensures that sector-recognised standards for the qualifications it delivers on behalf of the University of Bolton are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks because the Academy follows the requirements of the University's Programme Approval</p>

				<p>Handbook which requires programmes to be aligned with relevant sections of the FHEQ. This is confirmed by external examiners who affirm that credit and qualifications are awarded only where sector-recognised standards have been met. University policy and the University's periodic monitoring of the Academy demonstrate that the University's scrutiny of programmes is rigorously implemented in practice and that programme approval is undertaken by staff who understand and apply the Academy's approach to maintaining sector-recognised standards. Assessed student work also demonstrates that credit and qualifications are awarded only where relevant sector-recognised standards have been met</p>
S2	<p>The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.</p>	Met	High	<p>The review team, based on the evidence presented to it, determined that the standards set for students to achieve beyond the threshold on the Academy's courses are reasonably comparable with those set by other UK providers. The review team considered that the standards described in the approved programme documentation and in the Academy's academic regulations and policies should ensure that such standards are maintained appropriately.</p> <p>Therefore, the review team concludes, based on the evidence described above, that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers and this Core practice is met.</p> <p>The review team found that the academic regulations and frameworks governing assessment provide opportunities for students at the Academy to achieve</p>

				standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved at other UK providers. This is because, although the team found evidence of some historic inconsistency in the design and application of marking schemes and rubrics, the team also found that this had been addressed and that marks awarded to students are consistent with sector standards and judged to be appropriate by external examiners and fair by students themselves. Students understand how to achieve standards beyond the threshold and feel that teaching, guidance, academic support and assessment provide them with opportunities to do their best work.
S3	Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.	Met	High	The review team concludes that the Academy has effective arrangements in place to ensure that the standards of awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered, or who delivers them. Partnership agreements are clear and comprehensive and reflect the University's regulations, and the Academy has robust and credible plans to secure standards in provision delivered in partnership with the University. Meetings with staff from both the University and the Academy confirm that staff understand their respective responsibilities for the maintenance of academic standards. This is confirmed by external examiner reports and assessed student work. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.
S4	The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.	Met	High	The review team concludes that the Academy uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent. This is verified by external examiner reports which confirm that the assessment process measures student achievement

				<p>rigorously and fairly in line with University policies and regulations, The Academy has credible and robust plans for using external expertise in maintaining academic standards, and there are records of course approvals and review which indicate that external expertise is employed. Staff understand the requirements for the use of external expertise and students appreciate the reliability, transparency and fairness of assessment and classification processes. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.</p>
Q1	The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system.	Met	High	<p>The review team concludes that the Academy has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system. This is because it manages the admissions process in accordance with the University's Student Admissions Policy. Decisions regarding recognition of prior learning are made by the University which uses its own Regulations and Policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning to advise the Academy on the appropriate evidence or qualifications prior to an applicant being invited to interview. Admissions records demonstrate that the University's policies are implemented by the Academy. Staff involved in interviewing applicants receive training, and the processes used by the Academy to conduct interviews are well understood by them and ensure consistency in the interview process between years of entry and students. Students told the review team that they had all the information they needed during the application process, and that Open Days were helpful to them in making their decision. The review team therefore concludes that the oversight of the University of Bolton, within the framework of its policies and procedures enables the Academy to provide a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system</p>

				and that this Core practice is met.
Q2	The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses.	Met	High	The review team concludes that the Academy designs and delivers high-quality programmes because it demonstrates adherence to programme development, monitoring and enhancement processes set by the University of Bolton while also beginning to develop its own procedures for new programme design and the assessment of academic quality. Programme documentation also indicates that the ways in which teaching, learning and assessment are designed enable students at the Academy to demonstrate the intended learning outcomes. The quality of academic provision at the Academy is endorsed by external examiners and students, and further evidenced by the high-quality teaching and learning observed by the review team. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.
Q3	The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.	Met	Moderate	The review team concludes that the Academy has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience because the evidence considered indicates that the Academy recruits staff according to the University's policies and procedures while developing its own strategy to appoint, appraise and continuously develop its academic and support staff. There is not yet a formal process for the assessment of teaching quality, but teaching staff provided examples of improving teaching through the informal sharing of good practice. The team was provided with evidence of the Academy's plans for a peer observation scheme but has some concerns about its likely effectiveness. Notwithstanding this point, teaching staff are drawn from industry and have the opportunity to gain relevant teaching and higher-level

				academic qualifications, and to undertake CPD or industry training. Students consider that the Academy has sufficient staff and that those staff are appropriately qualified and skilled, and up to date with current industry practice. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.
Q4	The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.	Met	High	The review team concludes that the Academy has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience. The Academy has developed an innovative approach to accessing cutting-edge equipment and software through its comprehensive network of industry contacts and has taken the first steps in developing a formal resource strategy. The review team's direct assessment of facilities, learning resources and support services confirms that the Academy is able to offer a high-quality academic experience, and that staff understand their roles and responsibilities. External examiners and University approval reports confirm that the Academy provides a wide range of specialist equipment and facilities that are sufficient for current student numbers. Students are concerned about the lack of social space and an appropriate common room, but the review team saw evidence that the Academy is taking steps to address this. In other respects, students have a positive view of the facilities, learning resources and support services and, on the balance of the evidence, the review team concludes that this Core practice is met.
Q5	The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.	Met	High	The review team concludes that the Academy actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience. The Academy is developing robust and credible plans to further promote

				<p>student engagement, including a revised deliberative committee structure with appropriate student representation, although the team was unable to evaluate the effectiveness of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee which had still to meet at the time of the visit. However, students report that the Academy engages them through both formal and informal processes in the quality of their educational experience and gave examples of the Academy changing and improving academic, physical and timetabling aspects of their learning experience as a result of their feedback. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.</p>
Q6	The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.	Met	High	<p>The review team found that the Academy, in partnership with the University, has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals, which are accessible to all students. This is because the Academy's procedures for handling complaints are definitive, fair, and transparent, and deliver timely outcomes, and because examples of complaints scrutinised by the review team have been dealt with according to published procedures. Appeals are managed directly by the University. Procedures for handling complaints and appeals are accessible to students, and students do not raise any serious concerns about their fairness, transparency, accessibility, or application. The Academy's plans to develop fair, transparent and accessible complaints and appeals procedures are robust and credible. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.</p>
Q8	Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the	Met	High	<p>The review team concludes that the Academy, working in partnership with the University, has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is</p>

	academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.			high quality, irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them. This is because the University's franchise arrangements with the Academy are up to date and provide clear and comprehensive regulations and policies for the management of the partnership. Staff from both the Academy and the University understand their respective responsibilities, and external examiner reports indicate that the academic experience for students on courses is of a high quality. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.
Q9	The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.	Met	High	The review team found that the Academy supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes. There is some inconsistency in the quality and quantity of feedback on student assessed work, but overall it is helpful, timely and generally comprehensive. Academic and professional support staff understand their role in supporting student achievement, and the Academy's plans to support students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes, including support for work placements, are comprehensive, robust and credible. Students expressed their satisfaction with the support they receive. On the basis of the evidence it examined, the review team therefore found that this Core practice is met.

About this report

This is a report detailing the outcomes of the Quality and Standards Review for providers applying to register with the Office for Students (OfS), conducted by QAA in January 2020, for Backstage Academy (Training) Ltd.

A Quality and Standards Review (QSR) is a method of review QAA uses to provide OfS with evidence about whether new providers applying to be on the OfS Register meet the Core practices of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code), based on evidence reviewed by expert assessors. This report is structured to outline the review team's decisions about the provider's ability to meet the Core practices through detailing the key pieces of evidence scrutinised and linking that evidence to the judgements made.

The team for this review was:

Name: Nina Di Cara
Institution: University of Bristol
Role in review team: Student Reviewer

Name: Dr Mark Irwin
Institution: BIMM Limited
Role in review team: Subject reviewer Creative Arts and Design

Name: Sharon Potter
Institution: University College of Osteopathy
Role in review team: Institutional reviewer

The QAA Officer for the review was: Professor Derrik Ferney.

The size and composition of this review team is in line with published guidance and, as such, is comprised of experts with significant experience and expertise across the higher education sector. The team included members with experience of a similar provider to the institution, knowledge of the academic awards offered and included academics with expertise in subject areas relevant to the provider's provision. Collectively, the team had experience of the management and delivery of higher education programmes from academic and professional services perspectives, included members with regulatory and investigative experience, and had at least one member able to represent the interests of students. The team included at least one senior academic leader qualified to doctoral level. Details of team members were shared with the provider prior to the review to identify and resolve any possible conflicts of interest.

About Backstage Academy (Training) Ltd

Backstage Academy (Training) Ltd (the Academy) provides specialist training and education designed to address skills shortages in the creative industries sector and to provide students with access routes into live events careers. The Academy's vision is to become a leading international institution for specialist professional training and education for the creative industries sector.

The Academy is based in Wakefield, Yorkshire, and forms part of a group of companies that sit under the umbrella of Production Park Ltd. Backstage Academy has its own Board of Directors which constitutes its overarching governing body and comprises the registered company directors, Senior Leadership Team and the CEO of Production Park. The

Backstage Academy Board reports to the Production Park Board and there is cross-membership of the two Boards.

In April 2018, the Backstage Academy Board commenced a review of the Academy's governance and deliberative committee structures which concluded in November 2018. The revised structure consists of a Senior Leadership Team (SLT) and four deliberative committees. The SLT comprises the Vice Principal, Academic Director, Director of Operations and Student Services, and the Marketing and Commercial Director (with input as required from Production Park's Finance Director and HR Manager). The deliberative committees are Academic Board, Student Experience Committee, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee and Course Committees. Students are represented on all deliberative committees.

The Academy offers a range of full-time undergraduate programmes under a franchise agreement with the University of Bolton, the first of which was established in 2011.

List of full-time programmes and numbers of students

Programme	Number of students
BA (Hons) Live Events Production	108
BA (Hons) Live Events Production (Top Up)	8
FdA Live Events Production	26
BA (Hons) Stage and Production Management	27
BA (Hons) Live Visual Design and Production	26

There are no other partnership agreements within the scope of this review.

How the review was conducted

The review was conducted according to the process set out in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

When undertaking a QSR, all 13 of the Core practices are considered by the review team. However, for this review it was clear that the provider does not offer a research degree programme. Therefore, the review team did not consider Q7 (where the provider offers research degrees, it delivers these in appropriate and supportive research environments).

To form its judgements about the Academy's ability to meet the Core practices, the review team considered a range of evidence that was submitted prior to the review visit and evidence gathered at the review visit itself. To ensure that the review team focused on the principles embedded in the Core practices, and that the evidence it considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews, the team used Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers to construct this report and detail the key pieces of evidence seen. Annex 4 expects that review teams will sample certain types of key evidence using a combination of representative sampling, risk-based sampling and randomised sampling. In this review, the review team sampled the following areas for evidence for the reasons given below.

- Approved course documentation and records of approval for all five of the Academy's programmes to test that specified sector-recognised standards for courses sampled are consistent with national qualifications frameworks, to test that specified standards beyond the threshold for courses sampled are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers, to assess the reliability,

fairness and transparency of assessment and classification processes for the courses sampled, to test whether admissions requirements for the courses reflect the School's overall regulations and policy, to test that all elements of the courses sampled are high quality, and to test that learning and assessment design will enable students to demonstrate the intended learning outcomes.

- Six external examiner reports covering all programmes from the last two academic years to check that external examiners confirm that sector-recognised standards are consistent with national frameworks, that external examiners confirm that standards beyond the threshold for courses sampled are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers and that credit and qualifications are awarded only where those threshold standards have been met, to test whether external examiners consider that standards are credible and secure, to interrogate the use of external examiners and check that the Academy considers and responds to externals' reports regarding standards appropriately, to identify external examiners' views about reliability, fairness and transparency of assessment and classification processes, to identify their views about the quality of the courses sampled, and to test that they consider courses delivered in partnership with the University of Bolton to be of high quality.
- Representative, risk-based and random samples of 66 pieces of assessed student work to test whether assessed student work reflects the relevant threshold standards, that marks and awards given to students are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers, that standards of awards are credible and secure, that credit and qualifications are awarded only where the relevant sector-recognised standards have been met Core practice, that specified standards beyond the threshold for courses sampled are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers, and to assess whether students are given comprehensive, helpful and timely feedback. For representative sampling, the team selected two modules from the BA (Hons) Live Events Production (LEP4109 Staging and LEP5112 Research Methods for Event Studies), two modules from the BA (Hons) Stage and Production Management (STM4104 Show Concept and Design and STM5006 Applied Stage Management Techniques). For risk-based sampling, the team selected the LEP5014 Event Production Management module because it was identified as an underperforming module in the Academy's 2018 Action Plan, and LEP6105 Final Major Project which was identified for monitoring in Senior Leadership Team minutes. Because of comments from the external examiner in 2017 indicating possible risks to standards, the team also undertook further risk-based sampling of the following modules: LVD4005 Experiential Technologies (Hardware), LVD4006 Showtime Production Basics, LVD6004 Work Related Project, and LVD6005 Major Project. One module from the BA (Hons) Live Visual Design and Production (LVD5005 Contemporary Issues for Visual Production) was selected for random sampling.
- A random sample taken from 138 interview records from January 2019 to assess whether reliable, fair and inclusive admissions decisions were made. As there were no specific concerns about the applications process, the examples of admissions communications with students were randomly sampled. The Academy has no arrangements with recruitment agents so no evidence was requested.
- A random sample of module and course evaluations to identify students' views about the quality of courses sampled, students' views about the sufficiency, qualifications and skills of staff, about student engagement in the quality of their educational experience, about facilities, learning resources and student support services, and about student support mechanisms.

- Four observations of teaching and learning to test whether course delivery is high quality, to test that academic staff deliver a high-quality learning experience. Because the week of the visit coincided with a revision/assessment period, only one class could be observed 'live' (LVD January Intensive). The three remaining observations were based on recordings of teaching sessions made by the Academy the previous week.
- Staff role descriptions for teaching and Course Manager posts, and Student Services Officer, Student Wellbeing Officer, and senior manager posts, and details of persons holding specific posts, to assess whether the staff sampled are appropriately qualified and skilled to perform their roles effectively, that they are recruited according to the University's policies and procedures, and that staff roles are consistent with the delivery of a high-quality academic and learning experience.
- An overview of all 11 complaints received by the Academy since 2017-18, and detailed examination of a random sample of five specific complaints and two responses to informal complaints. The team also examined an overview of the seven appeals received by the University of Bolton since 2017-18, but since appeals remain the responsibility of the University the team did not examine any correspondence in detail. This was to test that complaints are dealt with in a fair, transparent and timely manner. All student complaints and appeals presented for this purpose were anonymised.

Explanation of findings

S1 The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications' frameworks

1 To meet this Core practice a provider must ensure that threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications' frameworks. The threshold standards for its qualifications must be articulated clearly and must be met, or exceeded, through the delivery of the qualification and the assessment of students.

2 The sector-recognised standards that are used in relation to this Core practice are those that apply in England, as defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS regulatory framework. That is, those set out in Table 1, in paragraphs 4.10, 4.12, 4.15, 4.17, 4.18, in paragraphs 6.13-6.18 and in the Table in Annex C, in the version of [The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies](#) (FHEQ) published in October 2014. These sector-recognised standards represent the threshold academic standards for each level of the FHEQ and the minimum volumes of credit typically associated with qualifications at each level.

3 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

4 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the Academy could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence it considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Management and Self Governance Document for OfS
- b Backstage Academy Indirect Franchise Agreement with University of Bolton 2013
- c Academic Regulations PowerPoint Presentation
- d University of Bolton Programme Approvals Handbook September 2019
- e University of Bolton Academic Misconduct Regulations and Procedures 2019-20
- f University of Bolton Assessment Regulations for Undergraduate Programmes 2019-20
- g University of Bolton Regulations for the Organisation and Conduct of Assessment Boards 2019-20
- h Example Module Guide LEP5120
- i Letter of Support from University of Bolton
- j Partnership Oversight and Development Handbook 2019-20
- k Governance and Management Document November 2018
- l Academic Board ToR November 2018
- m Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee ToR December 2018
- n Course Committee ToR
- o Student Experience Committee ToR

p	University of Bolton Mitigating Circumstances Regulations and Procedures 2019-20
q	Backstage Academy QSR Provider Submission 1 November 2019
r	Academic Board collated minutes
s	Course Committees Agenda and Minutes
t	External Examiner Reports and Responses
u	Programme Specifications
v	Partnership Overview Forms 2018-2019
w	Strategic Plan Explanatory Notes
x	Student Work Sample: LEP4109, LEP5014, LEP5112, LEP6106, LVD4005, LVD4006, LVD5005, LVD6004, LVD6005, STM4104, STM5006
y	Meetings with six senior staff members, with seven members of the teaching staff and with five members of the professional support staff, plus one representative of the University of Bolton

5 Some of the key pieces of evidence, outlined in Annex 4, were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

- third party endorsements as none are available for the provision on offer at the Academy.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

6 The review team reviewed approved course documentation for all five of the Academy's courses, and the academic regulations and assessment frameworks underlying them, to test that specified sector-recognised standards for courses sampled are consistent with national qualifications frameworks.

7 The review team scrutinised six external examiner reports covering all the Academy's courses for the last two academic years to check that external examiners confirm that sector-recognised standards are consistent with national frameworks.

8 The review team examined representative, risk-based and random samples of 66 pieces of assessed student work to test whether assessed student work reflects the relevant sector-recognised standards, and to test that credit and qualifications are awarded only where the relevant sector-recognised standards have been met.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

9 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the Academy was considered by the review team either prior to the visit or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the Academy's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

10 The team considered the University of Bolton's partnership agreements academic regulations and assessment frameworks, including: Programme Approvals Handbook, Assessment Regulations for Undergraduate Programmes, its Academic Misconduct Regulations and Procedures, Mitigating Circumstances Regulations and Procedures and Regulations for the Organisation and Conduct of Assessment Boards, information provided to students on its website and in briefings to students to identify the rules set by the University for the approval of academic awards, programme and assessment design,

marking and moderation, as the underlying basis for the standards of awards conferred by the university in its name.

11 The review team considered the Academy's plans for maintaining sector-recognised standards by scrutinising the Partnership Oversight and Development Handbook and the Joint Operations Manual. The review team also considered the implementation of these arrangements through periodic review and Partnership Overview reporting, Live Action Partnership and Programme Plans for the last two years. The team also considered the Academy's plans for maintaining sector-recognised standards set out in the Academy's QSR Submission, Draft Strategic Plan, Management and Governance Documents and the terms of reference and minutes of its deliberative committees Academic Board Terms of Reference Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee Terms of Reference, Course Committee Terms of Reference, Student Experience Committee Terms of Reference, Academic Board Minutes and Course Committee Minutes to interrogate the robustness and credibility of the Academy's approach.

12 The review team considered approved programme documentation, including Programme Specifications, which are also published online, and examined current Programme Handbooks and Module Handbooks to test that specified sector-recognised standards for programmes sampled are consistent with relevant national qualifications frameworks.

13 The team considered six external examiner reports for the last two academic years to check that external examiners confirm sector-recognised standards are consistent with national qualifications frameworks, and that credit and qualifications are awarded only where those standards have been met.

14 The team considered a representative sample of student work and its associated Programme and Module Handbooks to test that students' assessed work reflects the relevant sector-recognised standards.

15 The team considered the views of staff responsible for delivering the Academy's programmes in meetings with senior staff and teaching and professional staff to test that staff understand and apply the Academy's approach to maintaining standards.

What the evidence shows

16 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

17 The partnership agreement with the University of Bolton makes clear the responsibilities of the Academy and the University, which maintains overall academic control of the programmes delivered by the Academy. The responsibilities checklist likewise confirms that the Academy delivers teaching assessment, student services, and the physical resources required for teaching and learning on behalf of the University. The University also affirms in a letter of support that the Academy adheres to the University's academic regulations. These include its Programme Approvals Handbook, Assessment Regulations for Undergraduate Programmes, Academic Misconduct Regulations and Procedures, Mitigating Circumstances Regulations and Procedures and Regulations for the Organisation and Conduct of Assessment Boards. The team found that, together, these documents provide a clear and comprehensive regulatory framework that forms the underlying basis for the standards of awards conferred by the University in its name. Information provided for students on the Academy's website and briefings provided during induction also confirm consistent and clear communication of the rules and regulations set by the University.

18 Comprehensive arrangements for formal oversight of standards are detailed in the University's Partnership Oversight and Development Handbook and the Joint Operations

Manual. The review team found evidence of the monitoring of standards at the Academy by the University, including periodic review through Partnership Overview reporting, Live Action Partnership Plans for the last two years and Programme Plans for the last two years.

19 The Academy has recently appointed a new senior leadership team and has formulated an ambitious draft strategic plan as part of a strategic review to be completed by April 2020. The Academy's draft strategic plan is focused on attaining OfS registration and, subsequently, degree awarding powers and includes aims and action planning for key areas. The Academy Board of Directors delegates responsibility for academic oversight for the maintenance of standards to its newly formed Academic Board. The review team considers the Academic Board's terms of reference to be fit for purpose because they set out fully the Board's responsibility for the maintenance of the standards and quality of academic provision. Moreover, although Academic Board has only met five times to date, its minutes indicate that it is becoming effective in providing strategic oversight of standards and quality. Agenda items are appropriate for the Board's terms of reference, minutes report discussions in considerable detail, and there is evidence of continuity between meetings through summaries of action points and reports on actions taken. The Academic Board oversees the work of a new subcommittee structure consisting of the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee, Course Committees and a Student Experience Committee. Minutes of the three inaugural meetings of Course Committees are detailed, with a standing agenda item devoted to specific course-related issues at each of Levels 4, 5 and 6, while minutes of the inaugural meeting of the Student Experience Committee evidence the consideration of more general issues affecting all courses, with standing items for a student representatives overview, a verbal report from student services and an Employability and Commercial Partnerships update. On the basis of its scrutiny of the minutes of the above meetings, the review team was able to confirm the emergence of a credible and robust deliberative committee structure at the Academy.

20 The review team noted that the Academy's draft strategic plan commits to improving quality assurance and internal processes ahead of applying for degree awarding powers but provides little additional detail. It therefore concluded that, while the current arrangements for maintaining standards are credible and robust, the Academy's plans for development and quality assurance of future validated provision are less developed at this stage and require further work to ensure that they are both robust and credible.

21 Programme and module specifications are held by the University online and accessed via hyperlinks from the Academy's website and the University's virtual learning environment (VLE). Programme specifications, Module Guides and Programme Handbooks reference sector-recognised standards that are fully aligned with relevant sections of the FHEQ. The team concluded that specified sector-recognised standards for programmes sampled are consistent with relevant national qualifications frameworks.

22 The team scrutinised assessed student work to test that marking makes use of the learning outcomes and assessment criteria provided in module handbooks and that marks awarded reflect the relevant sector-recognised standards. The team chose the example of STM5006 Applied Stage Management Techniques and found the following. The Programme Specification for the parent award, the BA (Hons) Stage and Production Management, aligns with the relevant sections of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, and with the University of Bolton Awards Framework, as well as with other points of reference, including the Creative and Cultural Skills National Occupational Standards. The Programme Guide for the BA (Hons) Stage and Production Management incorporates the programme aims and learning outcomes of the programme as validated, and the module guide translates these clearly into module learning outcomes and explains how they are tested in the two assessments for the module. Each assessment is then accompanied by a weighting of the different elements within it, and by an assessment brief. Assessment criteria are appended

for each assessment, using the standard percentage banding convention. The review team then examined six pieces of student work for this module and found that it is guided by and reflects the module's intended learning outcomes, that it comprises a range of student achievement and that marking follows the assessment criteria. The review team concluded that, given the clear line of sight from programme specification through programme handbook to module guide and the assessment of student work, students' assessed work reflects the relevant sector-recognised standards.

23 The University's external examiner report template includes a series of questions that require external examiners to report on whether sector-recognised standards are in line with the FHEQ and are being maintained, whether the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programmes, and if the standards achieved are broadly comparable with other institutions in the sector. External examiner reports from the past two academic years, for all programmes delivered by the Academy under its partnership with the University, confirm that no issues have been identified regarding the maintenance of sector-recognised standards, the rigour of the measurement of student achievement or the comparability of achievement with the sector. Therefore, the team is confident that the sector-recognised standards are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks.

Conclusions

24 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the Academy meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

25 From the evidence seen, the review team considers that the standards set for the Academy's courses it delivers on behalf of the University are in line with the sector-recognised standards defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS's regulatory framework. The review team also considers that the standards described in the approved programme documentation are set at levels that are consistent with these sector-recognised standards and the Academy's academic regulations and policies should ensure that standards are maintained appropriately.

26 The review team considers that the standards that will be achieved by the Academy's students are expected to be in line with the sector-recognised standards defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS's regulatory framework. Based on this information, the review team also considers that the Academy's academic regulations and policies will ensure that these standards are maintained. The review team considers that staff fully understand the Academy's approach to maintaining these standards and that the evidence seen demonstrates they are committed to implementing this approach. Therefore, based on its scrutiny of the evidence provided, the review team concludes that this Core practice is met.

27 The review team concludes that the Academy ensures that sector-recognised standards for the qualifications it delivers on behalf of the University are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks because the Academy follows the requirements of the University's Programme Approval Handbook which requires programmes to be aligned to relevant sections of the FHEQ. This is confirmed by external examiners who affirm that credit and qualifications are awarded only where sector-recognised standards have been met. University policy and the University's periodic monitoring of the Academy demonstrate that the University's scrutiny of programmes is rigorously implemented in practice and that programme approval is undertaken by staff who understand and apply the

Academy's approach to maintaining sector-recognised standards. Assessed student work also demonstrates that credit and qualifications are awarded only where relevant sector-recognised standards have been met

28 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects all of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix; therefore, the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

S2 The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers

29 This Core practice expects that the provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.

30 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

31 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the Academy could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence it considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a University of Bolton Assessment Regulations for Undergraduate Programmes 2019-20
- b Backstage Academy UniPulse Data 2017-2018-2019
- c Example Module Guide LEP5120
- d University of Bolton Assessment and Moderation Procedures 2019-20
- e Backstage Academy Programme Plan 2017
- f Backstage Academy Programme Plan 2018
- g Regulations and Policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning 2019-20
- h Backstage Academy QSR Provider Submission 1 November 2019
- i Backstage Academy QSR Student Submission 1 Nov 2019
- j SSLC collated minutes
- k Course Committees Agenda and Minutes
- l External Examiner Reports and Responses
- m Programme Specifications
- n Programme Handbooks 2018-19
- o Sample Module Guides
- p 2017-18 Module Survey results
- q 2018-19 Module Survey results
- r NSS Data 2018
- s NSS DATA and Action Plan 2019
- t Backstage Academy Programme Plan 2019
- u Strategic Plan Explanatory Notes
- v DRAFT Backstage Academy Programme Plan 2019
- w BA Group and Collaborative Work Policy June 19
- x Student Work Sample: LEP4109, LEP5014, LEP5112, LEP6106, LVD4005, LVD4006, LVD5005, LVD6004, LVD6005, STM4104, STM5006
- y Meetings with a representative group of nine students and 11 student representatives covering all levels of all programmes

32 Some of the key pieces of evidence, outlined in Annex 4, were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

- third party endorsements as none are available for the provision on offer at the Academy.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

33 The review team examined approved course documentation and records of approval for all five of the Academy's programmes to test that specified standards beyond the threshold for courses sampled are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.

34 The review team scrutinised six external examiner reports covering all programmes from the last two academic years to check that external examiners confirm that standards beyond the threshold for courses sampled are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers and that credit and qualifications are awarded only where those threshold standards have been met.

35 The review team selected representative, risk-based and random samples of 66 pieces of assessed student work from 11 modules to test that marks and awards given to students are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

36 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the Academy was considered by the review team either prior to the visit or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make their judgement regarding the Academy's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

37 The team considered the University's academic regulations and assessment frameworks and procedures to identify the Academy's approach to course and assessment design, marking and moderation and approaches to classification as the underlying basis for the standards of awards.

38 The team examined the Academy's annual monitoring programme plans for the last three years and its Draft Strategic Plan as it develops validated provision in order to interrogate the robustness and credibility of its plans for maintaining comparable standards and to ensure that plans are credible and evidence-based.

39 The team considered approved programme documentation, including approved Programme Specifications, current Programme Handbooks and Module Handbooks to test that specified standards beyond the threshold for programmes sampled are consistent with those achieved in other UK providers.

40 The team considered external examiner reports for the last two academic years to check that external examiners confirm that standards beyond the threshold for programmes sampled are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers and that credit and qualifications are only awarded where the relevant standards have been met.

41 The team considered a representative sample of student work to test that the marks achieved by students at the Academy are comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.

42 The review team also met with students and student representatives from the Academy to test their understanding of what is required of them to reach standards beyond the threshold.

What the evidence shows

43 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

44 The academic framework, regulations and assessment guidance provided by the University and adopted by the Academy provide the underlying basis for the standards of awards delivered by the Academy in the University's name. These regulations include the Programme Approvals Handbook, Assessment Regulations for Undergraduate Programmes, Assessment and Moderation Procedures and Regulations and Policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning. The review team examined minutes of two Awards and Progression Boards which are conducted via videoconference and chaired by University staff and noted the provision of standard agenda items for input from the Academy's Course Leaders and external examiners. The review team noted one external examiner comment about the lack of clarity in the sample size of assessed student work to be moderated, but other external examiners raised no issues. The external examiner for the BA (Hons) Stage and Production Management commented that the new Level 4 structure for the programme was a 'great success', and that 'all aspects of programme delivery were good', while the external examiner for the BA (Hons) Live Visual Design and Production noted 'a very high standard of achievement for final year students'.

45 The review team found that the degree classification scheme and Assessment Criteria in the University of Bolton's Assessment Regulations for Undergraduate Programmes and Assessment and Moderation Procedures in operation at the Academy secure threshold standards and test performance beyond them. The University's Assessment and Moderation Procedures provide academic staff with a step-by-step guide to devising, issuing, marking, moderating and returning assessments. The review team found the marking schemes and criteria provided to the Academy's students in Programme and Module Handbooks reflect this guidance.

46 The University benchmarks its partners against both its own and national performance indicators, providing comparative data to the Academy from UNiPULSE for use in annual Programme Plans. This data indicates that the number of good degrees achieved by Academy students has achieved or exceeded the University's internal benchmark for the last three years.

47 The review team found that Programme and Module Handbooks for programmes sampled include threshold standards that are fully aligned with relevant sections of the FHEQ, and that assessment criteria and marking schemes allow achievement of standards beyond the threshold that are consistent with those achieved in other UK providers.

48 The University's external examiner report template includes questions that require external examiners to report on whether the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly against the intended outcomes of the programmes, and if the standards achieved are broadly comparable with other institutions in the UK. External examiner reports from the past two academic years confirm that no issues have been identified regarding the maintenance of sector-recognised standards, the rigour of the measurement of student achievement or the comparability of achievement with the UK.

Therefore, the team is confident that the relevant sector-recognised standards are being maintained.

49 Student assessed work sampled by the review team indicates that students are achieving results that are reasonably comparable with achievement at other UK providers and that students are being challenged in both their academic and practical work through the use of practice-led authentic assessments that prepare them for the demands of the professions they are seeking to enter. In reviewing the student assessed work, the review team found that some module assessment marking schemes and rubrics used by the Academy for practical assessments provided in module guides used an outmoded degree classification-based marking scheme that could potentially be misleading for staff and students. Academic staff told the team that this had been phased out from 2017-18, and the team was able to confirm that the most recently published module guides include assessment briefs that utilise percentage-banded marking schemes. Therefore, the review team is confident that credit will only be awarded where relevant standards have been met, and that marks and awards are reasonably comparable to those achieved at other UK providers.

50 Students whom the review team met were very positive about the support and guidance they receive regarding assessment requirements, including the module introductory session held at the beginning of each semester at which tutors explain the learning outcomes, assessment briefs and grading criteria before lectures and practical sessions begin. Students and student representatives articulated how teaching, guidance, academic support and assessment provide them with appropriate and relevant opportunities to do their best work and reach standards beyond the threshold that are comparable with other UK providers, and the team concluded that students understand what is required of them to reach standards beyond the threshold.

Conclusions

51 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the Academy meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

52 The review team, based on the evidence presented to it, determined that the standards set for students to achieve beyond the threshold on the Academy's courses are reasonably comparable with those set by other UK providers. The review team considered that the standards described in the approved programme documentation and in the Academy's academic regulations and policies should ensure that such standards are maintained appropriately.

53 Therefore, the review team concludes, based on the evidence described above, that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers and this Core practice is met.

54 The review team found that the academic regulations and frameworks governing assessment provide opportunities for students at the Academy to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved at other UK providers. This is because, although the team found evidence of some historic inconsistency in the design and application of marking schemes and rubrics, the team also found that this had been addressed and that marks awarded to students are consistent with sector

standards and judged to be appropriate by external examiners and fair by students themselves. Students understand how to achieve standards beyond the threshold level and feel that teaching, guidance, academic support and assessment provide them with opportunities to do their best work.

55 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects all of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix; therefore, the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

S3 Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them

56 This Core practice expects that where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.

57 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

58 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the Academy could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence it considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Backstage Academy Indirect Franchise Agreement with University of Bolton 2013
- b Backstage Academy Indirect FF Variation Extension 2019
- c Backstage Academy Student Handbook 2019
- d Academic Regulations PowerPoint Presentation
- e University of Bolton Programme Approvals Handbook September 2019
- f University of Bolton Academic Misconduct Regulations and Procedures 2019-20
- g University of Bolton Assessment Regulations for Undergraduate Programmes 2019-20
- h University of Bolton Regulations for the Organisation and Conduct of Assessment Boards
- i University of Bolton Nomination appointment rights and responsibilities of External Examiners
- j University of Bolton Assessment and Moderation Procedures 2019-20
- k Letter of Support from University of Bolton
- l Backstage Academy Programme Plan 2018
- m External Examiners Nominations Sub Committee ToR 2019-20
- n Backstage USP Report AMM August 2018
- o Backstage USP Report AMM September 2018
- p Backstage Academy USP Signoff September 2018
- q University of Bolton Academic Appeals Regulations and Procedures 2019-20
- r University of Bolton Mitigating Circumstances Regulations and Procedures 2019-20
- s University of Bolton Student Non Academic Conduct and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure 2019-20
- t University of Bolton Code of Practice for Work Based and Placement Learning 2019-20
- u Backstage Academy Placement Handbook
- v Backstage Academy Placement Agreement

w	University of Bolton Student Attendance Policy 2019-20
x	Academic Board collated minutes
y	SLT collated minutes
z	External Examiner Reports and Responses
aa	Updated Backstage Operations Manual 2019
bb	University of Bolton Assessment and Moderation Procedures 2019
cc	UK166 Agreement FD and BA Top-up Live Events 18122013
dd	Post-VTM Request for Information 16 Dec19
ee	FDA Live Events Production Validation Documentation 2011
ff	BA Live Events Production Top UP Documentation 2013
gg	Approval Documentation BA Hons LEP and FdA STM 2014
hh	Approval Report ADA3 BA Live Events Management 2014
ii	Approval Report ADA3 FdA Stage Management 2014
jj	BA COURSE AM FLOWCHART
kk	Student Work LEP4109, LEP5014, LEP5112, LEP6106, LVD4005, LVD4006, LVD5005, LVD6004, LVD6005, STM4104, STM5006
ll	Meetings with six senior staff members, with seven members of the teaching staff and with five members of the professional support staff, plus one representative of the University of Bolton
mm	University of Bolton Moodle https://moodle.bolton.ac.uk

59 Some of the key pieces of evidence, outlined in Annex 4, were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

- third party endorsements as none are available for the provision on offer at the Academy.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

60 The review team scrutinised six external examiner reports covering all programmes from the last two academic years to test whether external examiners consider that standards are credible and secure.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

61 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the Academy was considered by the review team either prior to the visit or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the Academy's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

62 The review team reviewed the University's Partnership Agreement and Programme Approval Handbook, the University's Standing Panel Reports of August and September 2018, validation documentation and its Recommendation to Senate for Programme Approval and Sign-Off of September 2018 in order to identify how the Academy ensures the standards of awards as credible and secure.

63 The review team scrutinised the Academy's plans for working with the University and for managing work placements and tested the latter against student feedback for LEP 5111, a work-experience module, to assess whether the Academy has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for securing standards in partnership work.

64 The review team examined the list of current external examiner appointments, one moderation record and six external examiner reports to test whether external examiners consider that standards are credible and secure, thus confirming the effectiveness of the underpinning arrangements.

65 The team reviewed the sample of assessed student work to test that standards of work are credible and secure.

66 The review team met with staff from the Academy and the University's Partnership Manager to test that staff understand and discharge effectively their responsibilities to the awarding body, and to test the University's understanding of its responsibilities.

What the evidence shows

67 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

68 The Academy is in a franchise relationship with the University that began 2011. A franchise arrangement is defined as one whereby Academy academic staff provide at the agreed location of delivery all teaching on the programme(s) and undertake all assessments while University staff undertake the quality assurance of the academic standards and student experience in accordance with the Academic Memorandum and Validation Documents.

69 The Partnership Agreement and related extension letter indicate amendments and updates made to the initial agreement in the period 2014-18, 12 March 2014, 1 October 2014, 27 August 2015, 18 December 2017, and 1 September 2018, and the team noted that the agreement has been extended until July 2020. The Academy's Senior Team articulated its desire to move to a validation agreement with the University and the University's Partnership Manager confirmed the University's understanding of this intention. The Franchise Agreement clearly states the role of each partner with regard to securing standards, and confirms that the University, as the awarding body, has oversight and security of standards. The University's Programme Approval Handbook 2019-20 defines procedures and includes the use of external experts, student panel members and University and Academy panel members to ensure programmes approved meet the appropriate sector-recognised standards. The team examined the initial approval documentation for all the Academy's programmes and found that they aligned with the University's approval processes and that the standards of the University's awards were credible and secure, and also viewed on the University's virtual learning environment (VLE).

70 The team also scrutinised the Academy's use of University processes for making modifications to existing programmes. In this regard the University Standing Panel Reports evidence the robust approach taken by the University to the Academy's proposed reconfiguration of its programmes. The team noted the Standing Panel's rejection of the Academy's initial proposals and its detailed feedback about their shortcomings, which included lack of differentiation in BA and FdA learning outcomes, and incomplete and/or inconsistent documentation. The Academy acted promptly on this feedback and was able to make a successful resubmission subsequently.

71 The Partner Oversight and Development Handbook sets the overarching relationship between the University and the Academy. It defines clearly the responsibilities of each partner. This is supported by the Backstage Operations Manual 2019-20 which defines the roles involved in liaison between the two institutions and is updated annually with new contact details. Partnership Development Meetings are held two or three times a year to consider the Live Action Partnership Plan and are chaired by the University. The Live Action Partnership Plan is owned jointly by the University and Academy and is regularly updated by the University. The Academy is further invited to comment on feedback from the external

examiners and to evaluate the quality of the Students' Education Experience. This evidence led the review team to conclude that the Academy and University have credible and robust evidence-based plans for securing standards in partnership work.

72 The Academy complies with the University's regulations governing the nomination, appointment, rights and responsibilities of external examiners, as well as the consideration of their reports. The Academy's October 2018 Programme Plan states in respect of external examiners' comments on academic standards that there were no issues raised in relation to the maintenance of academic standards. The team tested this by reading external examiner reports for all the Academy's programmes. While external examiners may query some aspects of module or course delivery, they all consider that academic standards within the partnership are credible and secure, thus confirming the effectiveness of the underpinning arrangements.

73 The team's sampling of assessed student work confirms that assessment and classification are carried out in line with the University's assessment and classification processes. The review team observed, for example, that assessment criteria and marking schemes are clear and relevant, that the marks awarded align with both, and that in most cases there is evidence of internal moderation for both practical and written assessments. In the major project/dissertation for BA Live Visual Design and Production the review team noted some lack of differentiation in the marks awarded for individual contributions to group projects and less visible evidence of internal moderation than in other modules.

74 In its meetings with senior staff and with academic and support services staff the team found good levels of understanding of the responsibilities of the University and the Academy respectively, which aligned with the Responsibilities Checklist for Providers without Degree Awarding Powers. There are two areas of shared responsibility, one of which is 'responding to external examiners and other third parties'. The team asked how the sharing worked in practice. The University's representative confirmed that the University's Link Tutor is responsible for responding to external examiner reports received by the Academy and, while course leaders at the Academy may contribute to the Link Tutor's responses, no formal record of their contributions is kept.

Conclusions

75 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the Academy meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. Their conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

76 The review team concludes that the Academy has effective arrangements in place to ensure that the standards of awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered, or who delivers them. Partnership agreements are clear and comprehensive and reflect the University's regulations, and the Academy has robust and credible plans to secure standards in provision delivered in partnership with the University. Meetings with staff from both the University and the Academy confirm that staff understand their respective responsibilities for the maintenance of academic standards. This is confirmed by external examiner reports and assessed student work. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.

77 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects all of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix; therefore, the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

S4 The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent

78 This Core practice expects that the provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.

79 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

80 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the Academy could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence it considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Management and Self Governance Document for OfS
- b Backstage Academy Indirect Franchise Agreement with University of Bolton 2013
- c Backstage Academy Indirect FF Variation Extension 2019
- d Backstage Academy Student Handbook 2019
- e Academic Regulations PowerPoint Presentation
- f University of Bolton Programme Approvals Handbook September 2019
- g University of Bolton Academic Misconduct Regulations and Procedures 2019-20
- h University of Bolton Assessment Regulations for Undergraduate Programmes 2019-20
- i University of Bolton Regulations for the Organisation and Conduct of Assessment Boards
- j University of Bolton Nomination appointment rights and responsibilities of External Examiners
- k Backstage Academy UniPulse Data 2017 2018 2019
- l University of Bolton Assessment and Moderation Procedures 2019-20
- m Backstage Academy Operations Manual 2019-20 Review Version (1)
- n Partnership Oversight and Development Handbook 2019-20
- o Backstage Academy Programme Plan 2017
- p Backstage Academy Programme Plan 2018
- q External Examiners Nominations Sub Committee ToR 2019-20
- r University of Bolton Academic Appeals Regulations and Procedures 2019-20
- s University of Bolton Student Non Academic Conduct and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure 2019-20
- t University of Bolton Student Attendance Policy 2019-20
- u SLT collated minutes
- v External Examiner Reports and Responses
- w Updated Backstage Operations Manual 2019
- x External Moderation Records
- y External Examiner List
- z University of Bolton Assessment and Moderation Procedures 2019
- aa UK166 Agreement FD and BA Top-up Live Events 18122013

- bb FDA Live Events Production Validation Documentation 2011
- cc BA Live Events Production Top UP Documentation 2013
- dd Approval Documentation BA Hons LEP and FdA STM 2014
- ee Approval Report ADA3 BA Live Events Management 2014
- ff Approval Report ADA3 FdA Stage Management-2014
- gg University of Bolton Moodle <https://moodle.bolton.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=8572>
Documentation for re-approval in 2018
- hh Meetings with six senior staff members, with seven members of the reaching staff and with five members of the professional support staff, plus one representative of the University of Bolton
- ii Meetings with a representative group of nine students and with 11 student representatives covering all levels of all programmes

81 Some of the key pieces of evidence, outlined in Annex 4, were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

- third party endorsements as none are available for the provision on offer at the Academy.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

82 The review team examined approved course documentation and records of approval for all five of the Academy's programmes to assess the reliability, fairness and transparency of assessment and classification processes for the courses sampled.

83 The review team considered six external examiner reports covering all programmes from the last two academic years to interrogate the use of external examiners and check that the Academy considers and respond to external examiners' reports regarding standards appropriately.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

84 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the Academy was considered by the review team either prior to the visit or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the Academy's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

85 The review team scrutinised the terms of reference of the External Examiners Nominations Sub-Committee and the University's procedures covering the Nomination, Appointment, Rights and Responsibilities of External Examiners to identify how external expertise is used in maintaining academic standards, and how the Academy's assessment and classification processes operate.

86 The review team scrutinised plans for using external expertise in maintaining academic standards, particularly in relation to assessment boards, to assess whether plans for using external expertise in maintaining academic standards and plans for assessment and classification processes are credible, robust and evidence based.

87 The review team reviewed approved course documentation stored on the University's VLE, the Student Handbook, Module Guides and information about academic regulations provided to students during induction to assess the reliability, fairness and transparency of assessment and classification processes for the courses sampled.

88 The review team considered external examiner reports and responses, the Academy's Programme Plans, the Terms of Reference and five sets of minutes from Academic Board and three sets of minutes from the newly constituted Course Committees to interrogate the use made of external examiners and that the Academy considers and respond to external examiners' reports regarding standards appropriately.

89 The review team examined the University's Programme Approval Handbook, approval documentation and the Academy's new course approval policy and process to test that external expertise is used according to the Academy's regulations and policies.

90 The review team met with staff and students to test that staff understand the requirements for the use of external expertise, and the University's assessment and classification processes, and to identify how students regard the reliability, fairness and transparency of assessment and classification processes.

What the evidence shows

91 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

92 The franchise agreement with the University and the responsibilities checklist make it clear that the overall responsibility for the assessment and classification of awards lies with the University's Assessment Board. The University's Assessment Regulations are clear and in line with sector expectations for the utilisation of external examiners. The review team found that the terms of reference of the Examiners Nominations Sub-Committee are appropriate and scrutiny of the external examiner list confirms that they result in the appointment of external examiners with profiles that are relevant to the Academy's courses.

93 The team judged that plans for using external expertise are credible and robust. External examiners are moderating a sample of work of appropriate size. One email from a current external examiner indicated that over 50% of the modules for the course had been moderated, and all the reports read by the review team provided the required amount of detail. The Academy's external examiners attend Awards and Progression Boards which are chaired by a member of the University. Standing items invite external examiners to comment on the moderation of assessed student work and on the standard of student achievement, and scrutiny of Board minutes indicates that these comments are noted and responded to appropriately. It is the responsibility of the Link Tutor, appointed by the University, to respond to external examiner reports received by the Academy and, while course leaders at the Academy may contribute to the Link Tutor's responses, no formal record of their contributions is kept. The team noted that the 2018 Programme Plan describes the University's lack of expectation that course leaders contribute to the response to external examiners' reports as seemingly at odds with good practice.

94 The University's Assessment and Moderation Procedures include an expectation that assignment briefs and examinations will be externally moderated by external examiners prior to their use. This should involve sending draft assessment briefs to the external examiner, along with the relevant moderation pro forma showing internal moderator comments, the relevant module specification and, where relevant, model answers. It further recommends that a central record of external examiners' approvals and comments should be kept. The Academy acknowledged a process failure with regard to external moderation of assessments prior to their use and senior staff explained that, while module guides and proposed assessments had been moderated internally by the Academic Director and Course Leaders, they had not been forwarded to external examiners due to an oversight.

95 Approved course documentation clearly shows the assessment and classification processes for all courses currently delivered at the Academy. These are University-approved regulations for assessment and classification process and are fully used by the Academy.

The team examined the presentation of these regulations used during induction and noted the clear and simple language used to explain assessment, internal moderation, credit accumulation and the basis for degree classification. The Student Handbook and Module Guides are equally clear. The team concluded that approved course documentation is reliable, fair and transparent with regard to assessment and classification processes for the courses sampled.

96 The review team scrutinised external examiner reports for the last two academic years and noted that external examiners are content that sector-recognised standards have been met, and that they align with relevant sections of FHEQ, that the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly in line with University policies and regulations, and that academic standards and achievements of students are comparable with those of other UK providers. As part of the annual monitoring process, the views of external examiners are given serious consideration in programme plans and a response is provided by the Academy's Academic Director. External examiner concerns may also be picked up in Partnership Development meetings, and the review team observed how the October 2019 Partnership Development responded to external examiner concerns about the poor sound quality of Examination Board meetings held by videoconference.

97 The team noted the terms of reference for the recently established Academic Board which include responsibility for academic standards and that minutes indicated that external examiner reports had been considered in three of the five meetings sampled between January and October 2019. The terms of reference of Academic Board also include one external academic member. The Academy's Management and Self Governance document for OfS explains that the purpose of this role is to bring both industry and commercial experience and an appreciation of the higher education landscape that augments and supports the Board's expertise. Finally, the team tested the use made of external examiner reports by the newly constituted Course Committees for all courses held in November 2019. While minutes indicate the inclusion of a standing agenda item dealing with annual monitoring and external examiners, the team noted that this consisted of a digest provided by the Academic Director and that the meeting did not receive copies of the full text of the individual reports. The review team queried this with academic and professional support staff who confirmed that students do not see external examiner reports. The review team concluded that the general satisfaction of external examiners, the use made of their reports in annual monitoring, and their referencing in the Academy's deliberative committees confirm that the Academy responds appropriately to externals' reports regarding standards.

98 The University's Programme Approval Handbook requires the use an external adviser with relevant specialist knowledge and expertise to advise the University on the suitability of the new course proposals. Expectations of external advisers are clear, and records of course approval clearly show their use in the validation of the Academy's provision. The Academy has also developed its own New Course Approval Procedure and this clearly indicates the Academy's plans for using external expertise in the development of any further provision. The Procedure requires validation panels to include at least one external academic panel member, at least one industry specialist or employer and a subject specialist from the professional or accrediting body, where relevant. The Procedure was new and had not been tested at the time of the visit, but the review team found it to be robust, credible and evidence-based.

99 The Academy's staff understand the role of external examiners in maintaining standards and are looking forward to having more involvement with them as they move towards a validation arrangement with the University. Senior staff informed the review team that in anticipation of moving from a franchised to a validated partnership the Academy had started work on building its own academic infrastructure based in part on the University's rules and regulations, and in part on wider sector practices. The University's representative

indicated the University's understanding of and support for this transition, in anticipation of which the Academy is piloting its own annual monitoring process in the current academic year, alongside the current University-led annual monitoring process. The review team noted the Academy's flowchart for this new process which it judged to be credible. One of the benefits of this is expected to be improved internal processes for interaction with external examiners and their reports. In this regard, the team noted the Academy's inclusion of the nomination of external examiners in the terms of reference of its recently established Academic Board, the minutes of which observe that the Academy would welcome the opportunity to respond directly to external examiners' reports. The team also read related documents outlining a number of new internal processes, including a new course approval procedure and new marking and moderation procedures. While the team was unable to test them during the visit it judged them to be credible and likely to be effective.

100 Students who do not have representative roles told the review team that they are clear about assessment briefs and what is required of them in respect of assessment, and they have a full understanding of the role of the external examiner. They also told the review team that they are content with the range of assessment methods used, and that they receive supportive feedback from their tutors who respond quickly to requests for individual meetings with them. Student representatives confirmed that they are also clear about assessment briefs, that they are 'engaged rather than taught at', and that they receive constant feedback prior to assessment. On the basis of the evidence, the review team judges that the assessment and classification processes for the courses sampled are reliable, fair and transparent.

Conclusions

101 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the Academy meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

102 The review team concludes that the Academy uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent. This is verified by external examiner reports which confirm that the assessment process measures student achievement rigorously and fairly in line with University policies and regulations, The Academy has credible and robust plans for using external expertise in maintaining academic standards, and there are records of course approvals and review which indicate that external expertise is employed. Staff understand the requirements for the use of external expertise and students appreciate the reliability, transparency and fairness of assessment and classification processes. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.

103 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects all of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix; therefore, the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

Q1 The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system

104 This Core practice expects that the provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system.

105 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

106 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the Academy could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence it considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Franchise arrangements between the University of Bolton and Backstage Academy
- b Responsibilities Checklist
- c The University of Bolton's Student Admissions Policy
- d The University of Bolton's Recognition of Prior Learning Policy
- e Applicant Journey flow diagram
- f Backstage Academy's Provider Submission
- g Explanatory note regarding the admissions process
- h Explanatory note outlining a strategic plan
- i Explanatory note regarding the Recognition of Prior Learning process
- j Senior Leadership Team minutes November 2018 to present
- k Academic Board minutes January 2019 to present
- l Academic Board Terms of Reference
- m Draft Retention Strategy
- n Access and Participation Plan
- o Interview records
- p Records of emails to applicants from Backstage Academy
- q Emails regarding students requesting recognition of prior learning
- r Case Studies regarding reasonable adjustments for admissions
- s Email evidence relating to the case studies in
- t Marketing information for applicants Backstage Academy's website
- u Approved course documentation
- v Response to query regarding communication with unsuccessful applicants
- w Briefing material provided to staff involved in interviews
- x Staff qualification record
- y The student submission
- z An email from the University of Bolton to confirm that no admissions-related complaints had been received
- aa University of Bolton Admissions Complaints and Appeals Policy
- bb Meetings with six senior staff members, with seven members of the teaching staff and with five members of the professional support staff, plus one representative of the University of Bolton

cc Meetings with a representative group of nine students and with 11 student representatives covering all levels of all programmes

107 Some of the key pieces of evidence, outlined in Annex 4, were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

- arrangements with recruitment agents because the Academy reported that they do not use recruitment agents.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

108 The team examined approved course documentation and records of approval for all five of the Academy's programmes to test whether admissions requirements for the courses reflect the School's overall regulations and policy.

109 The team scrutinised a sample from 138 interview records from January 2019 to assess whether reliable, fair and inclusive admissions decisions were made. As there were no specific concerns about the applications process, the examples of admissions communications with students were randomly sampled. The Academy has no arrangements with recruitment agents so no evidence was requested.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

110 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the Academy was considered by the review team either prior to the visit or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the Academy's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

111 The team reviewed relevant academic regulations in the form of franchise agreements, the responsibilities checklist, University of Bolton policies, descriptive process documents, and the Academy's submission and explanatory notes to identify institutional policy relating to admissions and how responsibility for this process is shared with the University.

112 The team reviewed the Academy's plans for delivering admissions by considering explanatory documents, minutes from meetings of the Senior Leadership Team and Academic Board, Academic Board Terms of Reference, the draft Retention Strategy and Access and Participation Plan, and meetings with staff. This was to assess whether the Academy has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for ensuring that admissions systems are reliable, fair and inclusive.

113 The team considered generic information for applicants, approved course documentation, communication with students, and meetings with students to assess whether the information given to applicants is transparent, inclusive and fit for purpose. Due to the size of the Academy the team was able to see all approved course documentation and information for applicants. These included the Academy's 2020-2021 'Pocket Guide' and 'Quick Facts' sheets for individual courses, and Open day dates and activities.

114 The review team scrutinised admissions and interview records and communications with prospective students, including students who required reasonable adjustments or recognition of prior learning, to test whether reliable, fair and inclusive admissions decisions were made for the applicants sampled.

115 The review team held meetings with staff at the review visit, assessed admissions training materials, and correlated attendance at the admissions training meeting with the record of conducting interviews to test whether staff understand their responsibilities, are appropriately skilled and supported and can articulate how the Academy's approach to inclusivity is manifest in the admissions process.

116 The review team considered students' views in the form of the student submission, meetings with students at the review visit, and any complaints received to assess students' views about the admissions process.

What the evidence shows

117 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

118 The team found that the current franchise agreement between the Academy and the University of Bolton gives the University ultimate responsibility for student admissions and approved course documentation, but that the Academy has delegated responsibility for managing the interview process and recommending an outcome to the University. All applicants are invited to attend an interview. The team saw that the Academy manages the admissions process in accordance with the University's Student Admissions Policy, and that it has not yet developed its own admissions policy. Decisions regarding recognition of prior learning are made by the University which uses its own Regulations and Policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning to advise the Academy on the appropriate evidence or qualifications prior to an applicant being invited to interview. In the absence of a policy regarding management of interviews, for which it has delegated authority, the processes used by the Academy were provided to the review team in the form of explanatory notes, and an interview form which is well understood by staff and serves to ensure consistency in the interview process. Though these processes are not all formally documented, the team concludes that the oversight of the University, within the framework of its policies and procedures, enables the Academy to have a clear approach for the recruitment and admissions of students which is reliable, fair and transparent.

119 Assessing the criteria and processes for student admissions is the responsibility of the Academic Board, but admissions data and ongoing plans for the admissions process are considered at Senior Leadership Team meetings.

120 The Academy's submission discusses its desire to increase applications from, and admission of, students from under-represented groups, and that it has three bursaries specifically available to these students. The Access and Participation Plan July 2019, as well as the Draft Retention Strategy, both outline a focus on providing as much information as possible to students prior to their making a decision about enrolling, and the Academy's Draft Strategic Plans 2021-25 outline the need for more outreach work to provide new access routes into the Academy's programmes, and for a standardised methodology for evaluating its effectiveness. Staff informed the review team that they have clear plans for the admissions process, overseen by the Director of Operations and Student Services, the Registry Manager, and the Employability and Admissions Officer, and that these plans are focused on the importance of inclusivity and fairness. Although these plans and policies are recent, and their effectiveness cannot be fully assessed at this stage, the team concludes that the Academy's plans are reliable, fair, inclusive, robust and credible.

121 Information about courses, entry requirements and open days are readily available on the Academy's website. Information about student support is also available on the website, including contact details for the staff member in charge of disability support. Policies relating to Student Admissions, Recognition of Prior Learning and Complaints and Appeals for Students are located on the University's website, to which the Academy directs students

via its own website. Open Days are held throughout the year to provide information for prospective students who have the opportunity to visit the campus and find out more about the course and setting through an Interview Experience Day, which includes a tour of the Academy's facilities. The official marketing material provided, such as booklets and presentations, is clear and contains useful information for students, such as condensed course summaries and financial considerations regarding the course. Communication with students is led by the Academy, and its messages provide appropriate and useful information. Successful applicants are informed directly by the University as opposed to the Academy. Students told the review team that they had all the information they needed during the application process, and that Open Days were helpful to them in making their decision. The team therefore concludes that information for applicants is transparent, accessible and fit for purpose.

122 The Academy invites all prospective students to interview which provides an opportunity for those with non-traditional qualifications or with professional experience to discuss the suitability of the course with staff. The record of interviews and decisions is collected in a central spreadsheet which demonstrates that there is a standard suite of questions with a points system to ensure that interviews are conducted consistently and fairly by different interviewers. This record also shows that students are often rerouted or given advice if the course they applied for does not seem right for them or they lack experience, and, as a result, in the 2018-19 recruitment round only four students out of 136 applicants were rejected. Students who are identified as needing additional support due to a disability are offered the option of meeting with the Student Support lead during their interview visit, and offered support for the admissions process, in line with the University's admissions policy. The review team observed two anonymised examples of reasonable adjustments in the admissions process being made by the Academy in the last three years, the first enabled a student with learning disabilities to have support from a parent at interview, and the second enabled a student with severe anxiety to be made an offer on the basis of an extended portfolio instead of an interview. The Academy has also had two students apply for recognition of prior learning since 2017 and provided evidence that this had been dealt with appropriately in partnership with the University. Scrutiny of this information allows the review team to conclude that the University's policies and the Academy's procedures are implemented in practice.

123 Interviews are primarily conducted onsite at the Academy by a member of academic staff and a member of professional services staff. The Academy's submission states that staff receive training before being involved in interviewing students, which the review team saw in the form of briefing materials used at an Interview Preparation and Training Meeting held in January 2019 to prepare academic and professional support staff for conducting interviews. Staff involved in interviewing students in 2018-19, as identified through the interview records provided, had all attended this meeting. During the review visit the team met with staff who are involved in interviews and learned that they interview in pairs, with pairings rotated for different interviews, to ensure that decision-making is consistent across staff. Staff are fully aware of their responsibilities to students in the interview process and described how they responded proactively to the information they received about students' needs by ensuring contact with the Student Services Officer as early as possible in the application process. Therefore, the review team is satisfied that staff involved in admissions understand their role and are appropriately skilled and trained.

124 The student submission reports that students were satisfied or very satisfied with the admissions process and noted the exceptional level of support provided by staff during the process. During the review visit, the team met with students, who reported that they found the admissions process very easy to use, that they had all the information they needed and that the process was transparent. Students particularly appreciated the presence of Student Ambassadors at Open Days. The review team also confirmed that no

admissions complaints had been received concerning the Academy's admissions process and found that students tend to agree that the admissions system is reliable, fair and inclusive.

Conclusions

125 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the Academy meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

126 The review team concludes that the Academy has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system. This is because it manages the admissions process in accordance with the University's Student Admissions Policy. Decisions regarding recognition of prior learning are made by the University which uses its own Regulations and Policy for the Recognition of Prior Learning to advise the Academy on the appropriate evidence or qualifications prior to an applicant being invited to interview. Admissions records demonstrate that the University's policies are implemented by the Academy. Staff involved in interviewing applicants receive training, and the processes used by the Academy to conduct interviews are well understood by them and ensure consistency in the interview process between years of entry and students. Students told the review team that they had all the information they needed during the application process, and that Open Days were helpful to them in making their decision. The review team therefore concludes that the oversight of the University, within the framework of its policies and procedures, enables the Academy to provide a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system and that this Core practice is met.

127 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects all of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix; therefore, the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

Q2 The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses

128 This Core practice expects that the provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses.

129 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

130 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the Academy could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence it considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a University of Bolton Programme Approvals Handbook September 2019
- b Example Module Guide LEP5120
- c Partnership Oversight and Development Handbook 2019-20
- d Backstage USP Report AMM August 2018
- e Backstage USP Report AMM September 2018
- f Backstage Academy USP Signoff September 2018
- g Backstage Academy QSR Student Submission 1 Nov 2019
- h New Course Approval Policy and Process
- i SSLC collated minutes
- j Course Committees Agenda and Minutes
- k External Examiner Reports and Responses
- l Programme Handbooks 2018-19
- m Sample Module Guides
- n 2017-18 Module Survey results
- o 2018-19 Module Survey results
- p LVD Module Survey Grid 2018-19
- q Programme Specifications
- r NSS Data 2018
- s NSS DATA and Action Plan 2019
- t Strategic Plan Explanatory Notes
- u Student Experience Committee Minutes 03-12-2019
- v BA Mitigating Circumstances Procedure June 19
- w BA Marking and Moderation Procedures July 19
- x BA Attendance and Engagement June 19
- y Meetings with six senior staff members, with seven members of the teaching staff and with five members of the professional support staff, plus one representative of the University of Bolton
- z Meetings with a representative group of nine students and with 11 student representatives covering all levels of all programmes

131 Some of the key pieces of evidence, outlined in Annex 4, were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

- third party endorsements as none are available for the provision on offer at the Academy.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

132 The review team examined approved course documentation to test that all elements of the courses sampled are high quality, and that the teaching, learning and assessment design will enable students to demonstrate the intended learning outcomes.

133 The review team scrutinised six external examiner reports covering all programmes from the last two academic years to identify external examiners' views about reliability, fairness and transparency of assessment and classification processes, to identify their views about the quality of the courses sampled.

134 The review team scrutinised a random sample of module and course evaluations to identify students' views about the quality of course sampled.

135 The review undertook four observations of teaching and learning to test whether course delivery is high quality.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

136 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the Academy was considered by the review team either prior to the visit or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the Academy's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

137 The team considered relevant academic regulations, specifically the University's Programme Approval Handbook, and Modification to Taught Programmes Guidelines, and the minutes of its Standing Panel to identify the Academy's approach to designing and delivering high-quality courses.

138 The review team examined the current arrangements with the University for designing and delivering programmes, and the Academy's plans for designing and delivering programmes as encapsulated in its Draft Strategic Plan, New Course Approval Procedure and associated policy documents, in order to assess whether it has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for designing high-quality programmes.

139 The team examined approved course documentation, including programme specification and programme handbooks for all the Academy's courses, and sampled nine module guides, to test that all elements of the programmes sampled are high quality and that teaching, learning and assessment design will enable students to demonstrate the intended learning outcomes.

140 The team considered external examiner reports for the last two academic years to identify external examiners' views about the quality of the programmes sampled.

141 The team considered student views expressed in Student Staff Liaison Committee minutes, Course Committee minutes, Module Surveys and National Student Survey (NSS) Results to identify their views about the quality of programmes sampled, and met with them to identify their views about the quality of courses sampled.

142 The team met with staff to assess how they ensure that programmes are high quality.

143 The team observed teaching and learning to test whether course delivery is high quality.

What the evidence shows

144 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

145 The University provides a clear policy and comprehensive guidance on the formal approval of programmes. These include the use of internal and appropriately qualified external expertise and student panel members to ensure that the programmes approved are of high quality. The rigour of the University's process is evident in reports from the University's Standing Panel which is a subcommittee of the University's Education Committee and which is charged with considering programme proposals. The rigour of the Standing Panel's operation is exemplified by its review of proposals for major modifications to its courses submitted by the Academy for approval by the University in August 2018. The Panel rejected the proposals on a number of grounds and observed that 'there were errors in the documentation consistent with a lack of careful scrutiny during the finalisation of the documentation'. The University also provides guidance on Modification to a Taught Programme which the review team found to be clear and rigorous. The team further noted the Academy's closing of the loop when, having used the process to modify Live Event Production modules in the light of student feedback about progression routes, the Academy subsequently advised students of these modifications in a Course Change Student Briefing Note requesting their agreement to the changes.

146 The Academy complies with the requirements of the University's Programme Approvals Handbook, which requires partner institutions to design programmes that are aligned with relevant national frameworks and ensures that programmes are scrutinised by the University's own staff and external subject experts to ensure their quality. The University's Partnership Oversight and Development Handbook lays out comprehensive procedures, for the assurance of high-quality delivery of programmes at partner institutions. At the time of the review visit, the Academy's own strategic approach to quality assurance and enhancement was in the early stages of development, with great reliance placed on the University's processes, although its draft strategic plan aims to address this as part of its journey towards institutional autonomy. To this end, the Academy has developed its own New Course Approval Procedure, and a number of new policies are in development in preparation for the delivery of validated provision. These include Mitigating Circumstances Procedures, Marking and Moderation Procedures and Attendance and Engagement Policy and procedures. The review team concludes that both current arrangements and proposed plans for delivering high-quality programmes are credible and robust.

147 The review team examined the programme specifications for all courses and found that programme design is of high quality. Programme specifications are comprehensive and align with internal reference points such as the University's awards framework and external reference points such as the UK Quality Code for Higher education. Other points of reference include the Creative and Cultural Skills National Occupational Standards, the Professional Lighting and Sound Association and the National Skills Academy. Entry requirements, programme aims and intended learning outcomes are clear, as are teaching and learning methods and assessment methods. Programme aims inform the Programme Handbooks. The Academy moved from five separate programme handbooks in 2018-19 to a single Student Handbook covering all five programmes in 2019-20.

148 The review team read nine module handbooks and found that they aligned well with programme specifications and programme handbooks. The approach to learning and teaching is stated, and learning outcomes are mapped against summative assessment tasks and weightings. Assessments are well designed, relevant and authentic, and reflect the vocational focus of the programmes. A module calendar detailing assessment deadlines and assessment criteria are also provided. The review team concluded that the Academy's approach to designing and delivering courses is high quality and that its plans for doing so are credible, robust and evidence-based.

149 External examiner reports confirm that the quality of provision is in line with sector and subject standards and note the continuing efforts at the Academy to support the development of students' research skills and their use of academic sources, which is often an area of challenge within practice-based provision. However, they also point out that practical work is very high quality and that the student experience is enhanced by 'placements on some prestigious projects in key roles' and that 'learning experiences are, in some cases, unique and exceptional'. External examiners also make comments regarding equality in the assessment of group work, an issue that has also been raised by students. However, discussions with senior, academic and professional services staff and with students and student representatives indicate that much work has been done to address this area of concern, including the development of new protocols and guidance for the assessment of group and collaborative work. The review team is confident that the external examiner reports sampled indicate that they are satisfied that the programmes delivered at Academy are of high quality.

150 Students appear to be satisfied with the quality of their programmes according to the Student Submission, although there is some evidence that this has not always been the case, as NSS results provided by the Academy indicate that overall student satisfaction declined in 2018. However, at the review visit students and student representatives told the review team that the quality of provision has improved significantly over the last three years, and current first year students feel that their first year experience is very different from that of students now in their third year. They attribute the dissatisfaction felt by their predecessors to a period of change occasioned by the move to Production Park, changes to staffing, and modifications to the curriculum. Despite some significant historical issues that had impacted on the quality of the student experience in previous years, the review team concluded that the students they met during the visit were very satisfied with the quality of their courses.

151 Senior staff also stated that levels of student satisfaction had dipped during a period of change, and explained to the team how they are seeking to address historic student dissatisfaction by increasing student representation in the revised deliberative committee structure so as to capture student concerns at an early stage, addressing problems with management through a 'You said we did' policy, and introducing a new student record system that will permit fine grain examination of data trends. Academic and professional support staff added that student dissatisfaction with organisation and management was also being addressed through the introduction of blocked timetabling and a later start time for lectures. These measures concentrated the teaching programme and reduced transport costs for students, and students expressed their appreciation of the blocked timetable. Both senior and academic staff also explained how they establish and maintain high-quality programmes through a rigorous process of course development and the alignment of programmes to relevant national frameworks and subject benchmarks, and through consultation with the production industry facilitated by the connections they have with the national and international companies around them at Production Park. Staff at all levels within the Academy were able to articulate how they work with colleagues and the University to monitor and improve the delivery of their academic programme, and how they are able to identify and share good practice in order to further improve the quality of provision at the Academy.

152 Teaching observations conducted by the review team during the visit included a practical, a lecture and a mock role play. In all cases staff were knowledgeable and classes well planned, although there were relatively limited opportunities for student interaction with the tutor in two of the three classes observed. For the mock role play students had been provided with a brief that involved a performance being halted due to an emergency requiring an evacuation of the building. Students were questioned robustly about how they would respond to the situation, which the tutor caused to evolve as the role play continued, further stretching the students' knowledge. This was a formative assessment and students were provided with clear, useful feedback which referenced the module's intended learning outcomes and prepared them for the summative assessment. All three classes took place in appropriate learning spaces and made effective use of resources, ranging from educational technology to lifting systems for stage productions, with the tutor providing students with a risk-assessment handout for the latter. On the basis of its observation of teaching, the review team concluded that programme delivery at the Academy is of high quality.

Conclusions

153 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the Academy meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

154 The review team concludes that the Academy designs and delivers high-quality programmes because it demonstrates adherence to programme development, monitoring and enhancement processes set by the University while also beginning to develop its own procedures for new programme design and the assessment of academic quality. Programme documentation also indicates that the ways in which teaching, learning and assessment are designed enable students at the Academy to demonstrate the intended learning outcomes. The quality of academic provision at the Academy is endorsed by external examiners and students, and further evidenced by the high-quality teaching and learning observed by the review team. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.

155 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects all of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix; therefore, the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

Q3 The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience

156 This Core practice expects that the provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.

157 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

158 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the Academy could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence it considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Backstage Academy Operations Manual 2019-20 Review Version (1)
- b Peer Observation and Enhancement of Teaching DRAFT
- c Backstage Academy QSR Student Submission 1 Nov 2019
- d SSLC collated minutes
- e Course Committees Agenda and Minutes
- f 2017-18 Module Survey results
- g 2018-19 Module Survey results
- h LVD Module Survey Grid 2018-19
- i Explanatory Note Peer Observation of Teaching
- j NSS Data 2018
- k NSS DATA and Action Plan 2019
- l Updated Backstage Operations Manual 2019
- m Employee list
- n Responsibilities-checklist-for-providers-without-degree-awarding-powers
- o Employee list
- p Strategic Plan Explanatory Notes
- q Academic Team Meetings
- r Peer Observation of Teaching DRAFT
- s Observation of teaching by review team LVD HE4 January Intensive, LEP4109 Automation and Drapes, LEP5120 Sponsorship Lecture and STM5006 Mock Role Play
- t Meetings with six senior staff members, with seven members of the teaching staff and with five members of the professional support staff, plus one representative of the University of Bolton
- u Meetings with a representative group of nine students and with 11 student representatives covering all levels of all programmes

159 Some of the key pieces of evidence, outlined in Annex 4, were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

- third party endorsements as none are available for the provision on offer at the Academy.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

160 The review team considered a random sample of module and course evaluations to identify students' views about the sufficiency, qualifications and skills of staff.

161 The review team scrutinised staff role descriptions and CVs for all teaching and Course Manager posts, and for the Student Services Officer, Student Wellbeing Officer, and senior manager posts, and details of persons holding specific posts, to assess whether the staff sampled are appropriately qualified and skilled to perform their roles effectively, that they were recruited according to the University's policies and procedures and staff roles are consistent with the delivery of a high quality academic and learning experience.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

162 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the Academy was considered by the review team either prior to the visit or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the Academy's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

163 The review team identified and considered the evidence described above for the purposes described in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers, as follows.

164 The team considered the Academy's policy as detailed in the Backstage Academy Operational Handbook to identify how the Academy assures itself that it recruits, appoints, inducts and supports its staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience to its students.

165 The team considered the Academy's strategy for selecting and developing staff contained within its draft strategic plan, the Explanatory Note on Peer Observation of Teaching and the draft policy on the Peer Observation of Teaching to assess whether it has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for ensuring that it has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality learning experience.

166 The team examined the Academy's current employee list (including qualifications), the Academy's Operational Manual, job descriptions/staff CV's and staffing records to assess whether the staff sampled are appropriately qualified and skilled to perform their roles effectively and whether they were recruited according to the University's and the Academy's policies and procedures.

167 The team considered the views of students expressed in the Student Submission, in deliberative committees, in module evaluation surveys in the NSS and in two meetings to identify their views about the sufficiency, qualifications and skills of staff.

168 The team met with staff to test that staff are appropriately qualified and skilled.

What the evidence shows

169 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

170 The Academy's Operational Handbook for 2019-20 asserts that Academy staff are required to be qualified at the level above the one at which they teach and that the

recruitment of staff is closely monitored by the University. It also states that 'applicants are normally expected to hold a teaching qualification in HE or be willing to complete such a qualification/seek professional recognition within two years of engagement, and/or hold Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy'. The University also requires staff at partner providers to undertake 'relevant training' delivered in partnership with the University. The current employee list indicates that the Academy's staffing aligns with the University's policy on staff appointments, which is provided in its Operations Manual 2019-20. The policy permits the Academy to manage the recruitment of its own staff through Production Park's HR function and states that a balance should be sought to ensure that course teams have staff with a range of experience in academic and professional live events contexts. On the basis of the evidence, the team concludes that staff are recruited according to the University's policies and procedures.

171 The team scrutinised staff CVs which indicate that five of nine teaching staff hold D2 Higher Education Academy Fellowship status (plus three of the four senior managers) and that the majority of teaching staff are qualified above bachelor's degree level and hold, or are in the process of completing, teaching qualifications supported and funded by the Academy. All members of staff have relevant industry experience, and two members of academic staff are also registered on professional doctorates in educational leadership. The evidence supplied to the team confirms that the current staff are appropriately qualified and skilled to deliver a high-quality academic experience.

172 The Academy's draft strategic plan includes a commitment to support the personal and professional development of staff. Strategic enablers include peer-to-peer assessment activity, and the introduction of a staff development framework that includes performance review, professional development targets and career pathways in addition to continuing professional development opportunities. The evidence considered by the team indicates that beyond the University's oversight there is currently no formal staffing strategy in place at institutional level. Staff informed the review team that performance review is currently a requirement for non-teaching staff, but not for teaching staff. Moreover, the Academy does not currently have in place an effective peer observation scheme for teaching although the University did conduct peer observation of the Academy's staff in 2017-18. Staff told the review team that although there is no formal process for the assessment of teaching quality they engage in peer observation as part of studying for teaching qualifications. They also provided examples of improving teaching through the informal sharing of good practice. The review team noted that the Academy had recently drafted a Peer Observation and Enhancement of Teaching Policy which is developmental in nature and aligned to the principles and practice of the UK Professional Standards Framework, but considered that the draft scheme may be rather complex given the current context and stage of development at the Academy and that a more straightforward approach might be more suitable. Together, the evidence examined by the review team indicates that the Academy has further work to do in terms of developing its staffing policy and strategy.

173 Student satisfaction with teaching and assessment dipped in 2018 following previous overall improvement in the NSS results over the three years sampled. Module evaluation surveys and points raised in the Staff-Student Liaison Committee identified particular concerns such as the provision of assessment information, the availability of staff outside teaching hours and issues regarding teaching styles. However, the current students and student representatives met by the review team expressed satisfaction with teaching and learning and, in particular, with the expertise of staff whom they consider to be well qualified, both academically and professionally, and who continue to update and enhance their skills as professionals and educators. For example, student representatives praised staff for keeping abreast of software developments in a complex and fast-changing field and students were appreciative of the support received from tutors for their projects, many of which are software-based. These comments were endorsed by the Student Submission

which draws attention to the benefit for students of being taught by staff with many years of industry experience in specialised areas such as stage management, lighting design, visual production and sound engineering who were, in addition, able to use their professional networks to help students make contact with the industry. The Student Submission states that academic staffing levels are adequate for the current size of the Academy and the students whom the review team met indicated their satisfaction with the number of support staff. On the basis of what it read and heard, the team concluded that students consider that the Academy has sufficient staff and that those staff are appropriately qualified and skilled.

174 Teaching staff and programme/module leaders met by the review team articulated a comprehensive understanding of the individual and collective needs of their students as learners and described how they provide a student-centred, active, problem and project-based learning environment, while ensuring individual differentiation to support weaker students and stretch the stronger ones. Staff also described the way they were recruited, inducted and supported by both the Academy and the University into their roles and beyond their induction through continuing professional development (CPD), particularly registration for higher degrees or teaching qualifications and achievement of Higher Education Academy membership. The team is confident that the Academy is ensuring that staff are appointed and supported in their roles according to the University's policy and are appropriately skilled and qualified.

Conclusions

175 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the Academy meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

176 The review team concludes that the Academy has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience because the evidence considered indicates that the Academy recruits staff according to the University's policies and procedures while developing its own strategy to appoint, appraise and continuously develop its academic and support staff. There is not yet a formal process for the assessment of teaching quality, but teaching staff provided examples of improving teaching through the informal sharing of good practice. The team was provided with evidence of the Academy's plans for a peer observation scheme but has some concerns about its likely effectiveness. Notwithstanding this point, teaching staff are drawn from industry and have the opportunity to gain relevant teaching and higher-level academic qualifications, and to undertake CPD or industry training. Students consider that the Academy has sufficient staff and that those staff are appropriately qualified and skilled, and up to date with current industry practice. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.

177 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects most of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix. However, given the absence of a formal staffing strategy, the lack of performance review for academic staff, the hiatus in formal peer observation and its concerns about the complexity of the proposed peer observation scheme, the review team has a moderate degree of confidence in this judgement.

Q4 The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience

178 This Core practice expects that the provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.

179 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

180 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the Academy could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence it considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Management and Self Governance Document for OfS
- b Backstage Academy Indirect Franchise Agreement with University of Bolton 2013
- c Backstage Academy Student Handbook 2019
- d University of Bolton Programme Approvals Handbook September 2019
- e Backstage Academy QSR Provider 2 Submission 1 November 2019
- f Backstage Academy QSR Student Submission 1 Nov 2019
- g External Examiner Reports and Responses
- h 2017-18 Module Survey results
- i 2018-19 Module Survey results
- j NSS Data 2018
- k NSS DATA and Action Plan 2019
- l Services Strategy 2016-17
- m Responsibilities-checklist-for-providers-without-degree-awarding-powers
- n Strategic Plan Explanatory Notes
- o Post-VTM Request for Information 16 Dec 19 Updated version
- p Approval Documentation BA Hons LEP and FdA STM 2014
- q BA Live Events Production Top UP Documentation 2013
- r Approval Documentation BA Hons LEP and FdA STM 2014
- s Approval Report ADA3 BA Live Events Management 2014
- t Approval Report ADA3 FdA Stage Management-2014
- u BA Counselling Service Annual Review 2017-18
- v BA Counselling six senior staff members, with seven members of the teaching staff and with five members of the professional support staff, plus one representative of the University of Bolton
- w Meetings with a representative group of nine students and with 11 student representatives covering all levels of all programmes

181 Some of the key pieces of evidence, outlined in Annex 4, were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

- third party endorsements as none are available for the provision on offer at the Academy.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

182 The review team scrutinised a random sample of module and course evaluations to identify students' views about facilities, learning resources and student support services.

183 The review team scrutinised job descriptions of staff employed in relevant functions to determine whether staff roles are consistent with the delivery of a high-quality learning experience.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

184 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the Academy was considered by the review team either prior to the visit or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the Academy's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

185 The review team considered the Academy's plans for facilities, learning resources and student support services, in particular the Academy's franchise agreements with the University, its governance and management document, SLT Minutes, an Explanatory note, the Student Services Strategy and the Provider Submission and explanatory note, to identify how the Academy's facilities, learning resources and student support services contribute to delivering a high-quality academic experience.

186 The review team considered plans for ensuring sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services, in particular the team considered the Student Services Strategy for the 2016-17 academic cycle and a Counselling Service Annual Review for 2016-18 and 2017-18 to assess whether the Academy has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for ensuring that it has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.

187 The review team considered students' views, in particular the Student Submission, SSLC Minutes, Module Surveys and NSS Data to identify students' views about facilities, learning resources and support services.

188 The review team considered the University's Programme Approval process, the approval reports and external examiners reports to identify third party views about the Academy's facilities, learning resources and student support services.

189 The review team considered the Academy's job roles, structures and resources, in particular the employee list and the Student Services Strategy to identify the Academy's facilities, learning resources and student support services in order to determine whether the roles are consistent with the delivery of a high-quality learning experience.

190 The review team met with senior staff and with academic and student support staff to test whether staff are appropriately qualified and skilled, and understand their roles and responsibilities.

191 The review team met with students to assess their views about facilities, learning resources and support services.

192 The review team undertook a direct assessment of facilities, learning resources and support services to test that the facilities, resources or services under assessment deliver a high-quality academic experience.

What the evidence shows

193 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

194 Under the terms of the Franchise Agreement it is the Academy's responsibility to provide for the educational, welfare and pastoral needs of its students. The Academy does not currently have a strategic plan for developing its resources, but the review team noted that its draft Strategic Plans 2021-25 demonstrate a strong commitment to developing its learning resources, estate and facilities infrastructure and to reviewing potential efficiency gains through shared services using an appropriate funding model. It further noted the Academy's intention to improve and increase learning resources to meet the needs of its expanding portfolio of specialisms and planned expansion of student numbers, and to develop an Estates Development Masterplan with its parent company, Production Park. At the visit the team was informed of the successful outcome of a European Regional Development Fund bid submitted in partnership with Wakefield Council and other bodies, including the Arts Council England, and the Northern Powerhouse Project, which will provide financial resources to begin construction of a new research and innovation centre. The Academy's website describes the origins and purpose of this 'Innovation Centre' which will be used for research and business incubation purposes rather than teaching, but which will nonetheless extend considerably the estate and the resources available to staff and students as the Academy seeks to enhance its research profile and facilitate student projects that support the industry.

195 A key aspect of the Academy's resource planning is its need to provide students with access to highly specialised and expensive equipment that dates quickly in an industry that is subject to fast and constant change. Senior staff explained how purchasing specialist equipment and software was costly and inappropriate in such a context, and that they had developed unique relationships with industry to obtain access to cutting-edge equipment and software for their students. This theme is taken up in the Student Handbook which explains that significant investment in technical resources, including new lighting, sound and visual technologies, has taken place in part through industry sponsorship.

196 While it was too soon to judge the overall effectiveness of the Academy's draft Strategic Plans 2021-25 in respect of resources and resource planning, the team found them to be credible at this stage, given the close relationships the Academy had built with industry partners.

197 The Academy's Student Services Strategy for the 2016-17 academic cycle and the Counselling Service Annual Review for 2016-18 and 2017-18 indicate the use made of student support and the development of the student support services over time. These services include student counselling, student finance, disability services and student academic and professional development.

198 The themes from the module surveys for 2017-18 and 2018-19 show generally high levels of student satisfaction with access to facilities and learning resources, such as

technical equipment and studio space, and high levels of satisfaction (often in excess of 90%) with access to support staff when needed. Conversely, NSS data from 2018 showed low levels of satisfaction for the learning resources and the academic support which the Academy's 2019 Action Plan analyses in some detail and attributes in part to legacy issues such as moving to Production Park, the disruption caused by the building of new locations and the lack of adequate representation of students in deliberative committees until this was addressed in 2018-19.

199 The student submission module surveys, and NSS data comment less favourably about the social spaces available to students at the Academy, but the Student Submission makes reference to the large variety of technical equipment available for student use and comments very favourably on access to industry-standard facilities during teaching sessions, the opportunity to gain additional industry-accredited training from major companies, for example in Avolites¹ and Green Hippo³, and to complete qualifications such as First Aid at Work, Manual Handling and an Event Safety Passport. A new Learning Resource Centre was introduced in 2019-20 which students regard as an improvement on what was there previously, but about which they still have reservations concerning opening hours. On the basis of the totality of the evidence it read and heard about, the team concluded that, on the whole, students are reasonably satisfied with the resources available to them.

200 Scrutiny of the programme approval events for the Academy's courses, which are conducted by the University, confirm that they routinely involve internal and external scrutiny of academic, pastoral and social support for students, as well as physical resources such as library, IT and specialist resources. External examiners confirm that the quality of the students' learning experience (including provision of student support and guidance as well as teaching and learning resources) is appropriate and satisfactory. The most recent set of three external examiner reports for 2018-19 agreed or strongly agreed that this was the case.

201 The employee list indicates there are 4.5 full-time equivalent staff involved directly in student support, covering registry functions, employability, admissions, disability, learning difficulties, timetabling and student health and wellbeing. Each member of staff other than the Student Wellbeing Officer, who is a registered psychotherapist, covers a varied range of functions. The general responsibilities as listed and on the University VLE appear to be sufficient to support the current numbers of students at the Academy. Support staff told the review team how student support services and pastoral care had developed over the last four years from being reactive to being proactive with regard to student wellbeing, and the team noted that this aligns with the Student Services Strategy 2016-17 which brought a number of support areas together. Staff roles are clearly defined in the Academy's Operations Manual. Staff and students were clear about roles and responsibilities within the Academy. Students told the team that they knew who to go to for specific types of support and commented very favourably on their experiences. On the basis of the evidence it saw and the high levels of student satisfaction with the support they receive, the review team concludes that staff roles are consistent with the delivery of a high-quality learning experience.

202 The review team met with students and student representatives and with 12 teaching and professional staff covering all courses and all student support areas. Students were very positive about the physical resources available to them but acknowledged that there had been issues with regard to social space, a concern that was also picked up in the Student Submission. Students told the review team that the Academy was aware of their need for appropriate social space and was addressing it. The team scrutinised relevant documentation and found that, as part of its 'You said We did' initiative, the Academy had advised students in November 2019 of steps it had taken to create a common room in response to their request for a space in which to relax, socialise, eat and drink. The

Academy acknowledged that the space it had found required improvement and identified additional facilities which students could use in the meantime. The December 2019 Academic Board agreed that the Director of Operations and Student Services would email all students clarifying the specified common areas. The review team took the view that the Academy was taking steps to address this student concern.

203 The review team's tour of the Academy's location and facilities confirmed that it is situated within Production Park's commercial and manufacturing facilities. The Academy has an array of specialised teaching facilities and resources available to students. The review team saw two lecture rooms that can accommodate 55-100 students, two computer suites and a variety of smaller tutorial spaces. All teaching facilities have appropriate ICT equipment. Of particular note was Studio 001, an arena-sized production rehearsal studio which has, on occasions, been used for student practicals when it is not being hired commercially by leading bands. Other studios include a dance studio, a large studio where students undertake staging activities, including the building of platforms and the rigging of lighting, and a mid-sized rehearsal studio predominantly used for students studying live sound engineering. The team was also shown a pre-visualisation suite for Live Visual Design and Production and Live Events Production Students, an immersive video facility used by both industry and students to design 360-degree digital presentations, and motion tracking and LED walls. A number of the facilities available to students are state of the art.

204 In the course of its tour, the team was shown the Academy's Student Wellbeing Office, quiet waiting area and quiet rooms in which mental health consultations are held.

Conclusions

205 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the Academy meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

206 The review team concludes that the Academy has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience. The Academy has developed an innovative approach to accessing cutting-edge equipment and software through its comprehensive network of industry contacts and has taken the first steps in developing a formal resource strategy. The review team's direct assessment of facilities, learning resources and support services confirms that the Academy is able to offer a high-quality academic experience, and that staff understand their roles and responsibilities. External examiners and University approval reports confirm that the Academy provides a wide range of specialist equipment and facilities that are sufficient for current student numbers. Students are concerned about the lack of social space and an appropriate common room but the review team saw evidence that the Academy is taking steps to address this. In other respects, students have a positive view of the facilities, learning resources and support services and, on the balance of the evidence, the review team concludes that this Core practice is met.

207 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects all of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix; therefore, the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

Q5 The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience

208 This Core practice expects that the provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.

209 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

210 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the Academy could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence it considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Backstage Academy Provider Submissions
- b Backstage Academy's Operations Manual 2019-20
- c Academic Board Terms of Reference
- d Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee Terms of Reference
- e Course Committee Terms of Reference
- f Student Experience Committee Terms of Reference
- g Student Handbook
- h Student Submission
- i Academic Board minutes January 2019 to present
- j Student Staff Liaison Committee minutes December 2016 - May 2019
- k Course Committee minutes November 2019
- l Results to 'Other Internal Surveys'
- m Module Survey Results 2017-18
- n Module Survey Results 2018-19
- o Live Visual Design Module Survey Results 2018-19
- p Module Review Presentations July 2019
- q Complaints Tracking Form
- r Student Briefing Note on Live Event Production change
- s You Said We Did Email
- t Clarification and commentary on request for additional information
- u NSS Data and Action Plan 2019
- v Backstage Academy Programme Plan 2017
- w Backstage Academy Programme Plan 2018
- x Backstage Academy Programme Plan 2019
- y Backstage Academy Programme Plan 2020
- z Strategic Plan Explanatory Notes
- aa Draft Annual Monitoring process flowchart
- bb Meetings with a group of nine students and with 11 student representatives covering all levels of all programmes

How any samples of evidence were constructed

211 The review team scrutinised a random sample of module and course evaluations to identify students' views about student engagement in the quality of their educational experience.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

212 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the Academy was considered by the review team either prior to the visit or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make their judgement regarding the Academy's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

213 The review team reviewed the Academy's 2019-20 Operations Manual, committee Terms of Reference, committee minutes, the Student Handbook, and survey results to identify how the Academy actively engages students in the quality of their educational experience.

214 The team considered the Academy's plans for engaging students by reviewing the 2019 NSS Action Plan, 2017 to 2020 Programme Plans descriptions of plans in the Provider Submission, the Strategic Plan explanatory note, the draft Annual Monitoring flow chart, and its processes for the selection and training of student representatives to assess whether the Academy has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for engaging students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.

215 The team reviewed examples of changes made by the Academy in response to student feedback by examining emails to students to notify them of changes, scrutinising three module questionnaire returns by individual students and overall module survey summaries for the academic years 2017-18 and 2018-19 to illustrate the impact of the Academy's approach.

216 The team assessed student views by examining internal student and module surveys for 2017-19 and NSS results for 2016-19, and the 11 student complaints listed in the Academy's Complaints Tracking Form covering the academic years 2017-20 to identify students' views about student engagement in the quality of their educational experience.

217 The team met separately with nine students and 11 student representatives covering each level of every course to assess whether they consider they are engaged in the quality of their educational experience.

What the evidence shows

218 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

219 In reviewing the Academy's academic regulations and policies, the review team found that there are no formal policies in respect of the student voice or student engagement. There is an Attendance and Engagement Policy in draft form, but this concentrates almost exclusively on attendance. Nonetheless, following the introduction of a new committee structure in late 2018 students are now represented on all the Academy's deliberative committees. These include separate Course Committees for each programme which meet at least twice a year and focus solely on course-specific academic and management issues. Matters relating to the wider student experience are considered by the Student Experience Committee (SEC) whose broader remit includes pastoral support,

facilities and learning resources, and which meets three times a year. Students are also represented on the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee (EDIC) and on Academic Board. The Academy's Student Handbook explains the purpose of student representation and how to become a student representative. The Student Submission states that students are invited to apply for roles as student representatives and endorses the importance of these roles. At the time of the review visit, the SEC had met only once, in December 2019, and the EDIC had still to meet, so the team was unable to assess their effectiveness at this early stage.

220 Declining NSS results in 2019 led the Academy to implement a detailed action plan in partnership with the University. The actions identified relate to students' understanding of the NSS, the organisational context during the survey period, physical and learning resources that might have an impact on the student experience, and how the Academy can align its approach to the NSS with that of the University. Alongside the NSS outcomes the main survey used to gather student views is module evaluation, and the outcomes from both feed into Annual Programme Planning. Annual Programme Plans contain action plans that are intended to address issues identified from student surveys and data, but the review team found a lack of robustness in the action plans from earlier years. No action plan was completed in 2017, and only three broad actions were identified in 2018. From the 2019-20 academic year, module evaluation forms will be considered as part of a formal Annual Monitoring process which should allow for a more representative discussion of actions from student feedback.

221 Though there is not yet an overall strategy for student engagement there have been several strategic developments in 2018-20 with regard to the committee structure and student representation within it. At present, student representatives are elected by their peers, with one in each year of each programme. They are then provided with training by the Academy, which the students report as being helpful to their roles. The Academy's draft Strategic Plan states its intention to further develop the student engagement framework, including the development of a Student Union by 2025, though there is as yet no robust action plan for implementing this intention. Overall, the review team finds that the Academy has credible plans to actively engage students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience, but that at the time of the review visit these plans were not yet robust.

222 The team found that there are examples of the Academy changing and improving the student learning experience as a result of student engagement. Module evaluations seen by the review team show that, on the whole, students are satisfied with their individual modules, and that the Academy takes action where issues are identified. For example, module enhancement plans based on analysis of module evaluation results evidence adjustments being made, including three particularly poorly reviewed modules being replaced in 2018 through the University's major modifications process. The Academy communicates such changes to students in a 'You Said, We Did' format. During the review visit, the team found that students are confident that suggestions they make will be considered seriously by the Academy, and that they have the representation they need to make their thoughts known to decision makers. Students were able to identify several examples of times when their feedback had resulted in changes, such as improved timetabling, increased study space and moving the library to a more accessible location. The team notes that the Academy is developing an annual monitoring process where student feedback and changes will be considered in a more systematic way. Therefore, the team concludes that there are examples of the Academy changing and improving students' learning experience as a result of student engagement.

223 During the review visit, the review team met separately with students and student representatives so that the team could test more effectively student views about the recently

revised representative system. The students whom the review team met felt that better student representation has made change more transparent to the student body and are confident that student representatives represent their views accurately. The student representatives whom the review team met were positive about their involvement in committees, and feel their feedback is taken seriously and their concerns are responded to. All students noted the informal culture of support which allows them to directly approach staff at all levels if they have concerns or think that something should be changed. On the basis of what it learned from the students it met, the review team concludes that the Academy engages them in the quality of their educational experience.

Conclusions

224 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the Academy meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

225 The review team concludes that the Academy actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience. The Academy is developing robust and credible plans to further promote student engagement, including a revised deliberative committee structure with appropriate student representation, although the team was unable to evaluate the effectiveness of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee which had still to meet at the time of the visit. However, students report that the Academy engages them through both formal and informal processes in the quality of their educational experience and gave examples of the Academy changing and improving academic, physical and timetabling aspects of their learning experience as a result of their feedback. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.

226 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects all of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix; therefore, the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

Q6 The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students

227 This Core practice expects that the provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.

228 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

229 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the Academy could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence it considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Backstage Academy's Provider Submission
- b Responsibilities Checklist
- c Backstage Academy's Complaints Policy - until November 2019
- d Backstage Academy's Complaints Policy - since November 2019
- e Academic Board minutes January 2019 to present
- f Staff notes from OIA training sessions
- g Strategic Plan Explanatory Note
- h Backstage Academy Website
- i Student Handbook
- j Complaints tracking spreadsheet
- k Appeals summary data spreadsheet from the University of Bolton
- l A sample of five specific complaints, and two informal complaints
- m A draft Appeals and Review Policy
- n Meetings with a group of nine students and with 11 student representatives covering all levels of all programmes

How any samples of evidence were constructed

230 The review team saw an anonymised overview of all 11 complaints received by the Academy since 2017-18, and since the team did not identify any risk-based sampling as being necessary it examined in detail a random sample of five specific complaints and two responses to informal complaints. The team also examined an overview of the seven appeals received by the University since 2017-18, but since appeals remain the responsibility of the University the team did not examine any correspondence in detail. This was to test that complaints are dealt with in a fair, transparent and timely manner.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

231 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the Academy was considered by the review team either prior to the visit or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement

regarding the Academy's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

232 The team reviewed the Provider Submission, Responsibilities Checklist, and the old and updated versions of the Academy's Complaints Policies to identify the Academy's processes for handling complaints and appeals, and to confirm that these processes are fair and transparent.

233 The team considered the Academy's Submission, complaints policy, Academic Board minutes, meetings with staff, staff training documents, draft Appeals and Review Policy and the Strategic Plan Explanatory Note to assess whether it has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for developing and operating fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals, which are accessible to all students.

234 The team considered the information provided to students about complaints and appeals through the policy, the website and student handbook to assess whether information for potential and actual complainants and appellants is clear and accessible.

235 The team considered anonymised tracking documents that outline the number of complaints and appeals at each stage of the process for the previous three years in order to identify levels of complaints and appeals, overall and by course or type, which may identify issues for further investigation under other core practices.

236 The team held two meetings with students to identify student views about the clarity and accessibility of the Academy's complaints and appeals procedures.

237 The team scrutinised a sample of five specific complaints and two responses to informal complaints to test that they were dealt with in a fair, transparent and timely manner. All correspondence was anonymised.

What the evidence shows

238 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

239 The Academy's franchise agreement with the University provides it with delegated authority to operate its own Complaints Policy, with the exception of student-to-student complaints and the proviso that any quality and standards complaints which are not successfully managed within this procedure may then be escalated to the University itself. The Academy's Complaints Procedure was updated in November 2019. The review team noted that the Procedure includes a helpful diagram to visualise the process, and has clarified the meaning, timescales and necessary actions for each of the three complaint stages: Stage 1 Informal, Stage 2 Formal and Stage 3 Review, and advises students of their right to be accompanied to any hearings by another member of the Academy community. The Procedure informs students of the option to take unresolved complaints to the University and then, if necessary, to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). In this regard, the team noted that staff involved in student complaints are attending OIA CPD events to keep up with best practice and national standards. Having identified the Academy's processes for handling complaints, the review team confirms that these processes are fair and transparent.

240 Information for students about how to make a complaint or appeal is clearly signposted in student induction, in the Student Handbook and in the virtual learning environment, as well as in the Complaints Procedure itself. The review team scrutinised sample complaint correspondence and noted one case where a student explicitly mention

having been able to find the complaints forms online. The team therefore found that information for potential and actual complainants and appellants is clear and accessible.

241 The review team found that 11 complaints were recorded in the complaints tracking document since the start of the 2017-18 academic year. Of these complaints, four reached Stage 2 and none had reached Stage 3 at the time of the visit. Of those that reached Stage 2, one was fully upheld (a complaint against a fellow student), one partially upheld, and two were considered but not upheld. Of all 11 complaints, three of the complaints were identified by the Academy as being 'Academic Standards and Quality' related, one about 'Student Conduct' and seven about 'Service Provision'.

242 The samples of anonymised complaints scrutinised by the review team, including correspondence and minutes of meetings, are in line with the Academy's policy, with students being informed of their right to escalate a complaint if they are unsatisfied with the outcome. Most complaints are resolved at the informal stage (Stage 1), and all complaints were addressed within the timescale of the previous Academy student complaints policy, which gave 28 days for a Stage 2 complaint. This timescale has been shortened to 21 days with the new policy which took effect in November 2019. The team concludes that complaints were dealt with in a fair, transparent and timely manner.

243 The thorough minuting of complaints meetings, and the sharing of these minutes with the complainants following the meeting, adds to the fairness and transparency of the process. On the basis of this evidence, the review team found that procedures for handling complaints are dealt with according to the Academy's procedures, and that there were no deviations from procedures in the evidence provided. The review team concluded that the Academy has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for developing and operating fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints which are accessible to all students.

244 The processes for Academic Appeals and Mitigating Circumstances applications are both operated directly between students and the University which subsequently informs the Academy of its decisions. The Academy makes students aware of the distinction between making complaints to the Academy itself and making academic appeals directly to the University through its Handbook, induction and staff support.

245 Currently, appeals are managed by the University directly, but minutes of the Academy's Academic Board show that the Academy is planning its own Appeals and Review Board, with an accompanying policy which is in development at present. This was confirmed by staff at the review visit. The Academy is developing its appeals policies and processes in partnership with the University and planning to learn from the University by shadowing its Appeals Boards.

246 Appeals processes are managed by the University, and the appeals tracking log provided by the University showed that there were three appeals in 2017-18 and three in 2018-19. The date that students were informed of the outcome by letter was between 10 and 59 days from submission, and almost all are reason '1', referring to personal circumstances of the applicant. Overall, the review team did not detect any concerning themes from the complaints or appeals, which may identify issues for further investigation under other core practices.

247 At the review visit, students confirmed that they would know what to do if they wanted to raise a formal complaint or appeal, and raised no concerns about the fairness, transparency, accessibility of the related procedures, or their application. Appeals are referred to the University, and the team found that students are content with the clarity and accessibility of the Academy's complaints and appeals procedures.

Conclusions

248 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the Academy meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

249 The review team found that the Academy, in partnership with the University, has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals, which are accessible to all students. This is because the Academy's procedures for handling complaints are definitive, fair, and transparent, and deliver timely outcomes, and because examples of complaints scrutinised by the review team have been dealt with according to published procedures. Appeals are managed directly by the University. Procedures for handling complaints and appeals are accessible to students, and students do not raise any serious concerns about their fairness, transparency, accessibility, or application. The Academy's plans to develop fair, transparent and accessible complaints and appeals procedures are robust and credible. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.

250 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects all of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix; therefore, the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

Q8 Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them

251 This Core practice expects that where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.

252 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

253 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the Academy could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence it considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Management and Self Governance Document for OfS
- b BSA Indirect Franchise Agreement with UoB 2013
- c BSA Indirect FF Variation Extension 2019
- d Backstage Academy Student Handbook 2019
- e Academic Regulations PowerPoint Presentation
- f UoB Programme Approvals Handbook September 2019
- g UoB Academic Misconduct Regulations and Procedures 201920
- h UoB Assessment Regulations for Undergraduate Programmes 201920
- i UoB Regulations for the Organisation and Conduct of Assessment Boards
- j UoB Nomination appointment rights and responsibilities of External Examiners
- k Backstage Academy UniPulse Data 2017 2018 2019
- l UoB Assessment and Moderation Procedures 201920
- m Backstage Academy Operations Manual 201920 Review Version (1)
- n Partnership Oversight and Development Handbook 201920
- o Backstage Academy Programme Plan 2017
- p Backstage Academy Programme Plan 2018
- q External Examiners Nominations Sub Committee ToR 201920
- r UoB Academic Appeals Regulations and Procedures 201920
- s UoB Student Non Academic Conduct and Disciplinary Policy and Procedure 201920
- t UoB Student Attendance Policy 201920
- u SLT collated minutes
- v External Examiner Reports and Responses
- w Updated Backstage Operations Manual 2019
- x External Moderation Records
- y External Examiner List
- z UoB Assessment and Moderation Procedures 2019
- aa UK166 Agreement FD and BA Top-up Live Events 18122013

- bb FDA Live Events Production Validation Documentation 2011
- cc BA Live Events Production Top UP Documentation 2013
- dd Approval Documentation BA Hons LEP and FdA STM 2014
- ee Approval Report ADA3 BA Live Events Management2014
- ff Approval Report ADA3 FdA Stage Management-2014
- gg UoB Moodle <https://moodle.bolton.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=8572>_Documentation for re-approval in 2018
- hh Meetings with six senior staff members, with seven members of the teaching staff and with five members of the professional support staff, plus one representative of the University of Bolton to test staff views
- ii Meetings with a group of nine students and with 11 student representatives covering all levels of all programmes

254 Some of the key pieces of evidence, outlined in Annex 4, were not considered by the review team. These pieces of evidence and the reason why they were not considered during this review are outlined below:

- third party endorsements as none are available for the provision on offer at the Academy.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

255 The review team examined six external examiner reports covering all programmes from the last two academic years to test that external examiners consider courses delivered in partnership with the University to be of high quality.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

256 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the Academy was considered by the review team either prior to the visit or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the Academy's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

257 The review team scrutinised the partnership agreements with the University of Bolton to test the basis for the maintenance of high quality and that those arrangements are in line with the University's regulations or policies.

258 The review team considered relevant University academic regulations and policies, including its franchise agreement with the Academy, its Academic Regulations, its procedures, and its policies and processes to ensure courses are high quality irrespective of where or how they are delivered or who delivers them. It also examined the Academy's Student Handbook and the Student Presentation to test how key regulations are communicated to students.

259 The review team reviewed plans for delivering a high-quality academic experience in partnership work with the University, specifically the Franchise Agreement Management and Self Governance Document, Strategic Plan explanatory note, Provider Submission, Partnership Oversight and Development Handbook Operations Manual, Backstage Academy Programme Plan, Backstage Annual Operating Flow Chart, Partner Oversight and Development Handbook and a number of Academy draft regulations and procedures which were available in draft form at the time of the visit, to assess whether the Academy has

credible, robust and evidence-based plans for ensuring a high-quality academic experience in partnership work.

260 These drafts included a range of Academic Regulations and Procedures and a series of policies covering Dignity at Study, Appeals and Reviews, Drugs and Alcohol, Attendance and Engagement, Group and Collaborative Work, and Peer Observation and Enhancement of Teaching.

261 The review team scrutinised the Student Submission, module surveys, NSS data and met with students and student representatives to assess students' views about the quality of courses delivered in partnership.

262 It also met with senior staff and with teaching and professional support staff from all five programmes involved in the partnership to test whether staff understand and discharge effectively their responsibilities to the awarding body.

263 The review team scrutinised external examiner reports, the draft Academy Programme Plan 2018 University's Partnership and Oversight and Development Handbook, the Live Action Partnership Plans and the Programme Plans to test the basis for the maintenance of high quality within the partnerships, and that those arrangements are in line with the University's regulations or policies.

264 The review team also met with the Academic Partnership Manager who managed the relationship with the Academy on behalf of the University from 2015-19 to test that the University is meeting its responsibilities.

What the evidence shows

265 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

266 Under the Franchise Agreement, the Academy is required to adopt the University's Academic Regulations, policies and procedures which are presented to students in the Backstage Academy Student Handbook, on the University VLE, and also at induction in a PowerPoint presentation which provides a concise and clear introduction to the University's regulations. On the basis of this evidence the team found that the adoption by the Academy of the University's regulatory framework and the steps taken to present it clearly to students ensure that its courses are high quality.

267 Under the Franchise Agreement the University has overall responsibility for the oversight of quality assurance processes to ensure a high-quality academic experience for students at the Academy. The Academy's Operations Manual states that all programmes delivered in partnership must adhere to the University's Annual Monitoring Procedures, and the Partnership Oversight and Development Handbook provides detailed information about the University's process for assuring the standards of its franchised programmes with partners. Both documents are clear regarding the management arrangements for the delivery of the Academy's courses. The Operations Manual, which is updated annually, forms part of the contractual arrangements of the partnership, and provides detailed plans for assuring academic standards. In its Management and Self Governance Document, the Academy stated that a new Strategic Plan would be in place for 2019. The Senior Team explained that this had been delayed due to the sale by Production Park of one of its companies, Brilliant Stages, and provided a Draft Strategic Plan and explanatory note detailing its plans going forward, and a number of policies and procedures developing aspects of own academic regulations, which are in draft format currently as detailed above. It would be premature to gauge the likely effectiveness of these policies and procedures, but the review team found them credible and evidence-based.

268 The team read external examiner reports for all the Academy's programmes and found them to be positive in the main. The Academy operates in alignment with the processes laid out in the Partnership Oversight and Development Handbook in which the University provides a comprehensive quality assurance process for its partners through Live Action Partnership Plans which form the annual monitoring report and have action plans embedded within them. Partnership Plans are completed by the University Link Tutor, with contributions from Academy staff. The Academy is in the process of working with the University to develop its own policies and procedures as it transitions towards validated status. The team concluded that the external examiners and the planning processes provide evidence of maintenance of high quality in line with the University's procedures.

269 Senior staff are aware of their current responsibilities towards the University and explained how they are working with it to negotiate areas of quality management where the Academy can take initiatives as it moves from a franchise to a validation agreement. Teaching staff are also clear about their role in partnership meetings and in developing the ensuing Live Action Plans which were described as 'diarised timelines' to the team. They explained how staff training about the University's regulations is now no longer as necessary as it once was because of increased stability in the Academy's staffing team, but that they are informed annually about any changes to the University's regulations.

270 Students told the review team that they are aware that the Academy operates a franchise agreement with the University of Bolton which 'facilitates' the Academy's courses and that they are allowed to use the University's student support services, although none had chosen to do so. Students also have access to the University's e-resources and e-learning facilities. The student submission is generally silent about the Academy's relationship with the University, except to say that the Academy's VLE provides extensive information on the University's student-related policies. The review team concluded that, in the absence of any concerns deriving from its meetings with students or from the student submission, students are content with the quality of courses delivered in partnership.

271 The University's former Academic Partnership Manager (2015-19) attended the meeting with academic and professional services staff, as the recently appointed post holder was unavailable. The Academic Partnership Manager confirmed that the University was supporting the development by the Academy of its own regulations, policies and procedures. This would enable the relationship to evolve into a validation relationship. The Academic Partnership Manager confirmed that the University drafts the Live Action Plans and that partnership meetings take place three times a year, with the Live Action Plans serving as a record of these meetings, as no minutes are taken.

272 The review team concluded that the University is meeting its responsibilities towards the Academy and that the Academy's staff understand and discharge effectively their responsibilities to the University. Students are aware that courses are delivered in partnership with the University and are content with the quality of those courses.

Conclusions

273 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the Academy meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

274 The review team concludes that the Academy, working in partnership with the University, has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is

high quality, irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them. This is because the University's franchise arrangements with the Academy are up to date and provide clear and comprehensive regulations and policies for the management of the partnership. Staff from both the Academy and the University understand their respective responsibilities, and external examiner reports indicate that the academic experience for students on courses is of a high quality. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.

275 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects all of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix; therefore, the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

Q9 The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes

276 This Core practice expects that the provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.

277 The QAA review team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019).

The evidence the team considered

278 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to it, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the Academy could meet this Core practice at a threshold level. The Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students includes a matrix (Annex 4) which identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against this Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered. The review team used that matrix to ensure that the evidence it considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other reviews and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Backstage Academy Programme Plan 2019
- b Student Handbook
- c Backstage Academy Provider Submission
- d Request for additional information and clarifications
- e Personal Tutoring Scheme Information for Staff
- f Personal Tutoring Scheme Meeting Template
- g Personal Tutoring Records 2017-18
- h Personal Tutoring Records 2019-20
- i University of Bolton Attendance Policy
- j Attendance Review Panel Notes
- k Examples of communications to students about student support
- l Introductory presentation about staff roles
- m Backstage Academy Student Submission
- n Draft Retention Strategy
- o Access and Participation Plan
- p Strategic Plan Explanatory Note
- q UniPulse Data
- r Non-continuation data from 2017-18
- s Backstage Academy Programme Plan 2018
- t Draft Backstage Academy Programme Plan 2020
- u Sample of communication about student support
- v Student Welcome Talk slides
- w 2019 National Student Survey (NSS) data
- x Counselling Service Annual Review 16-17
- y Counselling Service Annual Review 17-18
- z Meetings with six senior staff members, with seven members of the teaching staff and with five members of the professional support staff, plus one representative of the University of Bolton
- aa Meetings with a group of nine students and with 11 student representatives covering all levels of all programmes
- bb Assessed student work seen at the review visit.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

279 The review team scrutinised representative, risk-based and random samples of 66 pieces of assessed student work to assess whether students are given comprehensive, helpful and timely feedback.

280 The review team examined a random sample of module and course evaluations to identify students' views about student support mechanisms.

Why and how the team considered this evidence

281 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the Academy was considered by the review team either prior to the visit or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the review team to make its judgement regarding the Academy's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the review team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

282 The team reviewed the 2019 Programme Plan, Student Handbook, the Provider Submission, information about Personal Tutoring, Personal Tutoring records, minutes of the Student Attendance Panel, the University of Bolton's Attendance Policy, induction material, communications with students, counselling services reviews, continuation data and attainment and employment data from Annual Programme Plans to identify the Academy's approach to student support, including how it identifies and monitors the needs of individual students.

283 The team reviewed the Academy's plans to support students in achieving academic and professional outcomes, which included the draft Retention Strategy, the Access and Participation plan which has been submitted to the Office for Students, the Strategic Plan explanatory note, and meetings with staff in order to assess whether the Academy has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for ensuring that all students are supported to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.

284 The team considered student's views by reviewing data from student surveys such as the National Student Survey, module evaluations, and the Student Submission, and by meeting with students during the review visit to identify and assess students' views about student support mechanisms

285 Six pieces of assessed student work from each of 11 modules were considered during the review visit to test whether students are given comprehensive, helpful and timely feedback.

286 The team met with 20 members of staff during the review visit to test whether they understand their responsibilities to students and are appropriately skilled and supported.

287 The team also met with 20 students to confirm their views about student support mechanisms and to assess whether students who have made particular use of student support services regard those services as accessible and effective.

What the evidence shows

288 The review team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

289 As there are no policies to review, the team considered documentation which describes the Academy's approach to student support. Student support is managed by the

Director of Operations and Student Services, supported by a Student Services Officer, a part-time on-site counsellor who acts as Student Wellbeing Officer, and an Employability and Admissions Officer who provides one-to-one drop-ins to help students with their CVs and employability. Students are also supported by the personal tutoring system, though this was suspended for a whole academic year in 2018-19, which the Academy acknowledges as a 'serious oversight'. Personal tutoring has been reinstated this year, and is scheduled in students' timetables. Guidance about personal tutoring responsibilities is provided to staff, but only a brief mention is made about it to students in their Handbook, and there is little written student-facing guidance.

290 To identify students who may be struggling, the Academy follows the University's Attendance Policy and measures attendance using registers for every scheduled session. In 2019 a Student Attendance Review Panel, meeting twice per year, was established to monitor student attendance and identify students who have less than 80% attendance or who have been identified as needing support. The team confirmed that this Panel has met three times in 2018-19 and found the minutes of these meetings to be comprehensive. The attendance review conducted at the February 2019 meeting, for example, identified 21 cases of poor attendance, correlated poor attendance with any other known issues, such as academic performance, health concerns and personal circumstances, where known, and identified an appropriate course of action for each student. Depending on the seriousness of the case, these ranged from a 'gentle' attendance reminder to an attendance plan, and included the offer of counselling support, support with an application to the University's hardship fund, and support with using the University's mitigating circumstances process. The review team found the identification and monitoring by student services of individual students through their attendance to be effective.

291 The Academy's 2019 Programme Plan notes that non-continuation rates have fallen to within the University's benchmark and attributes this fall to regular meetings of the Student Services and Support team to discuss student attendance and welfare issues, and improved information to students during the application and induction process leading them to have greater confidence in their choice. Students are made aware of how to access support through induction, student handbooks, and email messages from support staff throughout the academic year to remind them of the availability of services. Student handbooks include an extensive section on the respective roles of course leader, module leader and personal tutor in providing academic support, as well as the role of Student Services in respect of general academic advice, counselling, disabilities and wellbeing, and mental health. Student handbooks also direct students towards work experience opportunities by acting as paid Student Ambassadors, organising Academy events, or through the student jobs portal, and towards the University's careers service. The review team found that the comprehensive approach to student support facilitates successful academic and professional outcomes.

292 A draft Student Retention Strategy was developed with the University in 2019 in response to the high non-continuation rate in 2017-18. The strategy examines the causes of withdrawals since 2011 when the first course was launched and identifies a series of aims to address the issue of student retention. Senior staff described this as a 'holding' strategy which will be developed as part of a broader strategic plan in the future. The Access and Participation Plan is a robust, credible and evidence-based plan that correlates significant gaps in attainment for disadvantaged student groups alongside the Academy's plans for addressing them. These include a buddy system, an industry partnership scheme, and the new student records system which will give the Academy more detailed data with which to identify and address issues. The new records system is expected to be established by spring 2020. There are plans to enhance the student welfare offering through all staff being trained as mental health first aiders by the Student Wellbeing Officer. The team noted suggestions in the Student Submission and by the Student Wellbeing Officer that increased student support would be necessary if student numbers increased. The Academy has also a

produced a Strategic Plan explanatory note which states its intention to further develop pastoral support and ensure appropriate access to academic and personal tutor support. At the time of the visit, the plan itself was still in draft form, but on the basis of the evidence it saw, the review team concluded that the Academy has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for ensuring that all students are supported to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.

293 Throughout the review visit, the team heard many examples of how the Academy's close relationships with industry benefit students' skills and employability by allowing them training in and access to the latest technologies. The Academy has confirmed plans to enhance this through the development of a Research and Innovation Centre on site, in partnership with the local council. Students found employability support easy to access and helpful, knew support staff well and all felt comfortable approaching them for support in both academic and non-academic matters. Students in meetings, and through the student submission, were also very positive about the industry connections available to them through their course and their lecturers, and said they found the Jobs Portal on the website particularly helpful. The review team noted that these views aligned with the results of a student representative survey about the effectiveness of the Jobs Portal which the Academy conducted in January 2019.

294 Student views are collected through two main survey methods: module evaluation and the National Student Survey (NSS). Because of the small numbers of students registered on the Academy's other programmes, NSS outcomes are limited to the BA (Hons) Live Events Production which showed below sector averages for overall student satisfaction in the period 2016-18. However, the review team noted that this was not echoed in the Academy's internal surveys over the same period which indicate substantially higher levels of satisfaction at module level. The Student Submission is very positive about the student experience at the Academy and students confirmed this in their meetings with the team. Students were aware of historic poor feedback from the NSS and indicated that this was due to the amount of change at the Academy over this period. Students expressed clearly in the meetings that the quality of their courses was high and that they believe the historical NSS scores are not reflective of the current situation. The team concluded that the students judge the overall quality of courses delivered in partnership with the University to be high.

295 Senior staff explained that negative NSS outcomes were partly due to disruption caused by the physical development of the campus and identified plans to address underperforming areas in the NSS. These plans included a new student record system which would permit finer grain examination of data trends, improved student representation in the new committee structure, which would enable potential causes of dissatisfaction to be identified and dealt with at an early stage, and quicker response to student feedback through the Academy's adoption of the 'You Said We Did' initiative. Members of teaching and professional staff told the review team that the Academy had introduced a blocked timetable with a later start time to address known causes of student dissatisfaction with organisation and management.

296 The review team's consideration of assessed student work demonstrates some inconsistency in the quality and quantity of feedback to students. A number of modules demonstrate feedback that is pitched at the right level but of variable quality, with some assessments providing few indications of how students might develop their knowledge and skills. In other cases the review team found feedback that was both appropriate and developmental, demonstrates the role played by internal moderation in iteratively improving feedback, and provides very detailed feedback on group work. This was also demonstrated by live observations of the January Intensive group projects where the review team saw in action the personal mentoring and support described by staff and students in meetings. Student representatives told the review team that feedback is generally timely and helpful,

and students added that tutors reply quickly to any feedback-related queries. On the basis of the assessed student work it examined and student satisfaction with its timeliness, the team concluded that while there was some room for improvement in its consistency, the feedback provided for assessment demonstrates that students are given helpful and timely feedback.

297 In meetings with staff, the review team heard about the comprehensive support students are given to develop academically and professionally throughout their time at the Academy. Connections to industry benefit students in a number of ways, including the Academy's location in a commercial environment using the latest production techniques, the active engagement of teaching staff with industry, and the industry currency of module design and assessments. Academic staff spoke convincingly about the teaching and learning techniques they are able to use as a result of small class sizes and about the range of opportunities they are able to provide for students, including industry-led workshops on new technologies and inputs to teaching from industry partners. Students describe the use of guest lecturers as a 'massive resource' and student representatives also spoke of their appreciation of guest lecturers. Professional support staff were also very clear about their role in supporting students and described a system of support which enables all students to meet their potential. The review team was satisfied that all staff understand their role in supporting student achievement and are sufficiently skilled and supported.

298 In meetings with students during the review, the review team found that students who reported having used student support services were positive about the accessibility of staff, the ease of accessing the support they needed, and clear about where this support should come from. As such, the team found that students who have made particular use of student support services regard those services as accessible and effective.

299 The University's Code of Practice for Work Based Learning outlines the responsibilities of all stakeholders and the steps which must be taken to mitigate and manage risk, and contains a Work-Based/Placement Learning Assessment Form. The Academy's Placement Handbook is a student-facing document explaining the purpose of work placements and industry practice and providing students with helpful and relevant advice about how to secure a placement and obtain maximum benefit from it. It also advises students that placements form part of the requirements for one of their modules, and that they should read the appropriate module guide to familiarise themselves with its requirements, learning outcomes and assessment criteria. The Placement Agreement is a form confirming an employer's intention to offer a student internship or placement. The review team found the institutional approach to work placements and the information provided to students about them to be both clear and comprehensive, and tested it by examining student feedback over the last three academic years in respect of LEP 5111 which is a work-placement module. The team found that student feedback about this module was generally very positive, and that satisfaction with its overall quality had risen over the last three years. The hours of placement activity varied from student to student, but of the 24 students who completed the module survey only three had recorded fewer than 100 hours, and eight had recorded more than 300 hours. The only issue raised was a minor one related to the Google website on which placement documentation is recorded. The comments from meetings with the students were very positive about the benefits they find from these placements and that the Academy provides them with the tools to be able to apply for the jobs. On the basis of the evidence it found regarding the partnership between the University and the Academy, and the effectiveness of the Academy's placement partnerships, the review team concluded that students tend to agree that they are adequately supported to achieve academic and professional outcomes.

Conclusions

300 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the Academy meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the review team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other reviews and remained outcomes focused. Its conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

301 The review team found that the Academy supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes. There is some inconsistency in the quality and quantity of feedback on student assessed work, but overall it is helpful, timely and generally comprehensive. Academic and professional support staff understand their role in supporting student achievement, and the Academy's plans to support students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes, including support for work placements, are comprehensive, robust and credible. Students express their satisfaction with the support they receive. On the basis of the evidence it examined, the review team therefore found that this Core practice is met.

302 The evidence underpinning this judgement reflects all of the evidence described in the QSR evidence matrix; therefore, the review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

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