

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

**Raindance Educational  
Services Limited**

**Review Report**

November 2019



**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     | Moderate   | <p>From the evidence seen, the review team considers that the standards set for the provider's courses are in line with the sector-recognised standards defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS regulatory framework. Based on the evidence provided, the review team also considers that standards described in the approved programme documentation are set at levels that are consistent with these sector-recognised standards and the provider's policies should ensure that standards can be maintained appropriately.</p> <p>The review team considers that, based on the evidence scrutinised, the standards that will be achieved by the provider's students are expected to be in line with the sector-recognised standards defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS regulatory framework. Based on this information the review team also considers that the provider's policies should ensure that these standards can be maintained. The review team considers that staff fully understand the provider's approach to maintaining these standards and that the evidence seen demonstrates they are committed to implementing this approach. Therefore, based on scrutiny of the evidence provided, the review team concludes that this Core practice is met.</p> <p>This is because external examiners confirm sector-recognised standards are consistent with the relevant national qualifications' framework and that assessed student work demonstrates that credit and qualifications are awarded only where the relevant sector-recognised</p> |

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|    |  |     |          | standards have been met. Staff understand and apply the approach to maintaining standards described in the programme handbooks. While Raindance could do more to maintain sector-recognised standards strategically, the strength of the informal management culture and adherence to Pearson regulations enables the maintenance of sector-recognised standards.  |
| 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. | Met | Moderate | <p>The review team, based on the evidence presented, determined that the standards set for students to achieve beyond the sector-recognised standard on the provider'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 provider's 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 sector-recognised standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers and this Core practice is met.</p> <p>Although Raindance does not presently have an overarching plan as to how students can achieve sector-recognised standards beyond the threshold level, assessed student work clearly indicates to students their level of attainment and provides guidance on how to improve their work in the future, and they understand how sector-recognised standards beyond the threshold can be achieved. Staff are clear in their understanding of Raindance's approach to maintaining comparable standards through internal verification processes.</p> |

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|    |  |     |     | External examiner reports confirm that credit is awarded only where standards are met, and internal verification processes and grading rubric set out in assignment briefs and programme handbooks support the maintenance of sector-recognised standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.  |
| 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 | Low | The review team concludes that Raindance has effective arrangements in place to ensure that the standards of Pearson awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them. This is because, despite not having regulations in place to ensure that Pearson's awards are credible and secure, external examiner reports confirm that standards are met and upheld. Although there is no strategic oversight and a lack of signposting for staff means that they may not understand their respective responsibilities for academic standards, because of the small number of students Raindance's informal arrangements are currently effective. The review team therefore concludes that, on balance, this Core practice is met. |
| S4 | The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.   | Met | Low | The review team concludes that Raindance uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent. Assessed student work confirms assessment and classification is carried out in line with course requirements and students confirm that assessment and classification processes are reliable, fair and transparent. However, although external examiner reports confirm that assessment and classification processes are reliable, fair and transparent, Raindance does not have credible plans for using external expertise  |

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|    |  |         |          | beyond the external examiner and there are no records of course approval and review to indicate that external expertise is employed. This suggests that staff do not understand the requirements for the use of external expertise. However, the review team on balance, concludes that this Core practice is met.  |
| Q1 | The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system. | Not met | High     | The review team concludes that Raindance does not have a reliable, fair and inclusive admission system. This is because the academic regulations and policies for admissions are not sufficiently comprehensive to be reliable and fair, despite equality and diversity policies providing appropriate safeguards around inclusivity. There is no internal documentation that describes the admission process or regulations, the considerations that staff should take into account when making admissions decisions or the process by which previous qualifications are confirmed, the absence of which causes harm to the integrity of the process and the interests of applicants. There are no academic regulations or policies that provide applicants with the opportunity to lodge complaints or appeals against admissions decisions. The lack of record keeping around admissions, particularly the interview and decision-making process, also represents a risk to the integrity of admissions procedures and the interests of applicants. The programme promotional materials are misleading suggesting that the HND programme is 'accelerated'. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is not met. |
| Q2 | The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses.         | Met     | Moderate | The review team concludes that Raindance designs, through selecting relevant Pearson modules, and delivers high-quality courses. This is because, despite the lack of robust and credible plans for design through  |

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|    |  |     |          | <p>programme approval, and delivery through a formal learning and teaching strategy, the quality of courses is high. The lack of plans is counterbalanced by the delivery of the courses as confirmed by the observations of teaching and learning which demonstrate clarity of objectives, good planning and organisation, a sound approach, good delivery, appropriate content, effective use of resources and strong student engagement. Staff have a common understanding of Raindance's approach to ensuring courses are of high quality and are clear that they are delivering professionally focused film making units, working across all aspects of film production and distribution. External examiner reports confirm that the courses are high-quality and that this is reflected in the quality of student work. Students also regard their courses as being of high-quality and staff articulate what 'high quality' means in the independent film making context. Therefore, the review team concludes that this Core practice is met.</p> |
| Q3 | The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience. | Met | Moderate | <p>The review team concludes that Raindance has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience. This is because, although there are no formal regulations or policies in place, Raindance recruits sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff through its own network of industrial contacts. Pearson Academic Management Review Reports note that current staffing is appropriate and sufficient to support teaching and assessment, and observations of teaching and learning confirmed that staff are appropriately qualified and skilled to deliver a high-quality academic experience. Staff met by the team validate the approach, confirming the sufficiency of the recruitment, appointment, induction and support processes. Students are unequivocally</p>  |

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|    |  |     |          | positive in their support for the view that staff are appropriately skilled and qualified, citing examples that underscore the success of the industrial relevance that Raindance sets out as its objective in teaching and learning. 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 | Moderate | The review team concludes that Raindance has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience. This is because, while there are no explicit strategies or plans, staff understand their roles and responsibilities including that of offering one-to-one support. The review team's direct assessment of facilities, learning resources and support services is that they are of a standard to permit a high-quality academic experience. External examiners confirm Raindance provides a wide range of specialist equipment and facilities that are sufficient for the number of learners; and students have a positive view of the facilities, learning resources and support services. The review team concludes this Core practice is met. |
| Q5 | The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.                                 | Met | Moderate | The review team concludes that Raindance actively engages students individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience. This is because students express the view that they are being engaged in the quality of their educational experience, noting the formal engagement mechanisms and informal culture of support. In particular, students are collectively engaged through the student representation system and termly plenary opportunities, and individually engaged through one-to-one support and an 'open door' policy that provides feedback opportunities to all students. Student feedback has brought about changes that have   |



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|    |   |         |      | improved the quality of the learning experience and external examiners comment on the strength of the student voice. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.  |
| Q6 | The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.  | Not met | High | The review team concludes that Raindance does not have fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students. This is because although information on complaints and appeals is included in both programme handbooks it does not give sufficient guidance. Coverage in the programme handbook is updated annually and considered to be definitive but lacking essential details that would allow a student to progress a complaint or appeal. Coverage on the student portal is more detailed, containing all necessary information, but is not considered to be definitive, does not reflect organisation structure, and has not been refreshed since 2017. There is no systematic monitoring or oversight of the complaints and appeals procedures. Moreover, there is no evidence of plans to address any issues or make changes to the complaints and appeals procedures to provide oversight. The review team concludes that this Core practice is not met. |
| 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. | Met     | Low  | The review team concludes that Raindance, working in partnership with its awarding organisation, 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 Pearson partnership agreements are clear and external examiner reports indicate that the academic experience for students on courses is of a high-quality. However, Raindance does not have robust and credible plans to ensure a high-quality academic experience for  |

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|    |  |     |          | provision delivered in partnership beyond programme level. Raindance has no strategy for the management of partnerships with other organisations including that with Pearson to ensure that the partnership is managed and monitored by staff at a strategic level, presenting a risk to quality. However, on balance, the review team concludes that this Core practice is met.   |
| Q9 | The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes. | Met | Moderate | The review team concludes that Raindance supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes. Evidence to support this includes one-to-one support through tutorials and learning plans that enable the identification and development of specific learning needs. The combination of practical content in class and industrial opportunities reinforces Raindance's focus on preparing students for careers in filming-making and allied industries. External examiners confirm that the programmes are focused on developing skills for all students that will enable them to work in the film industry. Assessed student work demonstrates that students are consistently given comprehensive, helpful and timely feedback. Students are appreciative of the academic support and career development opportunities including extracurricular activities and networking events. Staff have a clear understanding of their role in facilitating student achievement. The review team, therefore, concludes 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 November 2019, for Raindance Educational Services Limited

A Quality and Standards Review (QSR) is a method of review QAA uses to provide the 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: Dr Matthew Leeke  
Institution: University of Warwick  
Role in review team: Institutional Reviewer

Name: Mr Mark Langley  
Institution: Bath Spa University  
Role in review team: Subject specialist, Creative Arts and Design

The QAA Officer for the review was Helen Kealy.

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 Raindance Educational Services Limited

Raindance, situated in central London, was founded in 1992 offering short courses in film making.

In 2017 Raindance was approved as a Pearson centre to deliver two Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF) Pearson Higher National Programmes in Creative Media Production: Film, and in Performing Arts: Acting. Prior to this, Raindance had Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) approval for the Higher National Creative Media programme. Currently 10 students are enrolled on to the first year of the Performing Arts: Acting programme. There are 19 students enrolled on the first year of the Creative Media Production: Film and six students on the second year. Raindance also has plans to deliver two further Higher National programmes in visual effects and games development.

Raindance's short course and higher education governance structure is headed up by an Executive Board. The Board, which was established as part of the OfS registration process, is chaired by a Chief Financial Controller supported by two external members who bring with

them academic and industry external expertise. The Board is responsible for making key decisions relating to the strategic direction of Raindance.

In 2011 Raindance entered into a partnership with Staffordshire University to offer a master's degree in Filmmaking. The provision was transferred to De Montfort University in 2019. This programme is not in scope of the review as it is delivered through Raindance Film Partnership LLP, which is a separate legal entity. Raindance is in early discussions with De Montfort University to develop and deliver a top-up degree year for students completing the HND who do not have the required level to progress on to the master's programme.

## **Raindance Educational Services Limited and Pearson Education Ltd: Responsibilities**

Raindance offers two Higher National programmes that lead to an award from Pearson Education Ltd.

Pearson Education Ltd (Pearson) is an awarding organisation that has its qualifications, examinations and assessments regulated by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual). As an awarding organisation Pearson creates Ofqual-regulated curricula (which include detailed learning outcomes) as well as programme specifications and handbooks. Pearson also issue certificates to students when providers submit evidence that their students have completed the relevant programme of study to the standard required.

Pearson devolves responsibility for the recruitment, teaching, support and assessment of students to providers and uses information gained from the initial approval and subsequent external examiner visits to determine if the relevant sector-recognised standards continue to be met. The provider should also have in place processes and procedures to ensure that the learning materials and the learning and teaching strategy are regularly reviewed and modified as appropriate to ensure their continued relevance and validity.

As set out in BTEC Centre Guide to Quality Assurance (2018-19) providers are specifically responsible for:

- Preparing for external examiner visits and seriously considering and acting upon recommendations which are outcomes of visits.
- Designing effective learning materials and a learning and teaching strategy that meets the learning outcomes of the Higher Nationals.
- Putting in place processes and procedures to ensure that the learning materials and the learning and teaching strategy are regularly reviewed and modified as appropriate to ensure their continued relevance and validity.
- Providing definitive programme information relating to the Higher Nationals as delivered at their institution, including a tailored programme specification.
- Operational responsibility for ensuring that students have appropriate opportunities to show they have achieved the intended learning outcomes and grading descriptors (where appropriate). This includes responsibility for setting assessments in direct compliance with Pearson requirements.
- First marking of students' work.
- Giving feedback to students on their work.

- The admission of students including promoting and marketing the programme; setting admissions criteria; selecting applicants; making offers and enrolment, induction and orientation of new students and making student registrations in a timely fashion.
- Widening access so that all students have an equal opportunity to access their qualifications and assessments.
- The appointment of teaching staff and ensuring they have the right skills and experience to deliver a high-quality programme.
- Delivery of the programme, including provision of learning resources and all aspects of learning and teaching strategy. Appointment of teaching staff. Strategic oversight of the identification and provision of learning resources to enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential, including provision for students with additional learning needs.
- Developing, implementing and facilitating arrangements and processes that ensure the engagement of students, individually and collectively, in the enhancement and assurance of the educational experience.
- Ensuring appropriate processes are in place to routinely monitor and periodically review the programme as delivered by them and to keep under constant review all aspects of standards management, quality assurance and day-to-day delivery of the programme.
- Implementation of a fair and accessible complaints procedure for the informal, and where appropriate formal, investigation and determination of a student complaint.

Prior to delivery, any provider must be approved by Pearson to deliver the relevant qualifications. Once approved, providers must register students with Pearson and then be subject to annual visits from Pearson-appointed external examiners to determine if the delivery of the qualifications is in line with the published specifications. Providers are also required to submit provider-wide evidence of review of their HE Pearson provision annually and some providers are subject to annual Academic Management Review (AMR) visits.

As such, Pearson does not have direct relationships with the students of a provider but provides online support materials (<https://hnglobal.highernationals.com/>). Pearson also accepts complaints or academic appeals from students if the students do not feel that these issues have been dealt with appropriately by the provider.

## How the review was conducted

The review was conducted according to the process set out in [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 their judgements about the provider'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 they 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:

- All admission records of the 2018-19 and 2019-20 cohorts to assess whether reliable, fair and inclusive admissions decisions were made.
- Three staff CVs submitted as part of the original evidence base and one job description submitted by Raindance in response for additional evidence to include job descriptions for teaching staff and the records of their recruitment in order to gain a full understanding of specific roles at Raindance and to assess whether staff are appropriately qualified and skilled to perform their roles effectively, along with determining whether the roles are consistent with the delivery of a high-quality learning experience.
- The student handbook for each of the two programmes and three associated assignment briefs to assess the information given to students on their programme and the academic and professional support available to them.
- The review team sampled 18 pieces of randomly selected assessed student work from two distinct units in each year of study for each of the programmes taught to test whether the work reflects the relevant sector-recognised standards and that feedback given to students is comprehensive, helpful and timely.
- All available (six) external examiner reports to assess the views of the external examiner on sector-recognised and comparable standards and to confirm the effectiveness of the courses delivered in partnership in terms of delivering a high-quality course.

In addition to the sample:

- The review team met with senior and academic staff.
- The review team also met with 20 first year students, (including one elected student representative) and six second year students (including one elected student representative).
- The review team also undertook a review of the resources and observed the only two classes and the networking session that were taking place at the time of the review.

## 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 them, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider 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 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 Pearson Academic Management Review Reports 2017-18 and 2018-19
- b Programme Handbook - Film 2019-21
- c Programme Handbook - Acting and Filmmaking 2019-21
- d External examiners' reports
- e HND Qualification Approval
- f HE Assessment board minutes 17-18
- g Pearson General Regulations for Approved Centres
- h Assignment Briefs
- i Internal Verification of assignment briefs
- j Assessment Policy
- k Assessed student work
- l Internal Verification Policy
- m Pearson Creative Media Programme Specification
- n Meeting with senior staff
- o Meeting with Level 4 students
- p Meeting with Level 5 and master's students
- q Meeting with academic staff.

5 Raindance did not provide any plans for maintaining sector-recognised standards but referred the review team to the programme handbooks and external examiner reports. Also, it did not offer any document that defines its academic regulations clearly, or any strategy or plans indicating how it intends to maintain sector-recognised standards. In addition, there are no third-party endorsements.

6 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:

7 Third party endorsements, as none are available for the provision on offer at the School.

### **How any samples of evidence were constructed**

8 Given the size of Raindance and the fact that only two programmes are being delivered, the review team was able to look at evidence from both programmes. The team considered all six available external examiners' reports to check that external examiners confirm that sector-recognised standards are consistent with national qualifications frameworks and that credit and qualifications are awarded only where those threshold standards have been met.

9 The team also reviewed 18 random samples of assessed student work to test that students' assessed work reflects relevant sector-recognised standards and that credit and qualifications are awarded only where the relevant threshold standards have been met.

10 The team reviewed student handbooks for both programmes being delivered to test that specified sector-recognised standards for the courses are consistent with relevant national qualifications' frameworks.

### **Why and how the team considered this evidence**

11 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider 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 provider'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.

12 The review team considered Pearson's Academic Management Review (AMR) reports for 2017-18 and 2018-19, the HND programme handbooks for Creative Media Production - Film and Performing Arts - Acting and Filmmaking, external examiner reports, assignment briefs, internal verification of assignment briefs, Pearson General Regulations for Approved Centres, the HND Qualification Approval, the Pearson Creative Media Programme Specification, assessment policy and internal verification policy to test if the specified sector-recognised standards for the courses are consistent with relevant national qualifications' frameworks and that credits and qualifications are awarded only where those sector-recognised standards are met.

13 The same documentation as detailed in paragraph 8 was also considered to identify Raindance's approach to course and assessment design, marking and moderation requirements for awards and approaches to classification, as the underlying basis for the standards of awards.

14 The review team considered assessment board minutes and met with senior staff



to interrogate the robustness and credibility of Raindance's plans for ensuring sector-recognised standards.

15 The review team met with senior and academic staff to test that they understand, and apply, a common approach to maintaining sector-recognised standards.

16 The team reviewed assessed student work test whether the work reflects the relevant sector-recognised standards for a Level 5 programme.

### **What the evidence shows**

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

18 The standards that have been set for Raindance's Pearson awards are in line with sector-recognised standards. This is evidenced through the combination of Pearson AMR reports, the HND programme handbooks, external examiners' reports, assignment briefs, and internal verification of assignment briefs indicate that Raindance's assessment activities meet Pearson's requirements as defined in the regulations and in accord with the HND Qualification Approval. The AMRs indicate no issues surrounding sector-recognised standards and confirm that the assessment methodology leads to valid and reliable assessment outcomes against 'national standards which are in line with regulatory and standards setting body requirements'. All recommendations made in the AMRs are at a low level of risk (that is, they are not noted as essential actions) and include, for example, that verification and evaluation of the programme would benefit from some external support. The subsequent AMR reported that Raindance now collaborates with Uxbridge College to ensure best practice is shared.

19 External examiners comment on the strength of the small, experienced teaching team and strong internal verification processes. They conclude that all assessment decisions are appropriate and consistent and are rigorously internally verified by staff who are very knowledgeable on the curriculum and assessment criteria and who, through standardisation and adherence to internal verification processes, collectively ensure that grading is accurate and fair. External examiners confirm that sector-recognised standards are consistent with national qualifications frameworks and that credit and qualifications are awarded only where those threshold standards have been met.

20 Raindance's approach to course and assessment design, marking and moderation requirements for awards and approaches to classification ensure that the standards achieved by Raindance's students are in line with sector-recognised standards. This is evidenced by external examiners, who, as noted above, comment on the strength of the assessment processes. Assignment briefs, which clearly detail learning outcomes and what students must do to achieve beyond the sector-recognised standards, are internally verified prior to release. A proportion of assessed work is internally verified to check that the assessment decisions made are justifiable and that feedback to students is appropriate and developmental. Standardisation takes place whereby assessors meet and complete marking exercises to ensure consistent application of assessment criteria that aligns with Pearson requirements. The review team concludes that assessed student work reflects sector-recognised standards and that credit and qualifications are awarded only where the relevant sector-recognised standards have been met.

21 While definitive programme handbooks include explanations of the internal and external verification processes, they do not include the fuller and more detailed institutional assessment and internal verification policies presented separately to the review team. The Assessment Policy is dated to February 2017 and does not reflect the structure of Raindance, referring to an Academic Standards Officer and Academic Standards Manager and has not been updated to reflect changes to the 2018 Pearson Creative Media

Production Specification. Programme handbooks have no sections headed regulations, but there is some content under assessment. This section outlines the total qualification time and identifies the level of study, accounting for the credits at each sector-recognised level. However, while definitive documentation does not indicate what students must do to attain the sector-recognised standards, the assignment briefs, which are made available to students, do. The team therefore concludes that the specified sector-recognised standards for the courses are consistent with relevant national qualifications' frameworks and that credits and qualifications are awarded only where those sector-recognised standards are met.

22 The team met with senior staff to interrogate the robustness and credibility of Raindance's plans for ensuring sector-recognised standards. Staff change Raindance policies 'as and when' and have not updated the policies for the last two years. The inconsistency of the policies and the omissions in the programme handbooks as noted above indicate that sector-recognised standards are not systematically embedded in Raindance's practice. However, the oversight of Pearson mitigates against any lack of institutional overview of sector-recognised standards and ongoing informal communication among Raindance staff through regular unrecorded meetings ensures that oversight occurs.

23 Brief institutional assessment board minutes indicate why students have failed to submit assessments, but Raindance does not draw together actions for each programme into an institutional action plan, and it did not provide the review team with any institutional plan or academic regulations to demonstrate what it does to maintain sector-recognised standards. However, Raindance is a small community and the teaching team affirmed that it communicates informally and regularly to ensure it completes the actions raised in its external examiner reports. In subsequent reports external examiners record improvements where they see changes made in response to the previous year's reports. While this approach is appropriate for a small cohort of students and the lack of institution plans or academic regulations does not currently pose a risk to the students, if the cohort were to grow, the likelihood of risk crystallising would also grow.

24 Both senior and academic staff were clear that internal verification and external examination processes ensured a common approach to maintaining sector-recognised standards. Staff explained that assignment briefs are internally verified and examples of internally verified briefs were included in the evidence base, and that assessed student work is also internally verified by the lead tutor, sampled internally and subsequently externally verified by a Pearson appointed external examiner. The team concludes that staff understand and apply Raindance's approach to maintaining sector-recognised standards.

25 Students are clear about what they must do to attain the sector-recognised standard and the sample of assessed student work confirms that credit is awarded only where sector-recognised standards are met.

## **Conclusions**

26 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider 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. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

27 From the evidence seen, the review team considers that the standards set for the provider's courses are in line with the sector-recognised standards defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS regulatory framework. Based on the evidence provided, the review team also

considered that standards described in the approved programme documentation are set at levels that are consistent with these sector-recognised standards and the provider's policies should ensure that standards can be maintained appropriately.

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

29 This is because external examiners confirm sector-recognised standards are consistent with the relevant national qualifications' framework and that assessed student work demonstrates that credit and qualifications are awarded only where the relevant sector-recognised standards have been met. Staff understand and apply the approach to maintaining standards described in the programme handbooks. While Raindance could do more to maintain sector-recognised standards strategically, the strength of the informal management culture and adherence to Pearson regulations enables the maintenance of sector-recognised standards.

30 While the approach adopted ensures that the sector-recognised standards of programmes are consistent with the relevant national qualifications' frameworks, the absence of robust and credible plans for maintaining sector-recognised standards results in the review team having a moderate 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**

31 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.

32 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**

33 The review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider 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 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 Programme Handbook - Film 2019-21
- b Programme Handbook - Acting and Filmmaking 2019-21
- c External examiner reports
- d Assignment briefs
- e Internal Verification of assignment briefs
- f Assessment Policy
- g Assessed student work
- h Raindance Master's Admissions Procedure
- i Raindance Master's admission one-to-one session checklist
- j Screenshots Accelerated HND to Master's programme
- k Meeting with senior staff
- l Meeting with Level 4 students
- m Meeting with Level 5 and master's students
- n Meeting with academic staff
- o Meeting with senior staff
- p Meeting with senior staff.

34 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:

35 Raindance did not provide any plans for maintaining sector-recognised standards but referred the review team to the programme handbooks and external examiner reports. Also, it did not offer any document that defines its academic regulations clearly, or any strategy or plans indicating how it intends to maintain sector-recognised standards. However, given the size of Raindance the team did not feel that the lack of these documents constituted an immediate concern.

## **How any samples of evidence were constructed**

36 Given the size of Raindance and the fact that only two programmes are being delivered, the review team was able to look at evidence from both programmes. The team considered all six available external examiners' reports to check that external examiners confirm that standards beyond the sector-recognised standard for both courses are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers, and that credit and qualifications are awarded only where those standards have been met.

37 The review team considered the student handbooks for both the programmes being delivered to test that specified standards beyond the sector-recognised threshold are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.

38 The team also reviewed 18 representative samples of assessed student work 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**

39 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider 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 provider'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.

40 The review team considered the HND programme handbooks for Creative Media Production - Film and Performing Arts - Acting and Filmmaking, assignment briefs and assessed student work, and met with students to test if they can achieve standards beyond the sector-recognised standard and understand what is required of them to do so. The team also met with senior and academic staff to test that staff understand and apply the provider's approach to maintaining comparable standards.

41 The review team also considered external examiner reports, the assessment policy, and internally verified assignment briefs and met with senior and academic staff to test the provider's approach to maintaining standards.

42 The review team considered the De Montfort University master's interview materials (the master's programme is out of scope of the review, but the interview materials have a bearing on the 'accelerated HND' programmes discussed below). The team met with senior and academic staff to clarify if the expectation established by programme information made available to applicants that upon successful completion of the Higher National and approval, students will have the opportunity to progress onto a one-year master's programme with Raindance in their third year indicates that staff assess Level 5 students at Level 6 standards and to test whether staff understand and apply the provider's approach to maintaining comparable standards.

43 The review team also met with students to assess whether students understand what is required of them to achieve beyond sector-recognised standards and their understanding of admission to the master's programme.

## **What the evidence shows**

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

45 Along with mandatory units, the Pearson approved programme handbooks detail relevant optional units that have been included within the programme, along with clear grading criteria, to enable students to achieve beyond sector-recognised standards. The handbooks explain how students can achieve merit and distinction grades and refer students to the more detailed assignment briefs regarding achieving merit or distinction as characteristics vary for every assignment. The review team concludes that the student handbooks for both the programmes being delivered set out specified standards beyond the sector-recognised threshold that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.

46 Students confirm this approach is very clear and they understand what they must do to achieve higher grades as this is set out in assignment briefs, detailed on the virtual learning environment (VLE) and discussed during lectures. Assessed student work clearly indicates to students their level of attainment and provides guidance on how to improve their work in the future and therefore demonstrates that credit and qualifications are awarded only where relevant standards have been met.

47 Staff were clear that their involvement in the design and internal verification of assignment briefs and the marking and internal moderation processes demonstrated an understanding and rigorous application of Raindance's approach to maintaining comparable standards.

48 External examiner reports indicate that the setting of assignments is clear and commented positively on the clarity of student assessment and that credit is awarded only where sector-recognised standards are met. Internal verification of assignment briefs demonstrates there is a standardisation of grading. Grading sheets on the staff intranet indicate close marking of each criterion and confirm a rigorous application of criteria to grading. For a small cohort of students and small teaching team the application of the process is easy to maintain on the current basis. While the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the sector-recognised standard is embedded at programme level, the lack of a formal learning and teaching strategy affirmed by senior staff during meetings indicates this may not be embedded institutionally. There are no over-arching plans that would support the provider's approach to maintaining standards, but through unrecorded course team meetings staff respond to the issues external examiners raise and in subsequent reports external examiners record improvements where they see changes made in response to the previous year's reports. While the lack of an overarching plan does not currently pose a risk to students, if the cohort were to grow the likelihood of risk crystallising would also grow.

## **Conclusions**

49 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider 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. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

50 The review team, based on the evidence presented, determined that the standards set for students to achieve beyond the sector-recognised standard on the provider'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 provider's policies should ensure that such standards are maintained appropriately.

51 Therefore, the review team concludes, based on the evidence described above, that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve sector-

recognised standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers and this Core practice is met.

52 Although Raindance does not presently have an over-arching plan as to how students can achieve sector-recognised standards beyond the threshold level, assessed student work clearly indicates to students their level of attainment and provides guidance on how to improve their work in the future, and they understand how sector-recognised standards beyond the threshold can be achieved. Staff are clear in their understanding of Raindance's approach to maintaining comparable standards through internal verification processes. External examiner reports confirm that credit is awarded only where standards are met, and internal verification processes and grading rubric set out in assignment briefs and programme handbooks support the maintenance of sector-recognised standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.

53 The lack of robust and credible plans for maintaining comparable standards results in the team having a moderate 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**

54 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.

55 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**

56 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented to them, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider 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 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 Pearson AMR reports 2017-18 and 2018-19
- b External examiners' reports
- c HND Qualification Approval
- d Internal verification policy
- e Pearson General Regulations for Approved Centres
- f Academic Board note
- g Assessed student work
- h Pearson Creative Media Practice Specification
- i Meeting with senior staff
- j Meeting with Level 4 students
- k Meeting with Level 5 and master's students
- l Meeting with academic staff
- m Meeting with senior staff.

57 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:

58 Third party endorsements, as none are available for the provision on offer at the School.

#### **How any samples of evidence were constructed**

59 Given the size of Raindance and the fact that only two programmes are being delivered, the review team was able to look at evidence from both programmes. The team considered all six available external examiners' reports to test whether external examiners consider that standards are credible and secure, thus confirming the effectiveness of the underpinning arrangements.



60 The team also reviewed 18 representative samples of assessed student work to test that the standards of awards are credible and secure.

### **Why and how the team considered this evidence**

61 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider 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 provider'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 considered the HND Qualification Approval, Pearson General Regulations for Approved Centres, the Pearson Creative Media Practice Programme Specification, AMR reports, the Academic Board note and external examiners' reports to test whether the external reviewers and external examiners consider that standards are credible and secure and to assess whether Raindance has credible, robust and evidenced-plans for securing standards in partnership work.

63 The review team met with senior and academic staff to test that Raindance's staff understand and effectively discharge their responsibilities to the awarding organisation.

### **What the evidence shows**

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

65 Regulations are in place that should ensure that Pearson's awards are secure and credible. Evidence to support this includes that the responsibilities of both parties are defined in the Pearson qualification approval and general regulations, and the Pearson Creative Media Practice Programme Specification provides further guidance. Raindance's responsibilities as set out in the Responsibility Checklist for Providers with Pearson Education Ltd provision include, but are not limited to, designing a learning and teaching strategy and processes and procedures that ensure the strategy is regularly reviewed and modified; setting assessments in direct compliance with Pearson requirements; marking and moderation of student work; and giving students feedback on their work.

66 Raindance, by its own admission, does not have a formal learning and teaching strategy that would ensure a coherent approach to teaching and a consistent experience for students. Subsequently, there are no plans for ensuring the strategy is regularly reviewed. In addition, Raindance has only recently established an Academic Board to 'ensure academic decisions are transparent and in the best interest of the institute'. Membership includes Board directors, academic staff, an external representative from Uxbridge College, an external industry representative and two student representatives. However, at the time of the review visit it has yet to meet.

67 External examiners, through their annual visits, monitor assessment and marking to ensure assessments are appropriate and at national standard, and that the standard of student work is appropriate to the grade awarded. Both AMR reports and external examiner reports consider that Raindance's assessment methodology leads to valid and reliable assessment outcomes that reflect national standards. Through standardisation and adherence to internal verification processes, staff collectively ensure that grading is accurate and fair, and that credit and qualifications are awarded only where the relevant sector-recognised standards have been met. Assessed student work clearly indicates to students their level of attainment and where they have demonstrated that they meet intended learning outcomes.

68 The 2017 and 2018 AMR reports note that Raindance will make use of all Pearson external examiner reports to inform their future delivery and that all actions and recommendations will be responded to and any required amendments made. In subsequent reports external examiners record improvements where they see changes made in response to the previous year's reports. Therefore, the team concludes that external examiners consider that standards are credible and secure. However, Raindance oversees its response to external examiner reports through course team meetings that they do not minute, note or action track which results in having no records to refer to for monitoring and evaluation purposes.

69 Additionally, as noted under S1, although an assessment board is in place which should offer a degree of oversight, Raindance does not draw together actions for each programme into an institutional action plan which would demonstrate institutional learning in respect to student outcomes, and it did not provide the review team with any institutional plan to demonstrate what it does to ensure that the standards of Pearson awards are credible and secure. This leads the team to conclude that Raindance does not have credible, robust and evidenced plans for securing standards in partnership work; however, given that the cohort is small, currently this informal approach does not pose a risk to student outcomes.

70 Senior staff confirm that there is a simple reporting structure of student voice meetings leading to course team leader meetings, which lead to executive team meetings. Just as Raindance does not draw together action plans from its external examiner processes, a clear track of action points or minutes emanating from student voice, course team leader or executive team meetings does not accompany the reporting process. Current processes centre on individuals, rather than roles and it is not clear what arrangements are in place to report on how effectively the provider has carried out its delegated responsibilities as Raindance lacks clear action planning and deliberation at each stage of its current informal committee structure, which would invigorate its understanding of its responsibilities for academic standards and enable it to be proactive in its partnership with its awarding organisation.

71 Academic staff confirm that the Principal and Course Team Leader provide some induction around Pearson regulations for staff when they start working at Raindance. However, Pearson regulations are not on the staff online drive nor does the platform direct colleagues to relevant sections of the Pearson website. Staff would not easily ascertain, for example, what responsibility Raindance has for the recruitment, selection and admission of students, nor in course design, development and approval, including through setting admissions criteria or for designing effective learning materials, which if managed inappropriately may have an adverse impact on standards. The staff platform contains a folder with certain Raindance policies, but these do not align to the most recent version of the Pearson Creative Media Practice Programme Specification.

72 Additionally, there is no strategy for the management of partnerships with the awarding organisation, and Raindance does not presently recognise the necessity for such a strategy. Similarly, students do not have easy access to Pearson regulations or policies or have any understanding that they can, for example, complain to Pearson. The evidence set out leads the team to conclude partnership working is not embedded across Raindance, that there is a lack of strategic oversight of partnership working, and that staff may not understand their responsibilities for helping to maintain academic standards in partnership work because of a lack of signposting and documentation to which they can refer.

## **Conclusions**

73 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to

form a judgement as to whether the provider 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. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

74 The review team concludes that Raindance has effective arrangements in place to ensure that the standards of Pearson awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them. This is because, despite not having regulations in place that ensure that Pearson's awards are credible and secure, external examiner reports confirm that standards are met and upheld. Although there is no strategic oversight and a lack of signposting for staff means that they may not understand their respective responsibilities for academic standards, because of the small number of students Raindance's informal arrangements are currently effective. The review team therefore concludes that, on balance, this Core practice is met.

75 The review team has a low level of confidence in its judgement. This is because there is a lack of robust and credible plans to secure standards in provision delivered in partnership.

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

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

77 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**

78 The review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider 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 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 Pearson AMR reports 2017-18 and 2018-19
- b HND Qualification Approval
- c Programme Handbook - Film 2019-21
- d Programme Handbook - Acting and Filmmaking 2019-21
- e External examiner reports
- f Pearson General Regulations for Approved Centres
- g Assessment Policy
- h Assessed student work
- i Meeting with senior staff
- j Meeting with academic staff
- k Final meeting with senior staff.

79 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:

80 Third party endorsements, as none are available for the provision on offer at the School.

### **How any samples of evidence were constructed**

81 Given the size of Raindance and the fact that only two programmes are being delivered, the review team was able to look at evidence from both programmes. The team considered all six available external examiners' reports to interrogate the use of external examiners and that Raindance considers and responds to external examiners' reports regarding standards appropriately and to identify externals' views about the reliability, fairness and transparency of assessment and classification processes.

82 The review team considered the student handbooks for both the programmes being delivered to assess the reliability, fairness and transparency of assessment and classification processes.

## **Why and how the team considered this evidence**

83 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider 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 provider'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.

84 The review team looked at the Assessment Policy and external examiner reports, and met with senior and academic staff to identify how Raindance's assessment and classification processes operate and how external experts are used in maintaining academic standards.

85 The review team considered the General Regulations for Approved Centres and the HND Qualification Approval Documentation to identify how Raindance engages with external examiners to maintain academic standards for both its Pearson programmes and that Raindance considers and responds appropriately to external examiners' reports regarding standards.

86 The review team met with staff and reviewed the HND programme handbooks for Creative Media Production – Film, Performing Arts - Acting and Filmmaking, and annual monitoring review reports to test staff understanding of how Raindance engages with external expertise and to test that staff understand the requirements for the use of external expertise.

## **What the evidence shows**

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

88 External examiners confirm that Raindance's assessment is reliable, fair and transparent. They comment that Raindance operates a fair and consistent approach to assessment decisions across all modules; that the design and outcome of the assessment is appropriate; that there is a robust internal verification process; that assignment briefs are appropriate for the level of the qualification; and their design and nature permit the aims and learning objectives of each unit to be met. A review of assessed student work confirms that assessment and classification are carried out in line with Pearson's and the course's requirement and students confirm that assessment and classification processes are reliable, fair and transparent as they understand what they must do to achieve an award.

89 While staff understand the requirements of the external examiner process, and therefore the assessment and classification processes, in meetings, there was no sense of an institutional understanding of the value of external expertise. Raindance's assertions that their position in the independent film sector meant that they were often consulted for external advice and they had no need to consider external expertise beyond the external examiner. At a senior level, Raindance has recently appointed two external advisors to its executive board, but it has yet to embed them into its practices.

90 In line with the HND Qualification Approval and General Regulations, Pearson appoint the external examiners. External examiner reports demonstrate that Raindance engages with external expertise at programme delivery level, but this is the only external expertise evident in Raindance's current practice. While Raindance uses external expertise in maintaining sector-recognised standards by responding to comments in external examiner reports at a local level, as noted above Raindance does not draw together the actions raised by the external examiners, so it does not institutionally draw out wider developmental points

from the expertise that external examiners provide. The lack of an institutional action plan that draws on that external expertise at programme level means there is no formal means of correlating the external advice provided into an action plan that can guide Raindance's development. There is also no policy covering Raindance's engagement with external expertise and how it gives such advice due consideration.

91 To create the two programmes delivered, Raindance has chosen some of the modules in its programmes. However, this means it would have been appropriate to engage external expertise to offer insight into that module choice and to underpin an internal approval process. Despite the AMR recommending that verification and evaluation of the programme would benefit from some external support, Raindance did not do this beyond collaborating with Uxbridge College to ensure best practice is shared at all times. Consequently, there are no records to confirm that external expertise informed programme approval or indeed any records of any internal process of programme approval.

## **Conclusions**

92 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider 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. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

93 The review team concludes that Raindance uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent. Assessed student work confirms assessment and classification is carried out in line with course requirements and students confirm that assessment and classification processes are reliable, fair and transparent. However, although external examiner reports confirm that assessment and classification processes are reliable, fair and transparent, Raindance does not have credible plans for using external expertise beyond the external examiner and there are no records of course approval and review to indicate that external expertise is employed. This suggests that staff do not understand the requirements for the use of external expertise. However, the review team on balance, concludes that this Core practice is met.

94 The review team has a low degree of confidence in its judgement. This is because, with the exception of aspects led by Pearson where external examiners offer external expertise, Raindance does not have robust and credible plans for using external expertise.

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

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

96 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**

97 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider 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 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 Pearson Creative Media Practice Specification
- b Equality and Diversity Policy
- c Gender Identity Policy
- d Statement on Religious Diversity
- e Equality Prompts - Validation/Period Review
- f Raindance Accelerated BTEC Level 5 HND in Film (leading towards entry to a Raindance master's degree in Film)
- g Offer Confirmation email/letters
- h Offer Confirmation Letter (Acting and Filmmaking)
- i Offer Confirmation Letter (Film)
- j Admissions Records for 2019-21 programmes
- k Student Details database screenshot
- l Meeting with senior staff
- m Meeting with academic staff
- n Meeting with Level 4 students
- o Meeting with Level 5 and master's students
- p Meeting with senior staff
- q Final meeting with senior staff

98 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:

99 Arrangements with recruitment agents because the School reported that they do not use recruitment agents.

### **How any samples of evidence were constructed**

100 Given the size of Raindance, the review team was able to look at evidence from both programmes and considered all admissions records for 2019-21 programmes to assess whether reliable, fair and inclusive admissions decisions were made.

## **Why and how the team considered this evidence**

101 As highlighted, all the evidence submitted by the provider 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 provider'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.

102 The review team met with senior and academic staff and considered relevant documentation, including the Pearson Creative Media Practice Specification to identify institutional policies relating to the recruitment, selection and admission of students and to identify how complaints and appeals are handled.

103 In the absence of supporting policies and guidance for admissions, the review team considered inclusivity policies to help determine how Raindance facilitates an inclusive admissions system.

104 The review team met with senior staff and students, and considered generic information for applicants including that on the website, electronic communications and offer letters, to test whether the information provided to applicants is transparent, inclusive and fit for purpose.

105 The review team considered admissions records to 2019-21 programmes to assess whether admissions decisions were reliable, fair and inclusive.

106 The team met with senior and academic staff to test whether all staff understand their responsibilities, are appropriately skilled and supported.

107 The review team met with students to assess students' views of the admissions process.

## **What the evidence shows**

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

109 Academic regulations relating to student admissions are not comprehensive. Pearson's Creative Media Practice Specification does not specify formal entry requirements beyond guidance on the entry profile of students who have recently been in education and consideration of prior learning. As an approved centre, it is the responsibility of Raindance to ensure that the students admitted to a programme have a reasonable expectation of success. Entry requirements are briefly set out on Raindance's website and include that students under 21 years should ideally have GCSE English at grade A\* - C (grade 9 – 4) and a full Level 3 qualification such as BTEC, A Level or an Access to HE course and that industry experience would be considered on a case-by-case basis. It also notes that students over 21 can apply as mature students, providing they can demonstrate the ability (and experience) to study at the appropriate level and that employment history and previous qualifications would also be taken into account.

110 There is no internal documentation that describes the admissions process or regulations, the considerations that staff should take into account when making admissions decisions or the process by which previous qualifications are confirmed. The review team heard from senior staff that every care is taken to ensure the suitability of students for their chosen programme, a process that is supported by the requirement that every student is interviewed. However, the review team was concerned that this approach compromises the



oversight and control that Raindance is afforded over its admissions process, particularly given that admissions processes and regulations are not set out. There are also no plans for the delivery of admissions or for monitoring of the process, an observation that was confirmed by senior staff. The lack of internal documentation and plans means that the system cannot be audited, monitored, evaluated and modified which could harm the integrity of the process and the interests of students as it is not possible to assess whether reliable, fair and inclusive admissions decisions are made.

111 Senior staff confirmed that there are no academic regulations or policies that provide applicants with the opportunity to lodge complaints or appeals against admissions decisions. There is no mechanism for the monitoring of complaints and appeals, and therefore it was not possible to establish the number of complaints or appeals relating to admissions.

112 Clear policies are in place for equality and diversity, gender diversity and religious diversity. These policies provide a foundation for an inclusive admissions process by confirming the legal and contractual responsibilities of staff with regard to their treatment of others in relation to protected characteristics. Although these policies are not specific to the admissions process, they are sufficiently broad and comprehensive to facilitate an inclusivity in admissions. Certainly, one external examiner's report states that 'it is clear from discussion as well as meeting minutes that Raindance are providing a very inclusive environment. Students come from myriad backgrounds, with many of them working, looking after families or managing busy lifestyles alongside their studies, and the flexibility of the course as well as support offered by the staff means that they are able to do this'.

113 The review team was concerned by the description and promotion of the 'Raindance Accelerated BTEC Level 5 HND in Film (leading towards entry to a Raindance master's degree in Film)'. The HND programme is not delivered over a condensed delivery period, therefore it is not accelerated. In the final meeting senior staff explained that the HND was accelerated as it gave students a quicker route into the industry. However, the review team had already heard from senior staff that the acceleration meant that students can progress directly to the De Montfort University Master's in Film. Indeed, the programme handbooks state that post-graduation students can progress directly onto the master's programme, allowing them to obtain a master's in the same time it would take to achieve a bachelor's degree, and one external examiner's report states that 'Upon successful completion and approval, students can progress onto the Raindance Master's one-year programme in Film, allowing them to obtain a Master's Degree within 3 years of starting Performing Arts Acting HN course. This would, therefore, be an accelerated master's programme and not an accelerated HND. Raindance asserted that it usually accepts students onto the HND who already have a degree and have taken the HND to up-skill into filmmaking, but the review team met students who have no prior higher education experience, and therefore no Level 6 credits. The Raindance Offer Confirmation Letters state that students have been accepted, for example, on the 'Fast-track BTEC Level 5 HND Diploma in Acting and Filmmaking (Leading to Entry onto the master's degree in Film)'. Students confirm that this is their expectation of the programme, with many choosing Raindance because of the potential to gain a master's qualification in three years, not four. While the master's is out of scope for this review, the review team regards the information published for HND programmes as inaccurate and concludes that information provided to applicants is not transparent, inclusive and fit for purpose.

114 The review team found that admissions records are inadequate, omitting details of the interactions between applicants and Raindance that form the basis for admissions decisions and providing no account of modifications made to the records themselves. Critical details relating to decision making, including the reasons for rejection and acceptance, are consistently omitted. Any mention of medical issues in the notes of a particular record is

accompanied by a referral to an individual member of staff, confirming that the admissions process is heavily reliant on informally maintained information rather than the combination of robust academic regulations and admissions records. A consequence of the inadequacy of admissions records is the inability to meaningfully audit decision making. Moreover, despite the fact that an interview is a requirement for all applicants, Raindance maintains no formal record of individual interviews. Combined with the absence of robust admissions records, prospective students could be in a position where they disagree with an admissions decision, have no opportunity to appeal and cannot request formal details of their interview or verify why a particular admissions decision was taken. Similarly, it makes it impossible for Raindance to robustly respond to many reasonable questions relating to interviews and any associated admissions decisions.

115 The review team heard that Raindance is developing a database to better capture admissions data but at the time of the review visit development was at a very early stage.

116 The interview process is delivered by a single member of staff. A further member of staff receives informal briefings when they are required to stand-in to undertake interviews. While the one member of academic staff understands their role in admissions, there is an absence of documented formal admissions training or guidance. Both staff who conduct interviews assert they rely on prior employment experience.

117 Students confirmed that they considered their experience of the admissions process to be reliable, fair and inclusive. However, the team did not feel this view was sufficient to mitigate against the risks identified above, since students who had been successful were likely to have a positive view of the admissions process.

## **Conclusions**

118 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider 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. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

119 The review team concludes that Raindance does not have a reliable, fair and inclusive admission system. This is because the academic regulations and policies for admissions are not sufficiently comprehensive to be reliable and fair, despite equality and diversity policies providing appropriate safeguards around inclusivity. There is no internal documentation that describes the admission process or regulations, the considerations that staff should take into account when making admissions decisions or the process by which previous qualifications are confirmed, the absence of which causes harm to the integrity of the process and the interests of applicants. There are no academic regulations or policies that provide applicants with the opportunity to lodge complaints or appeals against admissions decisions. The lack of record keeping around admissions, particularly the interview and decision-making process, also represents a risk to the integrity of admissions procedures and the interests of applicants. The programme promotional materials are misleading suggesting that the HND programme is 'accelerated'. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is not met.

120 The review team has a high degree of confidence in its not met judgement. This is because the evidence presented was not sufficiently comprehensive to demonstrate that Raindance has a reliable, fair and inclusive admission system that could be readily audited, monitored, evaluated and modified.

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

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

122 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**

123 The review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider 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 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 Programme Handbook - Film 2019-21
- b Programme Handbook - Acting and Filmmaking 2019-21
- c External examiner reports
- d Student submission
- e Student Engagement Strategy
- f Assessment Policy
- g Pearson Creative Media Production Specification
- h Observations of teaching
- i Meeting with senior staff
- j Meeting with Level 4 students
- k Meeting with Level 5 and master's students
- l Meeting with academic staff
- m Final meeting with senior staff.

124 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:

125 Raindance has no learning and teaching strategy to inform its delivery of high-quality courses, and no programme approval policy to inform their design.

126 Third party endorsements, as none are available for the provision on offer at the School.

### **How any samples of evidence were constructed**

127 Given the size of Raindance, the review team was able to look at evidence from both programmes. The review team considered six external examiners' reports to identify their views about the quality of the programmes and undertook observations of the two lessons being delivered during the visit to test whether course delivery is of high quality.

### **Why and how the team considered this evidence**

128 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider 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 provider'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:

129 The review team met with senior staff, academic staff, reviewed the student submission and explored the Student Engagement Strategy, assessment policy and HND programme handbooks for Creative Media Production - Film and Performing Arts - Acting and Filmmaking, to determine Raindance's approach to designing and delivering high-quality courses.

130 The review team examined the Pearson Programme Specification and HND programme handbooks for Creative Media Production - Film and Performing Arts - Acting and Filmmaking to test that all elements of the courses sampled are high-quality and that the teaching, learning and assessment design enable students to demonstrate the intended learning outcomes.

131 The review team considered external examiner reports to identify their views about the quality of the courses sampled.

132 The review team undertook two observations of teaching to test whether course delivery is high quality.

133 The review team met with senior and academic staff to assess how staff ensure courses are high quality.

134 The review team met with students to identify students' views about the quality of the courses.

### **What the evidence shows**

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

136 Although a requirement of Pearson, there is no learning and teaching strategy and the 2017 assessment policy is in need of revision given the 2018 changes to the Pearson Specifications. In relation to learning and teaching, Raindance explained that it has an ethos that is central to its founding which is to create, through intensive vocational training, low to no income entrepreneurial film makers who can work in the professional marketplace. Students are given full access to the Raindance Independent Film Festival and have, as an integral part of their programme, the opportunity to attend additional courses delivered by industry professionals; commentary in the programme handbooks echoes this approach as does the student submission which indicates that students recognise its value. The brief Student Engagement Strategy also provides some indication of the ethos by reiterating that students are offered a broad range of industry masterclasses, professional events and specialist short courses.

137 While there is no direct or detailed statement about Raindance's approach to programme design and delivery, in meetings with staff their understanding is very clear. Both senior and academic staff articulate how they are delivering professionally-focused filmmaking units, working across all aspects of film production and distribution. More significantly, teaching observations undertaken by the team support this perception. The team observed that small groups allow for highly tailored delivery to students from a range of creative backgrounds and with varying interests. From the team's observations it is apparent that film directing centres on the filmmaking process rather than direction in a generic sense,

and this work sits within a critical framework that draws on the work of several mainstream theories. The team observed that teaching staff deliver very clear and engaging vocational training to a professional level.

138 In developing its own programmes within Pearson's framework, the combination of core, mandatory and optional units indicate that Raindance has selected modules, but the review team saw no policy for internal programme approval, or documentation indicating why Raindance chose certain modules for its programmes or of embedding programme approval oversight into its own practice. Through a review of external examiner reports and the Pearson Creative Media Production Specification, the review team recognises that the programme content satisfies Pearson's requirements and that Pearson sets sector-recognised standards for its qualifications, consistent with the relevant national qualifications' frameworks and sector-recognised standards.

139 External examiner reports state that Raindance delivers an 'extremely unique' programme that provides students with direct access to the working practices of the film industry throughout their education and where the quality of teaching is reflected in the quality of student work and in the positive feedback from students. One external examiner calls Raindance an 'impressive venture' and that students have 'amazing' access to resources and links to industry and professionals. The focus on placing the teaching within a professional, but low-budget context ensures that students recognise the difficulties of the independent film sector yet understand the broader context of how to make and read film.

140 Observations of teaching and learning demonstrate clarity of objectives, good planning and organisation, a sound approach, good delivery, appropriate content, effective use of resources and strong student engagement.

141 Students are highly positive about the quality of the courses and they list the teaching as one of their chief reasons for applying to Raindance and the aspect with which they are most satisfied. They regard the teaching on their courses as high quality.

## **Conclusions**

142 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider 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. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

143 The review team concludes that Raindance designs, through selecting relevant Pearson modules, and delivers high-quality courses. This is because, despite the lack of robust and credible plans for design through programme approval, and delivery through a formal learning and teaching strategy, the quality of courses is high. The lack of plans is counterbalanced by the delivery of the courses as confirmed by the observations of teaching and learning that demonstrate clarity of objectives, good planning and organisation, a sound approach, good delivery, appropriate content, effective use of resources and strong student engagement. Staff have a common understanding of Raindance's approach to ensuring courses are of high quality and are clear that they are delivering professionally focused filmmaking units, working across all aspects of film production and distribution. External examiner reports confirm that the courses are high quality and that this is reflected in the quality of student work. Students also regard their courses as being of high quality and staff articulate what 'high quality' means in the independent filmmaking context. Therefore, the review team concludes that this Core practice is met.

144 The lack of robust and credible plans for designing and delivering high-quality

courses results in the review team having a moderate degree of confidence in this judgement.

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

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

146 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**

147 The review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider 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 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 Staff Handbook
- b Staff Development Framework
- c Pearson AMR reports 2017-18 and 2018-19
- d Student Engagement Strategy
- e Staff CVs
- f Meeting with senior staff
- g Meeting with Level 4 students
- h Meeting with Level 5 and master's students
- i Meeting with academic staff
- j Observation of teaching and learning.

148 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:

149 Third party endorsements, as none are available for the provision on offer at the School.

#### **How any samples of evidence were constructed**

150 Although not a sample, the review team undertook a review of the resources and observed the two classes that were taking place during the review visit to determine whether academic staff deliver a high-quality learning experience.

#### **Why and how the team considered this evidence**

151 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider 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 provider'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.

152 The review team considered Pearson AMR reports, 2017-18 and 2018-19, the Staff Handbook, the Staff Development Framework, Student Engagement Strategy and met with senior and academic staff to identify how Raindance recruits, appoints, inducts and supports sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff.

153 The review team considered staff CVs and met with senior and academic staff to verify that staff are appropriately qualified and skilled.

154 The review team met with students to identify students' views about the sufficiency, qualifications and skills of staff.

155 The review team undertook two observations of teaching to test whether academic staff deliver a high-quality learning experience.

### **What the evidence shows**

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

157 The Staff Handbook provides some limited detail relating to recruitment, appointment, induction and support of staff. However, with the exception of the Staff Development Framework there are no academic regulations or policies in place that underpin this function. The industrial-focus for appointing staff, is articulated in the Student Engagement Strategy and includes that all of Raindance's 'lecturers are working filmmakers as well as educators'. This has resulted in the recruitment and appointment of staff who have extensive experience in an industrial setting as evidenced in CVs. This is a small organisation and the organisation structure set out in the Staff Handbook lists the responsibilities and is appropriate and proportional to the size of the organisation.

158 The AMR report for 2017-18 notes that Raindance monitors staff requirements and that current staffing is appropriate and sufficient to support teaching and assessment of the programme and that robust recruitment processes are in place. The 2018-19 AMR report states that Raindance has a formula that calculates the number of hours and tutors required based on learner numbers and that if staff are required the centre will find these through their own network of contacts within the industry. Senior staff confirmed this to be the case and explained that Raindance recruits through personal contact and their own network of industrial experts, and that they appoint visiting lecturers who perform well.

159 Staff are recruited and appointed on the basis of their industrial experience, suitability for a role and demonstrable teaching capability. Those CVs seen by the review team confirm that academic staff hold postgraduate degrees and industry experience and are, therefore, appropriately qualified and skilled to perform their roles.

160 This focus on industrial experience is consistent with the industrial focus of the organisation. Validation of teaching ability is ascertained prior to appointment often through engagement with the short courses that are hosted at Raindance throughout the academic year, and the support that staff receive in continued professional development. This includes the opportunity to work towards a formal teaching qualification as set out in the Staff Development Framework, which 'seeks to provide for all staff a route through which individuals will fulfil their potential and achieve consistently high standards of performance' which is achieved through continuous professional development (CPD).

161 A newly appointed academic member of staff confirmed that they could join the film training short courses which benefit staff as film makers and have a positive effect on teaching delivery. In addition, they stated that school-based CPD takes place within faculty



meetings and that they have had preliminary discussions about obtaining a teaching qualification.

162 The induction process is informal, in that it is overseen by senior staff and covers the expected responsibilities of staff but is not detailed in any official documentation. The scale of Raindance as a provider makes their informal approach to the induction of new staff viable as, currently, academic staff are infrequently appointed. An experienced senior staff member is responsible for the induction of staff who are engaged with teaching. Responsibilities, behaviours and capabilities expected of staff are clearly articulated in the Staff Handbook and Staff Development Framework. A newly inducted academic staff member confirmed that they had felt appropriately supported during the onboarding process and provided a clear account of their role and responsibilities, validating the sufficiency of the induction process at this scale of operation.

163 Students are unreservedly and uniformly positive about the quality of teaching making direct reference to the skills and industrial qualifications of staff.

164 During the lesson observations, the review team noted the use of appropriate teaching materials demonstrated a clear understanding of the level at which teaching was being delivered and the choice of learning methods was appropriate to the subject matter. Staff possess extensive experience in the subject matter, and students were actively encouraged to participate in a way that is challenging and supportive of their learning needs. Further, staff were able to bring relevance to their teaching by drawing on industrial experience, a point that was well received by students and a clear endorsement of the way in which staff are recruited, appointed and developed. Observations of teaching and learning confirmed that the staff observed are appropriately qualified and skilled in the delivery of a high-quality learning experience.

## **Conclusions**

165 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider 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. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

166 The review team concludes that Raindance has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience. This is because, although there are no formal regulations or policies in place, Raindance recruits sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff through its own network of industrial contacts. Pearson AMR reports note that current staffing is appropriate and sufficient to support teaching and assessment, and observations of teaching and learning confirmed that staff are appropriately qualified and skilled to deliver a high-quality academic experience. Staff met by the team validate the approach, confirming the sufficiency of the recruitment, appointment, induction and support processes. Students are unequivocally positive in their support for the view that staff are appropriately skilled and qualified, citing examples that underscore the success of the industrial relevance that Raindance sets out as its objective in teaching and learning. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.

167 The lack of robust and credible plans for the recruitment, appointment and induction of sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff lead the review team to have 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**

168 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.

169 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**

170 The review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider 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 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 Minutes of Learner Voice Meeting 14/05/2018
- b Minutes of Learner Voice Meeting 28/01/2019
- c Student Engagement Strategy
- d Raindance Educational Services Job Description (Course Team Leader)
- e Pearson AMR reports 2017-18 and 2018-19
- f External examiner reports
- g Meeting with senior staff
- h Meeting with Level 4 students
- i Meeting with Level 5 and master's students
- j Meeting with academic staff
- k Direct assessment of facilities, learning resources and support services.

171 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:

172 Third party endorsements, as none are available for the provision on offer at the School.

### **How any samples of evidence were constructed**

173 Raindance does not systematically collect student views through internal or external surveys, module or course evaluations and therefore none were available to sample that would aid identification of student views about facilities, learning resources and support services.

### **Why and how the team considered this evidence**

174 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider 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 provider'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.

175 The review team met with senior and academic staff and considered the Student Engagement Strategy and Learner Voice Meeting minutes to identify the facilities, learning resources and student support services.

176 The review team met with senior and academic staff and reviewed the job description of the course team leader to determine whether staff are appropriately qualified and skilled and understand their roles and responsibilities.

177 The team met with students to assess students' views about facilities, learning resources and support services.

178 The review team considered Pearson AMR reports 2017-18 and 2018-19 and external examiner reports to identify other organisations' views about facilities, learning resources and student support services.

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

### **What the evidence shows**

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

181 Although Raindance has no explicit strategy for facilities, learning resources and student support services, senior staff assert that facilities, learning resources and student support are monitored on an informal basis and incorporated by other fora, including the bi-termly Learner Voice Meeting. The Student Engagement Strategy details the one-to-one support, including pastoral support, that is offered to all students to address any concerns they may be having with any aspect of the course. This less formalised approach is facilitated by the scale of Raindance and results in the absence of documentary evidence relating to monitoring. However, there is evidence of facilities and resources being deliberated over and developed in response to the needs of staff and students. Most notably, Raindance has invested in the installation of a sprung floor in one of their studio facilities, and the creation of a media editing suite containing sufficient hardware and software licence capacity to meet the learning needs of each year group. Each of these examples of investment in facilities and learning resources was made in response to student feedback.

182 Staff understand their roles and responsibilities, both as academic tutors and providers of student support. Student pastoral support is overseen by a senior staff member who has student support as a substantial component of their specified job role. This support includes the opportunity for any student to book one-to-one appointments, waiting no longer than a week to receive one-to-one support for academic and wellbeing-related issues. This on-demand pastoral support is positively received by students, who comment on the readiness of staff to act in their best interests and support them in matters outside their programme of study through this mechanism. Raindance benefits from its scale of provision, which permits these formal and informal approaches to student support.

183 The 2017-18 Pearson AMR report notes that 'whilst not pristine' the premises 'provide adequate facilities for the current student cohort' and that Raindance 'provides a wide range of specialist equipment that was clearly accessible and available to students'.

This is reiterated in the 2018-19 AMR which reported that 'At present the facilities are sufficient for the number of learners on register' and that 'learners have access to dedicated specialist equipment...including production quality cameras, lighting and VFX equipment'. As noted under Q2 external examiners report that students have 'amazing' access to resources and links to industry and professionals. Other comments include that 'the innovative use of software and resources available to students is highly commendable', that 'teaching staff are very approachable and supportive', and that there is a strong support process for students.

184 Raindance teach film making and allied disciplines from the perspective that a substantial budget is not required to produce high-quality films and related deliverables. Although the facilities and learning resources are undoubtedly improved by cooperation with industrial partners such as Lumix (see below) quality cameras, the review team's own assessment of the facilities and learning resources confirms that they provide a high-quality academic experience within the expectation that high-quality films and other deliverables can be produced without a substantial budget.

185 In addition to its own investments in facilities and learning resources, Raindance has benefited from third-party support from Lumix in the provision of high-end technical equipment. The status and engagement of Lumix, as a premier supplier of high-end equipment in film making and allied industries, provides substantial added value for students. Students and staff expressed the view that this industrial cooperation is an endorsement and a mark of quality, supplementing the exposure to industrialists.

186 Students have a positive view of the facilities, learning resources and support services. This is confirmed in external examiners' reports where it is stated that 'students appreciate the resources that the college offers'. The only exception to this being the amount of space they have available within the premises. This issue of space is recognised as an intractable problem by students, who appreciate that the majority of space within Raindance is devoted to teaching and learning, even more so following the creation of the media editing suite. Learner Voice minutes include discussion around resource issues along with the action taken by Raindance. For example, students felt that some prime lenses were hard to get hold of. The minutes note that new equipment, including a new set of lenses had been ordered.

## **Conclusions**

187 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider 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. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

188 The review team concludes that Raindance has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience. This is because, while there are no explicit strategies or plans, staff understand their roles and responsibilities including that of offering one-to-one support. The review team's direct assessment of facilities, learning resources and support services is that they are of a standard to permit a high-quality academic experience. External examiners confirm Raindance provides a wide range of specialist equipment and facilities that are sufficient for the number of learners and students have a positive view of the facilities, learning resources and support services. The review team concludes this Core practice is met.

189 The potential risk posed to student outcomes as a consequence of Raindance's lack of explicit strategies and plans for facilities, learning resources and student support

services that are demonstrably linked to the delivery of successful academic and professional outcomes for students, is currently mitigated by the small scale of the provision; however, their absence leads the review team to have a moderate degree of confidence in this judgement.

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

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

191 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**

192 The QAA review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider 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 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 Student Engagement Strategy
- b Minutes of Learner Voice Meeting 14/05/2018
- c Minutes of Learner Voice Meeting 28/01/2019
- d Student Feedback Collated Notes from Plenary 04/06/2019
- e Programme Handbook - Film 2019-21
- f Programme Handbook - Acting and Filmmaking 2019-21
- g External examiner reports
- h Meeting with senior staff
- i Meeting with Level 4 students
- j Meeting with Level 5 and master's students
- k Meeting with academic staff.

### **How any samples of evidence were constructed**

193 Raindance does not systematically collect student views through internal or external surveys, module or course evaluations and therefore none were available to sample that would aid identification of student views about student engagement in the quality of their educational experience.

### **Why and how the team considered this evidence**

194 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider 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 provider'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.

195 The review team considered relevant policies, including the Student Engagement Strategy, Learner Voice Meeting minutes, and elements of the Programme Handbooks, to identify how students are actively engaged in the quality of their educational experience.

196 The review team considered examples of changes and improvements to provision by meeting with senior and academic staff and students and examining the minutes of Learner Voice Meetings to illustrate the impact of Raindance's approach to student engagement.

197 The review team met with students to assess whether students consider they are engaged in the quality of their education experience.

198 The team also considered the comments of external examiners to identify the views of other organisations about student engagement in the quality of their educational experience.

### **What the evidence shows**

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

200 The brief Student Engagement Strategy addresses student experience by four key themes: practical industry-related content in class, industrial opportunities, one-to-one support, and learner voice. It reaffirms the industrial focus of Raindance and provides for mechanisms for formal engagement at both collective and individual levels.

201 The learner voice component of the Student Engagement Strategy forms the basis for collective engagement, since this relates to the election of student representatives to attend bi-termly Learner Voice meetings. Student representatives are nominated and elected by their year-group peers across both programmes of study. Student representatives are not provided with formal training, though there is a discussion with the programme leader at the outset of their role to inform representatives about the expectations for their role and provide an opportunity to ask questions of staff.

202 Termly plenary sessions, facilitated by the programme leader, are a further mechanism for collective student feedback that result in a collection of notes to be considered by staff and students. These notes will form the basis for items at future Learner Voice meetings, though practical matters, for example the availability of drinking water to all students, can be addressed by staff much sooner.

203 Programme handbooks give a little more detail about Raindance's plans for collecting and acting on student feedback including through student representatives, student surveys, unit reviews, and the National Student Survey. However, Raindance is yet to put mechanisms in place that would allow students to participate in student surveys.

204 The provision of one-to-one support within the Student Engagement Strategy is not limited to academic and pastoral support for students. Individually, students also benefit from the opportunity to book appointments with the programme leader and are encouraged to provide feedback to staff on an informal basis. There are no mechanisms for providing individual anonymous feedback, though student representatives are directed to maintain the anonymity of their peers.

205 There are numerous examples of Raindance making changes in response to student engagement, most notably through Learner Voice meetings. These include the installation of a sprung floor within an existing studio facility, the establishment of a media editing suite, the redevelopment of a first-year curriculum to ensure a manageable workload for students, and the ongoing investment in hardware.

206 Students reflect positively on the willingness of Raindance to work in partnership in their educational experience, highlighting changes to teaching spaces and the curriculum in response to their feedback. Students report that staff are receptive to feedback and open

to their ideas in formal and informal settings. Students recognised the lack of anonymity in providing feedback but felt assured that the supportive culture that exists between staff and students meant that voices were not going unheard. External examiner reports echo student views and confirm that it is clear that Raindance values the student voice and that students are given ample opportunity to feed back on their programme formally through the learner voice system or informally as staff are very approachable and have open-door policies.

## **Conclusions**

207 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider 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. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below:

208 The review team concludes that Raindance actively engages students individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience. This is because students express the view that they are being engaged in the quality of their educational experience, noting the formal engagement mechanisms and informal culture of support. In particular, students are collectively engaged through the student representation system and termly plenary opportunities, and individually engaged through one-to-one support and an open-door policy that provides feedback opportunities to all students. Student feedback has brought about changes that have improved the quality of the learning experience and external examiners comment on the strength of the student voice. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.

209 The absence of robust and credible plans to actively engage students individually and collectively in the quality of their educational experience through internal surveys and module and course evaluations, while currently mitigated by the small scale of the provision, lead the review team to have a moderate 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**

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

211 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**

212 The review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider 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 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 Programme Handbook - Film 2019-20
- b Programme Handbook - Acting and Filmmaking 2019-21
- c Complaints Policy Procedures (February 2017)
- d Procedure for Appeals Against Assessment Decisions (February 2017)
- e Meeting with senior staff
- f Meeting with Level 4 students
- g Meeting with Level 5 and master's students
- h Meeting with academic staff.

### **How any samples of evidence were constructed**

213 Raindance asserts that no complaints or appeals have progressed to a formal stage and therefore no examples were presented as a sample.

### **Why and how the team considered this evidence**

214 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider 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 provider'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.

215 The review team considered relevant documentation and policies, including the Programme Handbooks, Complaints Policy Procedures, and Procedure for Appeals Against Assessment Decisions to identify the processes for handling complaints and appeals and to confirm that the processes are fair and transparent.

216 The same evidence was also considered to assess whether information for potential and actual complainants and appellants is clear and accessible.

217 The review team met with students to identify students' views about the clarity and accessibility of the complaints and appeals procedures.

### **What the evidence shows**

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

219 Processes for handling complaints and appeals are not transparent and information available to potential and actual complainants and appellants is not clear and accessible. This is because regulations and policies relating to complaints and appeals are only partially documented in programme handbooks. There is minimal detail relating to all stages of the complaints and appeals processes. There are no details relating to the requirements for the completion of procedures once the internal complaints process has been exhausted without resolution.

220 Programme handbooks refer students to the student portal to access the Procedure for Appeals Against Assessment Decisions, which is a more robust set of appeals procedures (although no link is provided, and the procedure does not reflect the internal management structure of Raindance). However, this is not the case for complaints. Senior staff confirmed to the review team that the programme handbooks contained the definitive and complete information for complaints. However, the review team had sight of a more detailed Complaints Policy and Procedure document which is dated February 2017, but which follows a procedure that is not reflected in the handbooks and which does not reflect the internal management structure of Raindance.

221 The combination of these issues raises concerns relating to the documentation of procedures and the procedural awareness of staff. Moreover, the complaints and appeals procedures located on the student portal are dated February 2017, leaving them in need of revision and rationalisation with regard to the procedures that are published annually in programme handbooks.

222 Raindance states that no complaints or appeals have been progressed past an informal stage, which is why no information on the numbers and types of complaints or examples of specific complaints are available. As such, it is not possible to test that complaints and appeals were dealt with in a fair, transparent and timely manner.

223 Raindance also states that it has no formal mechanism to monitor or provide oversight of complaints and appeals. Raindance has no documented plans for change with regard to the monitoring and oversight of complaints and appeals.

224 However, students are aware that each programme handbook contains information relating to complaints and appeals but are not confident in identifying the definitive sources of information on complaints and appeals procedures. In the first instance, if wishing to complain or appeal, students stated that they would approach teaching staff, an administrator or, for collective complaints, the student representatives.

### **Conclusions**

225 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider 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. The

team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

226 The review team concludes that Raindance does not have fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students. This is because although information on complaints and appeals is included in both programme handbooks it does not give sufficient guidance. Coverage in the programme handbook is updated annually and considered to be definitive but lacking essential details that would allow a student to progress a complaint or appeal. Coverage on the student portal is more detailed, containing all necessary information, but is not considered to be definitive, does not reflect organisation structure, and has not been refreshed since 2017. There is no systematic monitoring or oversight of the complaints and appeals procedures. Moreover, there is no evidence of plans to address any issues or make changes to the complaints and appeals procedures to provide oversight. The review team concludes that this Core practice is not met.

227 The review team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement. This is because although students have yet to raise formal complaints or make an appeal, the team did not feel this was sufficient mitigation. This is because Raindance did not present evidence of credible, robust and evidenced-based plans for operating fair and transparent procedures and the evidence presented was not sufficiently comprehensive to demonstrate that the procedures in place are definitive, fair and transparent.

## **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**

228 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.

229 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**

230 The review team assessed the evidence presented to them, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider 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 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 Pearson AMR reports 2017-18 and 2018-19
- b External examiners' reports
- c HND Qualification Approval
- d General Regulations for Approved Centres
- e Meeting with senior staff
- f Meeting with academic staff
- g Meeting with senior staff
- h Final meeting with senior staff.

231 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:

232 Third party endorsements, as none are available for the provision on offer at the School.

### **How any samples of evidence were constructed**

233 The review team considered all six available external examiners' reports to test that external examiners considered courses delivered in partnership to be of high quality.

### **Why and how the team considered this evidence**

234 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider 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 provider'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.

235 The review team considered the HND Qualification Approval, the General Regulations, and external examiner reports to test the basis for the maintenance of high-quality courses within the Pearson partnership, and that those arrangements are in line with Raindance's regulations or policies.

236 The review team read external examiner reports and AMR reports to test if external examiners consider courses delivered in partnership to be of high quality and to confirm the effectiveness of the underpinning arrangements.

237 The review team met with senior, teaching and support staff to test that staff understand and discharge their responsibilities effectively to the awarding body.

### **What the evidence shows**

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

239 The HND Qualification Approval and the General Regulations for Approved Centres set out clear guidelines for the partnership between Raindance and Pearson. The agreement is clear and ensures that staff from Raindance understand their responsibilities for quality. External examiners' reports and AMR reports show that Raindance engages with those requirements clearly and well. While the process staff use to ensure they address any action points is informal, staff do respond to external examiner comments.

240 However, this is only at programme level. There is no indication of a cross-institutional approach to partnership working. The lack of any institutional plans or a policy for working with partners means that Raindance has no effective strategic arrangements in place to ensure that, through its partnership with Pearson, Raindance can continue to deliver a high-quality academic experience. Within Raindance, there is an over-reliance on key members of staff to interpret Pearson's requirements, there is no institutional understanding of the way the partnership works. Staff also state they do not refer to the Pearson website as a source of key information. There is no sense of an approach to working with Pearson being embedded in Raindance's own policies. The senior staff recognise that this is an area for development.

### **Conclusions**

241 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider 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. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

242 The review team concludes that Raindance, working in partnership with its awarding organisation, 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 Pearson partnership agreements are clear, and external examiner reports indicate that the academic experience for students on courses is of a high quality. However, Raindance does not have robust and credible plans to ensure a high-quality academic experience for provision delivered in partnership beyond programme level. Raindance has no strategy for the management of partnerships with other organisations including that with Pearson to ensure that the partnership is managed and monitored by staff at a strategic level, presenting a risk to quality. However, on balance, the review team concludes that this Core practice is met.

243 The review team has a low degree of confidence in its judgement. This is because there is a lack of evidence, particularly that of robust and credible plans to ensure a high-quality academic experience for provision delivered in partnership that would embed a cross-institutional approach to partnership working.

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

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

245 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**

246 The review team assessed the evidence presented, both prior to and at the visit, to determine if the provider 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 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 Student Engagement Strategy
- b Programme Handbook - Film 2019-21
- c Programme Handbook - Acting and Filmmaking 2019-21
- d External examiner reports
- e Assessed student work
- f Provider website
- g Meeting with senior staff
- h Meeting with Level 4 students
- i Meeting with Level 5 and master's students
- j Meeting with academic staff
- k Meeting with senior staff.

### **How any samples of evidence were constructed**

247 The review team sampled 18 pieces of representative and random assessed student work from two distinct units in each year of study for each of the two programmes to test whether students are given comprehensive, helpful and timely feedback.

### **Why and how the team considered this evidence**

248 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider 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 provider'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.

The review team considered relevant documentation and policies, including the Student Engagement Strategy and Programme Handbooks to identify the approach to student support, including how it identifies and monitors the needs of individual students.

249 The review team considered the comments of external examiners to identify the views of other organisations about the support mechanisms in place that enable the successful achievement of academic and professional outcomes.

250 The review team considered assessed student work to test whether students are given comprehensive, helpful and timely feedback.

251 The review team met with staff to test whether all staff understand their responsibilities and are appropriately skilled and supported.

252 The review team met with students to assess students' views about student support mechanisms and determine whether students who have made particular use of student support services regard those services as accessible and effective.

### **What the evidence shows**

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

254 The Student Engagement Strategy addresses the approach to student support, focusing on four themes: practical content in class; industrial opportunities; one-to-one support; and learner voice. The focus on one-to-one support and the relatively small scale of the provision allows Raindance to identify and monitor the needs of individual students. The availability of timetabled one-to-one support is the primary mechanism for identifying, monitoring and responding to the needs of individuals. These include tutorials and study skills sessions which aim to support and guide students through their studies and identify and develop the higher-level skills needed to be successful on the course. The programme handbooks set out that students receive feedback from tutors on all aspects and progress, including assignment and unit achievement, and tutors and students work together to set targets and identify support issues that are incorporated into individual learning plans.

255 There are no formal plans relating to student support for achieving successful academic and professional outcomes. However, the approach that has emerged from valuing personal interaction and engagement with industry ensures that the individual needs of students are being identified and met. This is because the combination of practical content in class and industrial opportunities as themes of the Student Engagement Strategy reinforces Raindance's focus on preparing students for careers in filmmaking and allied industries. Students benefit directly from the industrial focus of Raindance through invited industrial speakers and collaborative projects which sees students from both programmes working on together. Students also have access to, as part of their Higher National programme, a suite of film training short courses that Raindance delivers, access to the Raindance Film Festival and extracurricular networking events that support successful academic and professional outcomes.

256 The industrial focus of the Student Engagement Strategy is complemented by the programme handbooks, which provide introductory academic support. In particular, the programme handbook gives guidance on essay writing, document presentation, academic referencing and bibliography management. In addition, the programme handbook informs students that they are given British Film Institute (BFI) membership for the duration of their study. This membership provides access to the BFI Reuben Library and collection of books, journals and digitised materials relating to filmmaking and allied industries.

257 External examiners confirm that Raindance's approach enables the successful achievement of academic and professional outcomes. External examiners confirm that the programmes are focused on developing skills for all students that will enable them to work in the film industry by providing access to the work practices of the industry throughout their studies. One expands on this stating that 'access to excellent speakers, visiting lecturers and



to Raindance in itself means that the students are not just learning to make films, but that they are becoming filmmakers through their study', and another that students 'were all in agreement that being taught by industry professionals has given them a greater understanding of the current skills that are required for entering the industry'.

258 A review of assessed student work demonstrates that students receive feedback that is consistently comprehensive, helpful and timely. Extensive marker comments on all assessed student work reviewed provide coverage that will help students to understand their level of attainment and improve their work in the future. There are rare examples of work being returned after the 20-day institutional turnaround time, although these are always justified by the circumstances and/or nature of the assignments. Students were quick to recognise that written feedback on assessed work represented only part of the feedback they received on their work, highlighting the regular in-class verbal feedback from teaching staff and informal discussions as part of their one-to-one support.

259 Staff understand their role and responsibilities in supporting student achievement ensuring that the individual and industry-focused approach to student support can be maintained. Staff use Google Classroom to provide academic support and access to opportunities for professional development.

260 Students are uniformly positive about the academic support they receive on a day-to-day basis, recognising the value of one-to-one tuition options and extensive industrial exposure. Both staff and students were very clear that students developed transferable skills, including organisational and communication skills as well as project and people management, that would allow them to achieve successful professional outcomes. Students value the opportunity to attend multiple film festivals and networking events throughout the academic year, hear from industrial speakers and participate in extracurricular collaborative projects with other students on the HND programmes and the short courses available to them as part of their studies. Students who have engaged with academic support during their period of study are unequivocal about the positive impact that this support has had on their performance and the suitability of the tools used to facilitate support, specifically mentioning the role of Google Classroom.

## **Conclusions**

261 As described above, the review team considered all of the evidence submitted to form a judgement as to whether the provider 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. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

262 The review team concludes that Raindance supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes. Evidence to support this includes one-to-one support through tutorials and learning plans that enable the identification and development of specific learning needs. The combination of practical content in class and industrial opportunities reinforces Raindance's focus on preparing students for careers in filmmaking and allied industries. External examiners confirm that the programmes are focused on developing skills for all students that will enable them to work in the film industry. Assessed student work demonstrates that students are consistently given comprehensive, helpful and timely feedback. Students are appreciative of the academic support and career development opportunities including extracurricular activities and networking events. Staff have a clear understanding of their role in facilitating student achievement. The review team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.

263 The lack of comprehensive, robust and credible plans to support all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes through monitoring and evaluation leads the review team to have a moderate degree of confidence in its judgement.

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