DQB

Assessment for New Degree Awarding Powers

The London Interdisciplinary School Limited

Review Report

June 2020

Contents

Summary of assessment team findings

New DAPs test components	DAPs criteria						
	A	B1	B2	B3	C	D	E
The provider has demonstrated a full understanding of this criterion	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
The provider has a credible New DAPs Plan for ensuring the criterion is met in full by the end of the probation period	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
The standards set for the proposed courses are at an appropriate level	Y						
	Overarching New DAPs criterion						
The provider is an emerging self-critical, cohesive academic community with a clear commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective (in prospect) quality systems	Y						

About this report

This is a report of a New degree awarding powers (New DAPs) assessment of The London Interdisciplinary School Limited conducted by QAA in June 2020 in accordance with the process outlined in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA for Degree Awarding Powers, October 2019.*

Assessment of degree awarding powers (DAPs) is the process QAA uses to provide advice to the Office for Students (OfS) about the quality of, and the standards applied to, higher education proposed to be delivered by a provider in England under a New DAPs authorisation and on a provider's readiness to operate with a New DAPs authorisation.

Provider information

Legal name	The London Interdisciplinary School Ltd
Trading name	The London Interdisciplinary School
UKPRN	10067623
Type of institution	Higher Education Institution
Date founded	November 2017
Date of first HE provision (anticipated)	September 2021
Application route	New DAPs
Level of powers applied for	Taught degree (up to Level 6)
Location of teaching	London (from September 2021)
Subjects applied for	08-01 (general and other sciences); 14-01 (humanities and liberal arts non-specific); 23-01 (combined and general studies)

Current powers held	None
Date current powers granted	Not applicable
Number of current programmes as at 27 March 2020 [New DAPs Plan]	One Bachelor of Arts and Sciences (BASc) in Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods
Number of students as at 27 March 2020 [New DAPs Plan]	None
Number of staff as at 27 March 2020 [New DAPs Plan]	Total: 23 (academic: 11, managerial: 7, support: 5)
Current awarding body arrangements	None

About The London Interdisciplinary School Limited

The London Interdisciplinary School Limited (the School) was founded in November 2017. Until November 2018 it was known as Odyssey School London. The School is a private limited company with a combination of companies and private individuals as shareholders. The School's mission is 'to create a centre of excellence for interdisciplinary learning, one that better prepares its students for the modern world'. It aims to develop learners who are capable of, and committed to, tackling the most important and complex social problems. The School wants to be a higher education institution with a new style of education where learning will be interdisciplinary and start with the problem, not the discipline.

In March 2020 the School approved its own single, three-year, full-time undergraduate programme in Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods (Bachelor of Arts and Sciences) which it plans to offer from September 2021 with a founding cohort of 120 students. The location of teaching will be a campus in London. At the time of the New DAPs assessment the School had identified a preferred site in East London and detailed site planning was underway. As referenced in the business plan, once the School has delivered the programme to the founding cohort across all three years of study, and had the opportunity to deliver to three cohorts simultaneously, the intakes are anticipated to grow to a maximum of approximately 350 undergraduate students, resulting in a total undergraduate population of more than 1,000 at maturity.

How the assessment was conducted

The QAA assessment team completed an assessment of the School according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA*, October 2019.

The team appointed to conduct the assessment was as follows:

Name: Cheryl Dunn
Institution: Blackpool and the Fylde College
Role in assessment team: Institutional assessor

Name: Laila Halani
Institution: Institute of Ismaili Studies
Role in assessment team: Institutional assessor

Name: Anne Harbisher
Institution: Staffordshire University
Role in assessment team: Institutional assessor

The QAA Officer for the assessment was Monika Ruthe.

The size and composition of this 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 School'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 School prior to the assessment to identify and resolve any possible conflicts of interest.

The assessment team conducted the assessment by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the Guidance for Providers. The criteria used in relation to this assessment are those that apply in England as set out paragraphs 215-216 and in Annex C in OfS's regulatory framework. To support the clarity of communication between providers and QAA, the DAPs criteria and evidence requirements from OfS's regulatory framework have been given unique identifiers and are reproduced in Annex 4 of the above Guidance for Providers.

In the course of the assessment, the team read 82 documents in support of the application. An initial set of 49 documents was provided as supporting evidence by the School with the submission document. Following a desk-based analysis of this initial evidence against the New DAPs criteria, a request for additional evidence was made and clarification was sought on areas related to staffing and learning resources. The additional evidence request covered criteria A1, B2, B3 and D1. The School provided an additional 12 documents in response. This included one document on an area the team had not requested but the School thought would be helpful for the team. Upon consideration of the additional evidence the team then made three further evidence requests in respect of the A1, C1 and D1 criteria. In response to this the School provided two pieces of evidence and submitted another 10 documents that it thought to be useful in support of its application, some of which were updated versions of previously submitted evidence. The School chose to submit two further pieces of evidence in support of its application before the visit and two more during the course of the assessment visit upon request by the team. The team did not conduct any sampling of evidence as the volume of material available was such that all evidence could be reviewed by the team. Furthermore, the School only intends to run one programme in the immediate future and therefore sampling across programmes was not necessary.

Key themes pursued in the course of the assessment included staff's understanding and planned application of the development of the academic governance structures, academic and support frameworks and policies and their current and future implementation, monitoring and review; the implementation of the programme design, development and approval processes and the use of external reference points, experts and external examiners; staff's understanding of the planned marking and moderation arrangements; staffing plans and their proposed implementation; staff development plans; and the planned implementation of student support arrangements, digital support platforms, learning resource and estate plans.

The team held five meetings using videoconferencing technology during the week of 1 June 2020. In the course of these meetings the team spoke to senior staff, including the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and five Directors, the Registrar and members of the Board of Governors and the senior academic authority. The team also met academic staff, including staff with programme development and management responsibilities, and professional support staff.

Details of the evidence the assessment team considered are provided in the 'Explanation of findings' below.

Explanation of findings

Criterion A: Academic governance

Criterion A1 - Academic governance

1   This criterion states that:

A1.1:   *An organisation granted degree awarding powers has effective academic governance, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for its academic responsibilities.*

A1.2:   *Academic governance, including all aspects of the control and oversight of its higher education provision, is conducted in partnership with its students.*

A1.3:   *Where an organisation granted degree awarding powers works with other organisations to deliver learning opportunities, it ensures that its governance and management of such opportunities is robust and effective and that decisions to work with other organisations are the result of a strategic approach rather than opportunism.*

2   The QAA team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers.

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

3   The QAA team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the Guidance for Providers, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the School's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes of the New DAPs test outlined in paragraphs 232 of the regulatory framework, namely to assess the School's understanding of this criterion and to test the credibility of the School's New DAPs Plan in relation to this criterion.

4   The team considered the School's New DAPs Plan [001] and supporting documentation to test whether the School understands this criterion, its plans are credible and the criterion is likely to be met by the end of the probation period. Specifically, the assessment team considered or assessed:

a   whether the School's higher education mission and strategic direction and associated policies are coherent, will be published, understood and applied consistently, and that its academic policies will support its higher education mission, aims and objectives. To do this, the team reviewed the New DAPs Plan [001], the Key Activities by Quarter document [002], the Strategy and Business Plan [015], the Quality Framework [004], the Governance and Academic Regulations [005] which includes terms of reference of key boards and committees, the General Policies and Procedures [006], and the Academic Community Development Framework [011]. The team also considered the School's website [www.londoninterdisciplinaryschool.org/policies], specifically the pages where a range of student and public-facing documents are published, reviewed minutes of the Academic Council [016a-b; 080] and met senior staff, including members of the Board of Directors and the Academic Council [M1].

b   whether there is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in the School in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its higher education provision; whether the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority is clearly articulated and will be applied

consistently and whether it will manage successfully the responsibilities that would be vested in it were the School to be granted degree awarding powers. For this, the team considered the New DAPs Plan [001], the Key Activities by Quarter document [002], the Quality Framework [004] and the Governance and Academic Regulations [005 – 1.4] which includes terms of reference of key boards and committees. The team also reviewed minutes of the Academic Council [016a-b; 080] and the Board of Directors [060a-c] and met senior staff, including members of the Board of Directors and of the Academic Council [M1].

c   whether there is appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership. To come to a view on this the team considered 11 academic CVs [017], the Academic Community Development Framework [011], the organisation structure [020] which includes job descriptions of senior staff and the academic staffing spreadsheet [022]. The team also met senior staff, including members of the Board of Directors and of the Academic Council [M1], and teaching and professional support staff [M3].

d   how the School will develop, implement and communicate its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff, students and external stakeholders. To do this, the team considered the New DAPs Plan [001], the Governance and Academic Regulations [005] which includes terms of reference of key boards and committees, the Student Engagement Framework [010] and the minutes of Academic Council [016b]. The team also met senior staff, including members of the Board of Directors and of the Academic Council, teaching and professional support staff [M1, M2, M3].

e   if students individually and collectively will be engaged in the governance and management of the School and its higher education provision, and whether students will be supported to be able to engage effectively. The team reviewed the New DAPs Plan [001], the Key Activities by Quarter document [002], the Governance and Academic Regulations [005], the Student Engagement Framework [010], the draft student handbook [029], minutes of the Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel [031a] and minutes of the Academic Council [016b]. The team also met senior staff, including members of the Board of Directors and of the Academic Council [M1].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

5   No sampling of evidence was applicable for this criterion as the School intends to run only one programme for which it wants to award qualifications and the volume of available documentation was such that all evidence could be considered.

What the evidence shows

6   The School's plans in relation to this criterion are as follows.

7   The School's governance structure is comprised of the Board of Directors as the ultimate authority of the School [005–1.2] and Academic Council, as the senior academic authority of the School [005–1.4]. The Executive Committee is the School's senior management team which has responsibility for implementing the strategic plan and providing operational management of the School, in service of the Board of Directors and the Academic Council [001; 005–1.14]. The School has set some of its formal academic governance bodies in motion and scrutinised and ratified its Academic Governance and Regulations document and a wide range of general policies and procedures [16a-b Academic Council Minutes; 060a-c Board of Directors Minutes]. The scheduled meeting dates of each committee, board or panel are planned to be in line with the anticipated student lifecycle beginning in September 2021 [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. During the probation period, the School intends to put in place a set of annual review mechanisms in quarter four of each year to ensure that these governance arrangements and regulations are

effective and evolve appropriately over the probation period with the growth of the School and changing needs of students [002].

8   The School plans to build its academic leadership capacity through a strategically planned approach, including developing its academic community through the seniority and experience of the staff already recruited together with seniority and depth of externals on Academic Council [011 Academic Community Development Framework]. To date, the School has recruited 11 of the planned 13 founding faculty, with further recruitment planned prior to the start of the probation period in September 2021 [001 New DAPs Plan]. Both now and throughout the probation period the School plans to enhance the strength and depth of academic leadership through an Academic Community Development Framework [011] together with the annual performance management process with reports on outcomes to the Board of Directors and Academic Council in quarter four of each year. Identified areas of development and enhancement are intended to feed into the next cycle of staff training, development and recruitment [011; 002 Key Activities by Quarter].

9   The School has developed a Student Engagement Framework approach [010]. This will include opportunities for feedback, student focus groups, and membership of key governance fora [010]. During the probation period, the School plans for student representatives for all relevant committees to be in place and inducted by mid-quarter one of each year of the plan and the Student Voice Committee is expected to be operational, with the first meeting scheduled for year one, quarter two [001 New DAPs Plan; 002 Key Activities by Quarter]. Major cycles of formal student feedback, for example termly feedback forms on modules and non-academic surveys, and the 'You Said, We Did' events (which play back the outcomes of student feedback to the student body) are scheduled in year one, quarter two, and in quarters one and two in subsequent years [002 Key Activities by Quarter; 079 New DAPs milestones].

10   The School is not planning to deliver learning opportunities in collaboration with other organisations during the probation period and this aspect of the criterion was not therefore covered by the New DAPs Plan [001 New DAPs Plan].

11   The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

12   Detail on the School's mission and strategic direction is provided in the Strategy and Business Plan [015], which encompasses a clear rationale and guiding principles for the School's model, together with priority work streams and key objectives. The School's aim is to 'create a centre of excellence for interdisciplinary learning, one that better prepares its students for the modern world' through an innovative interdisciplinary programme which will involve focused learning on a range of disciplines to equip students with knowledge and methods from the arts, sciences and humanities in order to solve real-world problems [001 New DAPs Plan]. The Strategy and Business Plan [015] also includes a simple articulation of the proposed financials, a description of the founding team and the underpinning pedagogy, and architects' representations of the proposed learning environment, giving a clear picture of its proposed structure and purpose.

13   The School's articulated approach to academic governance in the New DAPs Plan [001] references taking account of best practice and sector guidance in its development, including the Office for Students' Regulatory Framework, Notices and Advice; the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, relevant guidance from the Competition and Markets Authority, the Office of the Independent Adjudicator, the Committee of University Chairs, the Financial Reporting Council, and the Equality Act 2010 [005 Governance and Academic Regulations]. The design of the School's governance structure has also taken into account practice in the sector, including the forms and approaches of other, similar higher education institutions, sector good practice, regulatory bodies' good practice guides and the regulations and codes of practice of professional and accrediting bodies [005 Governance and Academic Regulations]. The team considered this approach to be carefully designed, coherent and

clear. The School's website provides contextual information about the School, including its focus and rationale, together with key student-facing information, including an overview of the programme, potential careers, student life and admissions. There is also a separate page with links to a comprehensive series of already approved and published policies and regulations together with the terms of reference for key committees and boards [www.londoninterdisciplinaryschool.org/policies]. This gives the team confidence that the School will continue to publish clear and accessible information about its higher education mission and strategic direction, and associated policies, over the probation period.

14   Collectively, the School's Governance and Academic Regulations [005] is an extensive and well-considered document that includes narrative context on governance structures, terms of reference of the main academic boards, committees and panels, and the 'general academic regulations' which are made up of relevant frameworks, policies, procedures and a code of practice. The General Policies and Procedures [006] are a wide range of appropriate and relevant policies and procedures which can be categorised as academic-related, which may be directly student facing and/or indirectly impacting on students. Included, for example, are the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy [005–1.1], the disability [005–1.3], safeguarding [005–3.1] and health and safety policies [005–3.2], the terms and conditions for students [005–8.1], and those policies concerned with data protection, risk management and business continuity. Collectively, both the General Policies and Procedures [006] and Governance and Academic Regulations [005] provide a robust framework in that these are complementary, thorough and consistent, and are likely to support the School's higher education mission, aims and objectives.

15   Consistent and appropriate application of the academic governance structure is already evidenced through the minutes of Academic Council meetings [016a; 016b; 080]. This includes appropriate consideration and approval of its terms of reference and the Governance and Academic Regulations following deliberation and scrutiny both prior to and during the meeting. Minutes of meetings to date provide reassurance that the application of the governance framework is likely to be consistent over the life of the New DAPs Plan. The development and approval process of the Governance and Academic Regulations has been effective at this stage in the School's development. The School plans to conduct a full review of these at a Council meeting in February 2021, although given that the document now collectively totals 449 pages and that Council meetings are typically just two hours in duration, the team noted it may be challenging to achieve comprehensive deliberation by all Council members. The senior staff whom the team met described the thorough development and approval process of the Governance and Academic Regulations and also noted that they would expect the governance structure to evolve to accommodate member and student needs and that this would be taken into account in the scheduled annual review [M1].

16   Senior staff met by the team explained how staff understanding of the mission and strategy would be evidenced during the probation period, noting that they expected associated policies to be understood and applied consistently throughout. This confidence was based on the School having a clear strategy and business plan and an approach to teaching and learning that was familiar to the staff recruited to date [M1]. They noted that consistent application was already evident in the approval of the School's programme and the planned systematic approach to monitoring, review and continuous student feedback would ensure an evolutionary approach whereby all quality instruments will have been successfully implemented by the end of the probation period [M1]. The team concluded that this shows an understanding by the School that policies and procedures may need to be adapted over time, following appropriate review, and is therefore a credible approach.

17   The School's Quality Framework [004] describes the development of a positive quality culture which will underpin its approach to monitoring and assuring the quality of its provision and the maintenance of academic standards. Supporting this culture will be a strong commitment to training and continuous development, through staff induction and ongoing development as articulated in its Academic Community Development Framework

[011]. Training on assessment, as detailed in the School's internal development programme, includes, as a key aim, to ensure that staff are fully aware of the School's regulations [011]. The team considered that this collectively demonstrates that the School's higher education mission and strategic direction and associated policies are likely to be understood and applied consistently.

18   The approved terms of reference for Academic Council, as the academic authority of the School [005–1.4], indicates clear differentiation between the role of the executive and academic governance. The Board of Directors is noted as the ultimate authority of the School and will be directly responsible for setting the mission, approving the strategic plan, and overseeing its commercial activities and financial health [005–1.2]. The Executive Committee, under the leadership of the Chief Executive, is the School's senior management team. It will be responsible for implementing the strategic plan and managing the functions and day-to-day operational activities of the School, in service of the Board of Directors and the Academic Council [005–1.2; 001].

19   The Board of Directors' terms of reference [005–1.2] set out that the Board will contain two external, independent members, appointed by the Board, who will have significant experience of strategic and commercial leadership within higher education or a similar environment, one of whom acts as Chair. The Board of Directors cedes authority for academic matters to Academic Council, recognising in its terms of reference that under company law it remains legally responsible for the School and any decision taken on its behalf [005–1.1 governance overview]. It also recognises that commercial pressures may abut or conflict with the protection of academic standards and quality. In consequence, it gives an appropriate undertaking to inform its regulatory bodies within 10 working days of any action or decision which reduces the powers or authority of the Academic Council over academic standards and quality [005–1.1 governance overview]. This demonstrates a clear understanding of the separate roles and functions of these two key governance bodies.

20   The Board of Directors' terms of reference [005–1.2] also note that it will receive regular and timely reports from the Academic Council on such matters as the monitoring, maintenance and protection of academic standards and the quality of the student experience. The minutes of the Board of Directors meetings in February and April 2020 [060a-c] evidence this, and are indicative of a structured and consistent approach to the leadership and management of the School. Staff whom the team met were clear that any potential for conflicts of interest would be effectively mitigated through a clear division of Board and Council function and decision-making, and through appropriate externality [M1].

21   The minutes of the three Academic Council meetings to date in December 2019, March 2020 [016a-b] and May 2020 [080] confirm that the meetings adhered to the terms of reference and that it discharged its academic governance responsibilities effectively, for example in oversight of quality and standards through its scrutiny, amendment and approval of regulations and policies, demonstrating that the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority is clearly articulated and implemented in practice. To further ensure that this will be the case, the School has plans for an externally commissioned review in year two of quarter three during the probation period to report on the effectiveness of governance and quality [002]. The team concludes that this demonstrates rigour and a self-critical approach to academic governance.

22   There are three intended subcommittees of Academic Council (Student Voice Committee [005–1.11], Admissions Decisions Committee [005–1.9], and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee [1.10]) six panels (Student Disciplinary Panel [005–1.13], Research Ethics Panel [005–1.12], Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel [005–1.7], Academic Misconduct Panel [005–1.8], Criminal Convictions Panel [005–1.9.1], and Extenuating Circumstances Panel [005–1.5.1]), and two boards (Board of Examiners [005–1.5] and Academic Appeals Board [005–1.6]), all of which will report directly to Academic Council. The team examined the terms of reference and concludes that, while there are a

large number of bodies given the intended size of the School's undergraduate provision, the intended lines of accountability and their roles and functions have the potential to support integrated working and effective academic governance. Additionally, while in the early stages of the School's development there may be the same staff in several of these fora, staff whom the team met confirmed that a much broader selection of staff would be involved as the School grows [M1]. The team considered that sufficient meetings of these bodies have been scheduled in alignment with the student life cycle and their key activities carefully mapped out over each year of the probation period [002 Key Activities by Quarter], demonstrating a considered approach and providing confidence to the team that the academic governance structures will be implemented consistently. The team also considers that the established governance structures demonstrate a clear understanding of the different functions and responsibilities in relation to governance and support the team's view that the School has the capacity to manage successfully the governance responsibilities of a degree awarding body.

23   The proposed organisational structure [020] is planned to be fully operational at launch in September 2021 and is considered proportionate by the team to the School's planned academic provision, with appropriate depth and strength of leadership evident across a range of functions. The job descriptions of key academic leaders analysed by the team [020] clearly demonstrate a focus on the continuous development of the School's academic community and the quality of the student experience. The 11 academic CVs [017] evidence wide and appropriate expertise, experience and extensive sector engagement. Similarly, the academic staffing spreadsheet [022] shows active engagement by current post-holders with pedagogic development, with current research and advanced scholarship, and wide experience of curriculum development, assessment design and assessment delivery (see paragraph 164 for details). Eight academic staff have experience as consultants, seven are or have been involved in professional practice, and three in creative work. While the academic staffing analysis [022] only records two staff who either have or are currently studying towards a teaching qualification, staff whom the team met confirmed that staff would be encouraged and supported to apply for Advance HE fellowships [M3 role of academic and professional staff meeting].

24   The Academic Community Development Framework [011] is planned for implementation from September 2020 when the School will also join Advance HE as an affiliate member. The framework introduces the detailed operational and theoretical underpinning of the School's approach and includes appropriate elements such as the academic career development framework, the faculty training programme and the induction and academic performance management policies [011]. There is a strong commitment to continuous development, for example through the School's internal staff development programme which is centred on four key areas: assessment; curriculum design; pedagogy (including research supervision for dissertations); and research [011]. A planned annual faculty awayday is intended to facilitate the School's institutional identity and contribute to the ongoing development of a distinctive, self-critical interdisciplinary community [011]. The New DAPs Plan [001] provides further clarity around the strength and depth of academic leadership, citing the seniority and experience of the senior staff recruited, the plans for leadership contingency and succession planning, and the seniority and depth of externals as evidence of the School's approach. This is credible both at this point in its development and in relation to the planned volume of staffing resource by year three of the New DAPs Plan in 2024.

25   In its New DAPs Plan [001] the School notes that it is committed to engaging students as active partners in their education and wider experience, with their views being vital in assuring and enhancing the quality of teaching, learning and the overall student experience. The Student Engagement Framework [010] is a comprehensive document which reflects this commitment to student engagement and is built on the principles of consultation, involvement, participation and partnership. The School plans that key governance bodies such as the Academic Council [005–1.4 membership] and the Programme and Module

Review and Approval Panel [005–1.9 membership] will include a student representative, ensuring student engagement in committee and board business and decision-making. The School has already appointed a graduate of an interdisciplinary BASc programme at another provider as a member of Academic Council, with the minutes of the March meeting [016b] demonstrating appropriate deliberation of the School's policies and procedures. This evidences the School's commitment to collaboration with students and gives confidence in its future approach. The planned Student Voice Committee which the School intends will include all elected student members of the School's committees, one of whom acts as Chair, has a broad and appropriate remit to drive quality improvements and changes in process as noted in the New DAPs Plan [001], although this is not explicitly mentioned in its formal terms of reference [005–1.11].

26   Academic Council meeting minutes [016b] demonstrate that the School has developed its policies and procedures in consultation with those staff currently employed and with members of the boards and committees which have met to date. However, over the probation period, the School intends to have a broader range of staff involved. For example, the terms of reference for Academic Council [005–1.4] include in its membership up to 10 module leaders from the programme team, two student representatives and at least one, and up to two, independent members. Staff whom the team met said that members of Academic Council would also be tasked with feeding back on the outcome of meetings to all staff [M1 governance meeting], and that fortnightly whole-team meetings would be used to communicate key information [M2 academic framework meeting]. Additionally, staff have a separate area on the learning management platform that is not accessible to students where information will be held and where they can communicate [M3 meeting role of academic and professional staff]. This shows that the School has in place the structures to develop, implement and communicate its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff.

27   While the School has no current students, it plans to include student representatives on all major governance committees, beginning with election and induction of new representatives the first quarter in year one of the probation period followed by the first meeting of the Student Voice Committee in year one quarter two [001 New DAPs Plan; 002 Key Activities by Quarter]. To enable students to engage effectively in the governance and management of the School, the School plans to provide specific training to those individuals. For example, all students who are elected to boards, including deliberative committees and the Board of Directors, will receive face-to-face training from the Director of Admissions and Student Support, or their nominee [010]. Pending the arrival of its own students, the School's decision to appoint a graduate of an interdisciplinary programme at another provider as a member of Academic Council [016b Academic Council minutes] and as a member of the Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel for the validation of the proposed programme, as demonstrated in the minutes [031a], signals early commitment to the planned framework.

28   In its New DAPs Plan [001] the School sets out a tiered model to student engagement which it intends to form the basis for its engagement strategies. Planned engagement opportunities include a variety of individual, focused, representative, and collective opportunities for students to comment on the running of the School and the quality of its provision. Examples include termly module feedback forms and non-academic surveys, the outcomes of which are to be considered by the Academic Council, thus ensuring appropriate oversight. The School's plans to engage all students are detailed in the draft student handbook [029] and include termly module feedback forms and student surveys on support services, termly 'You Said, We Did' events and termly engagement surveys on teaching and learning, resources and non-academic student services such as wellbeing, accommodation and careers advice [029]. The School will also hold student focus groups, including with hard-to-reach groups in drafting and evaluating the School's Access and Participation Plan [001]. The School's plans to engage students individually and collectively in governance and management and the support provided to do so effectively are credible and appropriate.

Conclusions

29   The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers.

30   The School's higher education approach, strategic direction and its associated approved and already published policies and procedures are well-developed and coherent and appropriately support its mission, aims and objectives. The School's academic governance structures are comprehensive and appropriately reference, take account of good practice and sector guidance in their development and are likely to provide a robust framework for managing academic standards and quality. There is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in the School in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its higher education provision, and the function and responsibility of Academic Council as the senior academic authority is clearly articulated, understood by those in post and has been applied consistently to date. Plans for student and staff membership of these governance bodies are likely to enable key involvement in the development, monitoring and communication of policies and procedures.

31   There is appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership to support the School's development, with wide and appropriate expertise, experience and extensive sector engagement evident in the founding faculty already in post, with plans in place for further development through a comprehensive Academic Community Development Framework and an annual performance management process. Students and staff are already engaged in the governance and management of the School, with plans in place for further embedded engagement over the life of the plan.

32   During the probation period, the School plans to put in place a set of annual review mechanisms to ensure that the governance arrangements and regulations are effective and evolve appropriately with the growth of the School and changing needs of students. The New DAPs Plan includes details of appropriate management, monitoring and self-critical evaluation in relation to this criterion; is well-structured, coherent and credible, demonstrating understanding of the criterion. Staff met by the team were able to explain their respective roles and responsibilities in meeting this criterion and in delivering the plan, further demonstrating clear understanding. The team is confident that the School has the understanding and capacity to manage successfully the governance responsibilities incumbent on a degree awarding body.

33   The team concludes, therefore, that the School understands this criterion and that its New DAPs Plan is credible and would enable the DAP criterion to be met by the end of the probation period.

Criterion B: Academic standards and quality assurance

Criterion B1 - Regulatory frameworks

34   This criterion states that:

B1.1:   An organisation granted degree awarding powers has in place transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications.

B1.2:   A degree awarding organisation maintains a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

35   The team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the Guidance for Providers, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the School's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes of the New DAPs test outlined in paragraphs 232 of the regulatory framework, namely to assess the provider's understanding of this criterion and to test the credibility of the provider's New DAPs Plan in relation to this criterion.

36   The team considered the School's New DAP Plan [001] and supporting documentation to test whether the School understands this criterion, its plans are credible and the criterion is likely to be met by the end of the probation period. Specifically, the team considered or assessed:

a   whether the School has created academic frameworks and regulations appropriate for the granting of its own higher education qualifications. To do this the team considered the New DAPs Plan [001] and the Key Activities by Quarters document [002] along with the Quality Framework [004], the Governance and Academic Regulations [005], General Policies and Procedures [006], the Access and Participation Plan [003], the Strategy and Business Plan [015] and the policies and regulations map [051; 065]. The team also reviewed the minutes of the Academic Council [016a-b], considered the Regulatory Lessons Learnt Document [018], the academic [049] and organisational risk registers [053] and met academic management and teaching staff [M2].

b   whether the School's academic frameworks and regulations governing its higher education provision are appropriate to its current status and will be implemented fully and consistently. For this the team considered the New DAP Plan [001], the programme and module design, development and approval policies and procedures [005–2.21], the overview of programme approval process document [035], minutes of the programme development team [047a-d] and the Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel 031a-b], outcomes of the validation process [039] and the School's response [040], the programme specification [014], the programme learning outcomes matrix [037, 067] and sample module forms and assessment instruments [036].

c   whether the School intends to maintain definitive and up-to-date records of its programmes and qualifications, that these records will be used as the basis for the delivery and assessment and that students and alumni will be provided with records of study. To assess this the team considered the New DAP Plan [001], the Key Activities by Quarters document [002], the policies and regulations map [051; 065], the programme specification [014], the draft student handbook [029] the Programme and Module Modification Procedure [005–2.21], and met academic management and teaching staff [M2].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

37   No sampling of evidence was applicable for this criterion as the School intends to run only one programme for which it wants to award qualifications and the volume of available documentation was such that all evidence could be considered.

What the evidence shows

38   The School's plans in relation to this criterion are as follows:

39   The School's academic framework is at an advanced stage. It has developed general academic regulations [005] which are supported by a Quality Framework [004]. Their design incorporates external reference points and research into academic quality and UK higher education frameworks. They have been approved by the Academic Council, in March 2020 [016b Academic Council minutes], and are due to be implemented from September 2021 although some aspects, such as the award of credit and qualifications, are not expected to be fully implemented until July 2024 when the first cohort is expected to graduate [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. During the three-year probation period the School intends that the Academic Council will review the effectiveness and fitness of purpose of the academic framework, regulations and policies on an annual basis in the third quarter of each academic year [002 Key Activities by Quarter].

40   The School intends for definitive programme records to be held by the Registry. These are intended to form the basis for the delivery and assessment of the programme and the School plans to make them available to students on the virtual learning environment. Records of study, including result transcripts, are to be housed in the student records system [001 New DAPs Plan]. During the probation period the School plans that any changes to the programme specification will be made in line with the Programme Design, Development, Modification and Evaluation Procedure [005–2.21] and approved by the Academic Council. Certificates and transcripts are to be produced by the Registry. This will be implemented in stages from programme launch in September 2021 until the programme is delivered and the first awards are made in 2024 [001 New DAPs Plan]. The School plans to monitor the effectiveness of the student record system in delivering definitive records of study, along with the administrative support system, during the first year of delivery, followed by a full annual review by the Academic Council in the last quarter of each academic year of the probation period [002 Key Activities by Quarter].

41   The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

42   The School's academic framework [005–2.2] is clear, comprehensive and appropriate, and thus suitable for its plans to grant its own higher education qualifications in that it has been developed using appropriate external sources. These include the OfS's Regulatory Notices and Advice (2018), the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (2018), the *Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies* (2014), the Competition and Markets Authority's Guidance to Institutions of Higher Education, the Equality Act 2010 and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's Good Practice Framework (2016) [001 New DAPs Plan]. The CVs for the School's senior management team confirm that they have extensive experience in the higher education sector [017; 024] and the New DAPs Plan states that the School has taken into account practice in the sector, including documentation and approaches of other, similar higher education institutions and sector good practice, as well as input from external expert higher education consultants in the design of its own academic frameworks, regulations, policies and procedures [001 New DAPs Plan]. This demonstrates to the team that the School has used appropriate external benchmarking activities in the development of its academic framework and the New DAPs Plan establishes a clear link between the mission of the School, the academic framework and regulations, policies and procedures [001 New DAPs Plan]. The Strategy and Business Plan [015] and Regulatory Lessons Learnt Document [018] details the changes the School has made to its academic framework, regulations and policies, reflecting on its experience of a Quality Standards Review in 2019, further demonstrating a self-critical approach and commitment to continuous improvement.

43   The regulatory framework is well developed in that it encompasses all aspects of running a higher education institution. The general academic regulations [005-2] together with the Quality Framework [004] define, support and enforce the academic framework and include arrangements for all aspects of the student journey. This includes student admissions, recognition of prior learning, assessment, awards, academic appeals and complaints. They also include comprehensive coverage of the planned approach to the

award of credit and qualifications [005–2.3 assessment and classifications framework] and detail the assessment regulations, which include rules on deferrals, mitigating circumstances, academic malpractice, student progression and classification of awards [005–2 general academic regulations].

44   The School plans to implement its policies and procedures for the award of academic credit and qualifications within a coherent committee structure ultimately reporting to the Academic Council [005–1.4 terms of reference]. Bodies with delegated responsibilities from the Academic Council include the Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel [005–1.7 terms of reference], which will be responsible for scrutinising programme approval and modifications, and the Board of Examiners [005–1.5 terms of reference] which will be responsible for safeguarding academic awards conferred in the School's name on behalf of the Academic Council by considering and approving student results and progression between levels. In addition, an Extenuating Circumstances Panel [005–1.5.1 terms of reference] and Academic Appeals Board [005–1.6 terms of reference] will be responsible to the Academic Council for ensuring equity of treatment for students in relation to such cases. The Academic Misconduct Panel [005–1.8 terms of reference] will consider cases that breach the good academic practice rules. Finally, the Admissions Decisions Committee [005–1.9 terms of reference] will be responsible for operating a fair, transparent and reliable admissions process. The terms of reference, membership and reporting lines for these bodies are clearly articulated and all panels and committees are scheduled to meet sufficiently often to enable robust oversight and timely action [005–1 governance structures].

45   The School's set of academic policies would enable it to perform its responsibilities as a degree awarding body with each policy presented in a standard template, with a summary document at the end where the author, review date and reviewers and related policies are indicated [005–2 general academic regulations]. This gives a very clear picture of the academic framework the School is proposing. All policies and procedures were approved at the Academic Council meeting in March 2020 [016b Academic Council minutes]. The regulations, policies and committee terms of references are presented with a version history, including where and how they have been reviewed and where changes have taken place [005–2 general academic regulations] demonstrating rigour and self-critical evaluation. The accompanying academic policies and regulations map [051, updated 065] details the proposed audience for each policy and how it would be communicated to them, evidencing that the School has given thorough and careful consideration to the implementation of the academic framework and supporting policies.

46   Academic Council minutes [016a-b] demonstrate extensive debates and decision-making surrounding the formation of the academic governance framework, regulations and policies as well as use of appropriate external expertise. The School expects the implementation of the academic framework and policies to be governed by the targets it has set itself in its Access and Participation Plan [003] for student access to higher education, success and attainment, and progression to employment or further study for students from areas of lower higher education participation, lower household income and/or lower socioeconomic status groups, and Black students.

47   The School is planning to monitor and review the academic framework, regulations and policies annually, in the third quarter of each probation year [002 Key Activities by Quarter] through the Academic Council. This body is expected to scrutinise the degree to which they are coherent, understood, applied consistently, and support the School's higher education mission, aims and objectives, demonstrating that the School is aware that policies may have to be adapted over time [001 New DAPs Plan; 004 Quality Framework]. The Key Activities by Quarter document [002] clearly identifies appropriate evidence in the form of Academic Council minutes, papers and other supporting documents that will become available on each review occasion during the probation period.

48   Academic managers and teaching staff already in post [M2 academic framework meeting] described in detail their roles and responsibilities with regard to policy development, monitoring and review and confirmed the use of internal and external expertise in the development of the academic framework and policies using initially two external advisers and then an additional three in policy planning. Staff also provided a detailed account of the plans for monitoring and reviewing the academic framework that was consistent with the measures outlined in the New DAPs Plan [M2]. The team considered there was strong evidence for the credibility of the academic framework and related regulations as the School had taken a robust and systematic approach in their development, demonstrating a thorough understanding of the criterion.

49   The School is currently in the preparatory stage for the launch of its academic provision in September 2021 which will consist of one undergraduate degree. The programme design and development procedures [005–2.21] have already been fully applied by the School in developing and approving the programme. This included the consideration of a business case and an academic case [031a-b Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel minutes]. Compliance with the School's academic frameworks and regulations is a condition of programme approval under the procedure [005–2.21]. The written summary of the approval process [035] is consistent with the approved programme and module design, development and approval policies and procedures [005–2.21]. Notes of the programme development team meetings demonstrate that the team met frequently with a wide membership of internal staff [047a-d]. The curriculum was carefully mapped as documented in the programme and module learning outcomes matrix [037, updated 067] which sets out how each module aligns with the programme learning outcomes. In February 2020 the School conducted a thorough formal programme and module approval panel event [035 programme approval process] (for details see paragraph 79 below). The New DAPs Plan [001] states that any future programme development would follow the same procedures. The thorough implementation of approval policies and procedures for the current programme provides confidence that the School is likely to implement its academic frameworks and regulations fully and consistently in the future.

50   The School intends to review the effectiveness of the programme approval policy and procedures annually through the Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel in each third quarter and any recommendations for change will be presented to the Academic Council for approval [001 New DAPs Plan; 002 Key Activities by Quarter]. Overall, the School's academic framework and regulations that will govern its higher education provision are appropriate for its current status as a small, single-programme institution. Evidence of the implementation of these to date in terms of programme approval, demonstrate that these are coherent and support rigour (see paragraph 79 below).

51   The School has well developed plans for the maintenance of definitive and up-to-date records of the qualification to be awarded. They are based on the programme and module specifications [014] which formed part of the programme approval documentation. The programme specification is intended to serve as the definitive record of the programme and is expected to be available to prospective students on the website, enrolled students through the online learning platform and to staff on the intranet [001 New DAPs Plan; 051 Policies and Regulations Map; 065 updated policies and regulations map]. The programme specification [014] was produced to a standard template and is comprehensive in its coverage of programme features and requirements, containing relevant information such as the award title, exit awards, stages and credit weighting, date of approval, delivery methods, structure and content, conditions of admission, progression points, programme aims and outcomes, and the applicable learning, teaching and assessment methods deployed for the programme. The programme comprises core and optional modules [014] and their coherence and currency was scrutinised at validation as described above.

52   The School's plans for the maintenance of records are credible because a single authority, the Registry, will be responsible for maintaining accurate records of each

qualification and the Programme and Module Modification Procedure [005–2.21] stipulates that any subsequent amendments to the programme specification have to be routed through a formal change process managed and recorded by the Registry. This was confirmed in meetings with senior management staff [M2 academic framework meeting]. The team considered that this arrangement is consistent with the academic framework, roles and responsibilities outlined in the New DAPs Plan and is likely to provide a sound basis for the maintenance and use of definitive records.

53   The School intends to use the programme specification [014] as the basis for the delivery and assessment of each programme. For example, it plans to communicate information regarding learning outcomes and assessments to students through the virtual learning environment and the course handbook [029]. Academic management and teaching staff stated that they have used the programme specification as the starting point for designing learning materials and assessments [M2 academic framework meeting]. This confirmed to the team that the record of the qualification would be definitive, current and accessible to students and staff.

54   Students and alumni are expected to receive records of study through transcripts and certificates generated through the planned digital student records system [001 New DAPs Plan]. The academic framework [005-2.2] stipulates that all certificates and transcripts are to be produced solely by the Registry, an approach that will help ensure security and provides assurance on the accuracy of information in relation to the definitive programme records. This was confirmed at the meeting with senior staff where they emphasised the importance of confidence in the system and plans for rigorous testing in the pre-launch phase in 2020-21 [M2 academic framework meeting]. The School intends to monitor the effectiveness of the student record system in delivering definitive records of study during the first year of delivery, with a full annual review by the Academic Council. Evidence of this activity has been identified in the form of minutes and supporting papers that would be available after each event [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. The plans for the records of study were therefore found to be sound and robust and demonstrate an understanding of the criterion.

Conclusions

55   The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers.

56   The School has developed comprehensive and transparent academic frameworks and regulations to govern how it will award academic credit and qualifications which are fit for purpose and fully understood by staff. This includes academic regulations for the award of academic credit, qualifications and classification of awards; assessment regulations covering deferrals, extenuating circumstances, academic misconduct and student progression; and policies and procedures for other aspects of the student journey such as student admissions, recognition of prior learning and academic appeals and complaints, demonstrating a good understanding of the criterion.

57   Responsibilities for the management and oversight of regulations, policies and procedures are clearly articulated. The academic frameworks and regulations are appropriate to its current status and the School has used appropriate external reference points and expertise in their development, evidencing that it understands the importance of benchmarking.

58   The School has clear and credible plans for maintaining definitive, secure and up-to-date records of approved programmes and qualifications by the Registry and it has clearly defined mechanisms to ensure that any changes will be formally approved and that the programme specification informs the delivery, assessment, monitoring of the programme and the provision of records of study.

59   The New DAPs Plan includes details of appropriate management, monitoring and self-critical evaluation in relation to this criterion and staff met by the team were able to explain their respective roles and responsibilities in meeting this criterion and in delivering the plan. The plan articulates clearly how the School intends to meet the criterion and identifies appropriate sources of evidence, and indicates when these will become available over the probation period. The Academic Council intends to review the effectiveness and fitness for purpose of the regulatory framework and policies and procedures on an annual basis in the third quarter of each academic year. The minutes of the meeting are expected to identify any changes required and these would be implemented in the following academic year; making the targets in the plan specific, measurable, achievable and time bound. Overall, the School's plans for meeting this criterion in full by the end of the probation period are comprehensive, coherent and realistic.

60   The team concludes, therefore, that the School understands this criterion and that its New DAPs Plan is credible and would enable the DAP criterion to be met by the end of the probation period.

Criterion B2 - Academic standards

61   This criterion states that:

B2.1:   An organisation granted degree awarding powers has clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications.

B2.2:   Organisations with degree awarding powers are expected to demonstrate that they are able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ). Organisations with degree awarding powers are expected to demonstrate that the standards that they set and maintain above the threshold are reliable over time and reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.

62   The QAA team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in Guidance for Providers.

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

63   The QAA team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the Guidance for Providers, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the School's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes of the New DAPs test outlined in paragraphs 232 of the regulatory framework, namely to assess the provider's understanding of this criterion, to test the credibility of the provider's New DAPs Plan in relation to this criterion and to test the academic standards of the proposed programmes.

64   The team considered the School's New DAP Plan [001] and supporting documentation to test whether the School understands this criterion, its plans are credible, the academic standards of the proposed programmes are appropriate and the criterion is likely to be met by the end of the probation period. Specifically, the team considered or assessed:

a   whether the School's higher education qualifications will be offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies. The team therefore examined the New DAPs Plan [001], the academic framework [005–2.2] and the assessment and classification framework [005–2.3], the programme and module approval procedures [005–2.21], the programme specification for the BASc degree [014], the programme learning outcomes matrix [037, 067], the background to programme development document [030], the minutes of the Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel [031a-b], the Marking and Moderation Policy [005–2.9], the milestones and accountability document [062] and met the programme development team [M2].

b   how the School will take appropriate account of relevant external reference points and external and independent expertise, including students, in setting and maintaining academic standards and establishing comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications. For this, the team considered the New DAPs Plan [001], the programme and module approval procedures [005–2.21], the background to programme development [030] and the programme approval process documents [035], Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel minutes [031a], the student consultation clarification paper [052], the external academic expertise framework [005–2.20], the External Examiner Policy and Procedure [005-2.19], the Marking and Moderation Policy [005–2.9], the Boards of

Examiner's membership and terms of reference [005–1.5], the annual programme monitoring procedure [005–2.21] and the register of external examiners and advisers [028].

c   whether the School's programme approval arrangements are robust, will be applied consistently, and will ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification the School will be awarding and are in accordance with its academic frameworks and regulations. To do this the team examined the New DAPs Plan [001], the programme and module approval procedures [005–2.21], the Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel Minutes [031a-b], the overview of programme approval process for the BASc degree [035], the Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel outcome note [039], and the programme development team's response to the panel [040].

d   whether credit and qualifications will be awarded only where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment, and both the UK threshold standards and the academic standards of the School have been satisfied. The team therefore considered the academic framework [005–2.2], the assessment and classification framework, the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy [005–2.10] and the operation of the Board of Examiners [005–2.19] as well as sample module forms and assessment instruments [036].

e   whether the School's proposed programme monitoring and review arrangements are robust, will be applied consistently and will explicitly address whether UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the School are being maintained. To come to a view on this, the team considered the New DAPs Plan [001] and the annual programme monitoring procedure [005–2.21].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

65   No sampling of evidence was applicable for this criterion as the School intends to run only one programme for which it wants to award qualifications and the volume of available documentation was such that all evidence could be considered.

What the evidence shows

66   The School's plans in relation to this criterion are as follows.

67   Programme delivery is being planned from September 2021 onwards [002 Key Activities by Quarter] and the School has developed a full set of academic regulations and procedures to act as a reference point for setting and maintaining the academic standards of the higher education qualifications it intends to award [001 New DAPs Plan]. It is proposed to use independent external expertise and students in future academic developments as academic advisers and scrutineers, members of academic governance committees and external examiners [005–2.20 external academic expertise framework]. The School intends to ensure comparability of academic standards through the use of external examiners and their reports [005–2.19 external examiner policy] and plans to recruit external examiners during the first year of delivery [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. Student assessment outcomes will be evaluated by a Board of Examiners from the first year of delivery [002 Key Activities by Quarter].

68   The School plans to conduct programme monitoring annually through the Academic Council [001 New DAPs Plan]. The School's annual programme monitoring procedure [005–2.21] is scheduled to be fully implemented for the first time after the first year of operation in quarter one of year two. [002 Key Activities by Quarter] Regulations and policies are planned to be reviewed annually by the Academic Council during the probation period in the third

quarter of each year, which will include scrutiny of effectiveness of the programme approval mechanisms and the annual programme monitoring procedure [002 Key Activities by Quarter].

69   The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

70   The School intends to offer a qualification that corresponds to Level 6 of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The School's academic framework [005–2.2] and the assessment and classification framework [005–2.3] provide an appropriate reference point for setting and assessing academic standards when designing and approving modules and programmes. They are designed in such a way that they are likely to ensure that qualifications are of a standard consistent with the FHEQ because the approval procedures [005–2.21] require that the threshold standards meet those described in the FHEQ. Programme learning outcomes must be mapped to each level of the FHEQ. For the re-approval of a programme a critical review of the standards of the programme from external examiners would be required, as well as the annual programme monitoring report for the previous two years. These must contain an evidence-based evaluation of whether the programme meets its stated academic standards, including consistency with the FHEQ, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, and comparator programmes in the sector [005–2.21 programme and module approval procedures]. The team considers this approach sound as it focuses on the alignment of academic standards with sector benchmarks and reference points.

71   School regulations and procedures pertaining to academic standards include the academic [005–2.2], assessment and classification [005–2.3] and external academic expertise frameworks [005–2.20]; and policies and procedures on assessment and marking [005–2.9], external examining [005–2.19], programme and module approval and programme annual monitoring [005–2.21]. They are intended to ensure standards above the threshold are reliable over time and reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies. Therefore, the School's academic framework and regulatory system aligns with the FHEQ. The assessment and classification framework [005-2.3] sets out the classification rules which are designed to enable students to achieve the academic standards at the threshold level and beyond. The thorough application of the academic regulations and related frameworks is evident from the development and approval of the BASc in Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods. The approval report shows that the School has consistently applied them and thereby set academic standards in line with sector and regulatory expectations [031a-b Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel Minutes].

72   The School's approach to the formulation of programme learning outcomes is set out in the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy [012]. The programme learning outcome matrix [037; updated 067] shows the implementation of its articulated principles and demonstrates a careful mapping of programme learning outcomes and credits to each level of the FHEQ. In addition, module learning outcomes have been mapped against the programme learning outcomes. The matrix also shows classification threshold descriptors for the proposed exit awards at Levels 4 and 5 and the degree level descriptors at Level 6, clearly demonstrating that students will have opportunities to achieve beyond the threshold level. Learning outcomes are specified in detail by skills, knowledge and attributes and the matrix shows how these would be achieved defined by academic level. Achievement of each learning outcome is grouped according to threshold (pass) level and higher levels, namely merit and distinction, which equates to degree classifications, demonstrating the School's understanding of the need for clear and consistently applied mechanisms for setting and maintaining standards [037 programme learning outcome matrix; updated 067].

73   The School's approach to the use of Subject Benchmark Statements is articulated in the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy [012]. It states that there is currently no Statement for 'interdisciplinary studies'; however, a draft Statement has been produced by a

group of institutions that deliver liberal arts and sciences programmes of which the School is a member. The School has used Subject Benchmark Statements from aligned subjects to determine the content and coverage of the programme [012 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy]. This was confirmed by the programme development team met who reported that the School had also considered the programme specifications and programme learning outcomes of several closely related degree programmes: at the University of Birmingham, Brunel University, UCL and King's School London [M2 academic standards meeting; 030 background to programme development].

74   The team examined the School's assessment and classification framework [005–2.3] and found it comprehensively sets out the classification rules and is designed to enable students to achieve the academic standards at the threshold level and beyond. It is supported by a Marking and Moderation Policy [005–2.9] which provides clarity to assessors and external examiners on the approved approach to marking and moderation, including the specification of marking criteria, assessment rubrics, marking calibration, first marking and internal moderation, all of which will enable the fair determination of whether students have achieved at and beyond the threshold level. From all of the above it is evident that the School's higher education qualifications are likely to be offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ.

75   The New DAPs Plan [001] outlines an appropriate programme of monitoring and review of the academic regulations and procedures to ensure the ongoing maintenance of academic standards, with a planned annual review by the Academic Council in the third quarter of each year [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. This is expected to include scrutiny of the extent to which the programme approval mechanisms are robust, applied consistently, and help assure academic standards in line with sector standards and the School's academic frameworks and regulations, as well as a review of the effectiveness of the annual programme monitoring procedure [001 New DAPs Plan]. Academic standards are to be monitored through a formal annual monitoring process from first quarter of year two when the programme has had a full year of delivery [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. The School expects to recruit external examiners in the first year of programme delivery and they are expected to start reporting in the first quarter of the second year of delivery to align with annual monitoring [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. The team found the plan for monitoring academic standards to be credible because the proposed mechanisms are cohesive, complementary and timely. It is likely that if there are any issues on academic standards, these will be noted and rectified by this approach. The Key Activities by Quarter document [002] together with the New DAPs Milestones document [079] and a summary of future evidence [062] identify appropriate sources of evidence in the form of reports and minutes of meetings and specify when evidence will be available in each quarter, making the School's plans specific, measurable and time-bound, thus aiding its achievement.

76   The team found appropriate use of external and independent expertise and reference points in the programme design and approval processes for the current programme in line with its policies and procedures [005–2.21 programme design and approval procedure]. Programme development documents [030 Background to Programme Development; 035 Programme Approval Process] show that an extensive range of external advisers and students were used at the various stages of programme design and approval. Minutes of the approval panel [031a] confirm that external experts provided assurance that the quality and standards of the School's proposed programme and the modules align with the FHEQ and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements; confirmed the reasonable comparability of the standards of the School's programme and modules relative to standards achieved at other UK providers and confirmed that students will have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level [031a Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel minutes]. The School's register of external examiners and advisoes [028] currently lists seven individuals and the School plans to expand this list and use them in future reviews and assessment processes [M3 academic standards meeting]. As the School does not have students yet, a graduate student from another institution was

recruited as the student representative on the approval panel [035 Programme Approval Process]. The student consultation paper provided to the team [052] demonstrates that the School provided training in academic standards and quality, and on the role of a panel member. For future events, one student representative is expected to sit on the Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel [005–1.7 terms of reference] and two on the Academic Council [005–1.4 terms of reference] which receive programme approval, annual monitoring and external examiner reports, thereby allowing student engagement in the setting and maintaining of academic standards.

77   The School intends to maintain academic standards and ensure their comparability with those at other UK higher education providers through the use of external examiners and their reports [001 New DAPs Plan]. The role of external examiners, which the School intends to appoint from 2021, is comprehensively articulated in the external academic expertise framework and the External Examiner Policy and Procedure [005–2.19], demonstrating that the School has understood the importance of using external and independent expertise for the maintenance of academic standards. The School will seek to have at least three external examiners appointed to the programme, which should ensure sufficient spread of expertise and engagement with the programme [005–2.19]. The clearly defined role will encompass a range of activities during each academic year, such as agreeing assessment instruments, marking, moderation and attendance at the Board of Examiners, where decisions on the achievement, progression and awards of students will be made [005].

78   The School's proposed approach to external examining is credible because external examiners are specifically asked to report on academic standards in relation to national sector benchmarks, comparability to the sector and alignment with the FHEQ. They are also expected to comment on academic standards as evidenced by assessment, marking and moderation practices and student assessment performance and opportunities for students to achieve beyond threshold level standards [005–2.19 external examiner policy]. In practice, the School aims to ensure this by involving external examiners in the scrutiny and approval of all summative assessments in terms of whether they are appropriate for the level being assessed. The sampling of assessed work is planned to confirm that marking standards are reasonable, and are being applied in line with those achieved at other UK providers. Recommendations on the reliability and conduct of assessment and marking are also expected [005–2.19 external examiner policy]. Furthermore, a confidential reporting mechanism to the School's Chief Executive is planned on any matters of serious concern which could put standards at risk [001 New DAPs Plan; 005–2.19 external examiner policy]. External examiner annual reports are expected to be considered and responded to by the Academic Council and incorporated into annual programme monitoring [005–2.19 19 external examiner policy]. The team concluded that the planned use of external examiners and their reports in assessment and result confirmation processes is likely to achieve robust arrangements for the maintenance of academic standards.

79   The programme approval arrangements are sound as programmes and modules must undergo a formal evaluation process prior to final approval by the Academic Council before delivery starts [005–2.21 programme approval procedure]. The procedures focus on setting appropriate standards and approval is conditional and time limited. The School has already implemented its approval policies and procedures successfully in February 2020. Minutes of the formally constituted Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel show that the Panel scrutinised in detail the design and specification of learning outcomes, including the alignment of the programme with the FHEQ, and the assessment of learning outcomes that enables differentiation between performances over and above the pass mark. Drawing on input from external panel members, the minutes confirmed the academic standards of the award and its associated exit awards are aligned with the relevant national qualifications frameworks, that students on the programme will have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level and that the academic standards set are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers [031a]. The approval panel stipulated conditions of approval and made recommendations to which the programme

development team responded thoroughly before approval was recommended to the Academic Council [040 team response to approval conditions]. The team considers that this approach ensures that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with the School's academic frameworks and regulations.

80   The team found the programme approval arrangements to be robust because the policy allows for a full and wide-ranging evaluation of all aspects of the programme design and delivery that fully addresses the setting of academic standards [005–2.21 programme approval procedure]. Documentation relating to the approval of the programme [035 Programme Approval Process; 031a Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel minutes] demonstrates that the School meticulously implemented its policies and procedures in accordance with its academic framework and regulations [005 – academic framework and regulations], thus giving confidence to the team that academic standards for this programme have been set at an appropriate level which meets the UK threshold standard and are reasonably comparable with those set and achieved by other UK degree-awarding bodies. The team considers it likely that such procedures would be implemented consistently in the future if the School were to develop and approve further programmes.

81   The School's academic framework [005–2.2], to be fully implemented from September 2021, clearly stipulates that 'credit is awarded to a student on successful completion of the outcomes associated with a particular block of learning at a specified academic level' and 'students will be awarded the credit upon successful completion of the module', that is, on the achievement of a pass mark or better. In order to pass a module, students must satisfy the requirements set out in the module form. The academic regulations [005–2.3] allow for module credits to be assigned through advanced standing and the process to be applied is set out in the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy [005–2.10]. The academic framework [005–2.3] also allows for the award of credit for a module despite the pass mark not having been achieved, provided other certain criteria have been met. The condonable range of marks is clearly set out in the assessment and classification framework [005–2.3]. The minimum credit and level requirements a student has to achieve to obtain a qualification or exit award are specified in the academic framework [005–2.2.], are mapped in the programme specification and conform to the sector credit framework requirements. All decisions related to a student's progression, final results, and awards, including the award of credit, are to be approved by a properly constituted Board of Examiners. No other body will have authority to recommend conferment of an award or progression, nor to amend the decision of the Board of Examiners [005–2.19 external examiner policy]. The design of the academic and classification frameworks shows that the School understands the requirement to only award credit where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment, and both the UK threshold standards and the academic standards of the School have been satisfied.

82   Sample module forms and assessment instruments [036] evaluated by the team showed the assessment strategies, assessment methods, their relative weighting and mapping to module learning outcomes, thus setting out how assessment tests the learning outcomes and allows students to gain credit. This gives confidence that the designed assessment strategies will allow students to evidence their achievement, thus demonstrating that the School has a thorough understanding of the criterion.

83   Programme monitoring is expected to be implemented after the first year of operation in the first quarter of year two to allow for the evaluation of a full year of delivery [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. The proposed annual monitoring procedure [005–2.21] is robust in that it explicitly requires annual monitoring reports to contain an evidence-based evaluation of whether the programme meets its stated academic standards, including consistency with the FHEQ, the UK Quality Code, relevant Subject Benchmark Statements or comparator programmes in the sector, and the School's academic regulations. They are also expected to provide an assessment of the degree to which the programme and its

constituent modules provide students with a fair and reasonable chance of achieving the academic standards beyond the threshold. The School plans for them to incorporate feedback from external examiners and students to support the maintenance of academic standards. It is envisaged that annual monitoring reports will be considered by the Academic Council [005–2.21 annual monitoring procedure] and that full reports are shared with staff to allow reflection and development [001 New DAPs Plan].

Conclusions

84   The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers.

85   The School's plans for meeting the DAPs criterion in full by the end of the probation period are clear and the stated approach is credible and realistic. The School has in place clear policies and processes for the design and approval of programmes and modules and there are robust academic frameworks and regulations developed to support the setting and maintenance of academic standards. Its academic, assessment and classification frameworks provide an appropriate reference point for setting and assessing academic standards when designing and approving modules and programmes. Definitive programme documentation, in the form of programme specifications and module forms, confirm that qualifications will be offered at levels that correspond to relevant levels in the FHEQ. Programme approval documentation demonstrates an appropriate use of external reference points and the use of independent external experts and students in the design and approval of programmes. Plans for the future use of independent external expertise, including external examiners, are sound.

86   The School's programme approval arrangements are robust and have been applied consistently in the approval of its proposed programme. The approval process allows for a full and wide-ranging evaluation of all aspects of the programme design and delivery that fully explores whether academic standards are being set at the correct level and allow students to exceed the threshold standard for the qualification. The School has credible plans for maintenance of academic standards through external examiners and their reports. Policy documents show that their roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and there are precise expectations for the content of the reports. Arrangements for ensuring that credit and qualifications are only awarded where required learning outcomes are achieved are clearly articulated and robust, with the Board of Examiners being the only authority to grant credit and qualifications.

87   The New DAPs Plan includes details of self-critical evaluation through a programme of monitoring and review activities of the academic regulations, procedures and the academic provision. It identifies valid sources of evidence and indicates when these will become available over the probation period, making it measurable and time bound. The planned annual monitoring process, with a focus on enhancement, is likely to be robust and evaluative, covering all elements of programme delivery and is expected to involve key stakeholders such as students and external examiners.

88   The team concludes, therefore, that the School understands this criterion, its New DAPs Plan is credible and would enable the DAP criterion to be met by the end of the probation period, and the academic standards of the proposed programme are appropriate.

Criterion B3 - Quality of the academic experience

89   This criterion states that:

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

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

90   The QAA assessment team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the Guidance for Providers, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the School's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes of the New DAPs test outlined in paragraphs 232 of the regulatory framework, namely to assess the provider's understanding of this criterion and to test the credibility of the provider's New DAPs Plan in relation to this criterion.

91   The team considered the School's New DAP Plan [001] and supporting documentation to test whether the School understands this criterion, its plans are credible and the criterion is likely to be met by the end of the probation period. Specifically, the team considered or assessed:

Design and approval of programmes

a   how the proposed programme was designed and approved in practice and whether responsibility for approving new programme proposals is clearly assigned, including the involvement of external expertise and to assess whether the School's processes for the design, development and approval of programmes are effective. The team therefore considered the New DAPs Plan [001], the Programme Design, Development, Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures [005], the minutes of the programme development team [047a-d], background documents to programme design [030] and approval [035], prelaunch surveys and focus group findings [034], Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel minutes [031a-b], the programme development team's response to approval panel [040] and met programme developers, academic management, teaching and support staff [M2; M3].

b   how the coherence of the proposed programme is secured and will be maintained and to identify how the School will monitor subsequent action from programme approval. For this the team examined the New DAPs Plan [001] and the Programme Design, Development, Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures [005–2.21].

c   how relevant staff will be guided and supported on programme design, development and approval procedures and on their roles and responsibilities in relation to them. To do this the team considered the Academic Community Development Framework [011], the Key Activities by Quarter document [002] and the policies and regulations map [051].

d   whether the School maintain links with learning support services in its programme planning and approval arrangements. To do this the team examined the New DAPs Plan [001], the terms of reference and membership of the Module Review and Approval Panel [005–1.7] and the Academic Council [005–1.4], the Academic

25

Community Development Framework [011], the minutes of the Module Review and Approval Panel [031a-b] and met with senior, academic and support staff [M3].

Learning and teaching

e   how the School articulates and intends to implement a strategic approach to learning and teaching and to establish whether this is consistent with its academic objectives. The team considered the School's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy [012] and its Academic Community Development Framework [011].

f   how the School intends to maintain physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student and how it intends to promote dignity, courtesy and respect in their use. The team therefore examined the New DAPs Plan [001], the terms of reference of the Learning Resources and Property Working Group [009], the Estates Plan [019] and latest updates [074], the Disability Policy [006–1.3], the Dignity at Work and Study Policy and Procedure [006–1.2], the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy [006–1.1], the Safeguarding Policy and Procedure [006–3.1], the Health and Safety Policy [006–3.2] and the Learning Resources Plan [038].

g   how the School intends to ensure that students will be able to monitor their progress and further their academic development. For this the team considered the New DAPs Plan [001], the Examinations Regulations and Procedures for Students [005-2.18], the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy [012], the Student Support Framework [007], the digital systems and IT infrastructure document [026] and met academic and support staff [M4].

Assessment

h   whether the assessment processes the School intends to operate, including the recognition of prior learning, will be valid and reliable; will enable students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit and qualification sought and whether processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are clearly articulated and will be consistently operated by those involved. The team therefore examined the New DAPs Plan [001], the Key Activities by Quarter document [002], the Assessment Approval Procedure [005–2.16], the Policy and Procedure on the Recognition of Prior Learning [005–2.10], [005–2.17], the Security of Examinations and Assessments Procedures [005–2.17], the Deferral, Extension and Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure [005–2.12], the Marking and Moderation Policy [005–2.9], the Academic Community Development Framework [011], the assessment and classifications framework [005–2.3], the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy [012], sample module forms and assessment instruments [036], the External Examiners Policy and Procedure [005–2.19] and met academic teaching and management staff [M3].

i   how the School intends to engage staff and students in a dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made. To come to a view on this the team considered the programme specification [014], sample module forms and assessment instruments [036], the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy [012], the student induction plan [055], the Key Activities by Quarter document [002], the draft student handbook [029] and met academic and management staff [M3].

j   how the School will operate processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice and to establish what opportunities it intends to provide to students to develop and demonstrate good academic practice.

To do this the team considered the New DAPs Plan [001], the Key Activities by Quarter document [002], the Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure [005–2.11], the student induction plan [055], the draft student handbook [029] and the Learning Resources Plan [038].

External examining

k   how the School intends to use external examiners, including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work, and whether it will give full, timely and serious consideration to their comments and recommendations. The team examined the New DAPs Plan [001], the Key Activities by Quarter document [002], the External Examiners Policy and Procedure [005–2.19], the Marking and Moderation Policy [005–2.9], the terms of reference and membership of the Board of Examiners [005–1.5] and met academic and management staff [M3].

Academic appeals and student complaints

l   whether the School's procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of their academic experience will be fair, accessible, enable timely outcomes and facilitate enhancement and how the School intends to take appropriate action following an appeal and complaint. The team therefore considered the New DAPs Plan [001], the Academic Appeals Procedure [005–2.13], the Student Complaints Procedure [005–2.14], the Applicant Complaints and Appeals Procedure [005–2.6], the appeals procedure on the basis of extenuating circumstances [005–2.12], the milestones and accountability document [079], the Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedures [005–2.11], the Academic Progress Policy [005-2.15], the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure [005–2.10] and the draft student handbook [029].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

92   No sampling of evidence was applicable for this criterion as the School intends to run only one programme for which it wants to award qualifications and the volume of available documentation was such that all evidence could be considered.

What the evidence shows

93   The School's plans in relation to this criterion are as follows.

94   The School has already developed and implemented policies for programme design and development in the approval of the BASc Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods. The School provided training for academic staff involved in the development of the programme and plans to provide further training in curriculum design, assessment and pedagogy during the spring and summer of 2020 [011 Academic Community Development Framework; 002 Key Activities by Quarter]. There are plans to review the Programme Design, Development and Approval Procedure annually in the third quarter of each year.

95   The School's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy [012] focuses on interdisciplinary and problem-based learning with an emphasis on real-world problems. Learning is expected to take place online and in the classroom as well as in a variety of external settings. The planned teaching strategy comprises a hybrid of several proven pedagogical approaches. The School has identified a preferred site for the development of its campus and envisages signature of contracts at the end of 2020, allowing for site development to be starting in early 2021, prior to fit out in summer 2021 before programme launch in September 2021 [001 New DAPs Plan; 019 estates plan]. The School plans that students will be able to monitor their progress through the provision of rapid feedback on assessments, interaction with their academic tutor [007 Student Support Framework] and by

accessing the student record system [026 Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure]. The School expects that the system will be fully configured and tested by August 2021 [054 implementation timelines].

96   The School intends that its approach to assessment will be governed by a range of policies it has developed [005 – general academic regulations]. Grading of assessments will commence during year one and is expected to involve a staged process of marking, internal and external moderation and confirmation of whether students have achieved the intended learning outcomes, and is expected to come through the external examining process [005–2.19]. The School plans to engage staff and students in a dialogue on assessment and academic judgements through training on assessment literacy starting at induction and to be repeated in the third quarter of each year [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. The School's approach to unacceptable academic practice focuses on the prevention of academic misconduct through the design of appropriate assessments that minimise opportunities [005–2.11 academic misconduct policy].

97   External examiners are to be formally appointed in the first quarter of year one of the probation period and will begin to fulfil their duties from that point [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. They are expected to have engaged in the full range of duties at the end of the probation period in 2023-24 when the first cohort graduates [005–2.19 external examiner procedure]. Examination Boards will be held in the fourth quarter of each year during the probation period [002 Key Activities by Quarter].

98   The School's procedures for dealing with academic appeals [005–2.13] and complaints [005–2.41] are expected to be gradually implemented from programme launch in 2021 [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. The School expects to monitor complaints and appeals through annual reports in the first quarter of years two and three of the probation period [002 Key Activities by Quarter].

99   The School intends to conduct a programme of annual policy and effectiveness of process reviews in the third quarter of each year during the probation period [002 Key Activities by Quarter].

100   The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

Design and approval of programmes

101   The New DAPs Plan [001] outlines the School's approach to the design and approval of programmes and states that the procedures for programme design and approval have been developed with due regard to external reference points, including the FHEQ, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and sector guidance on course design and development, and are based on extensive research and best practices in the field. The School developed Programme Design, Development, Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures [005-2.21] which it implemented in the design and approval of the programme it wishes to deliver. The School's processes for the design and approval are credible, robust and effective because they consists of a multi-stage consideration of the proposed programme, covering the academic and the business case and the procedures assign clear responsibility for the development and the approval of programmes [005-2.21]. The terms of reference for the programme development team [005-2.21] and the Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel [005–1.7] show that members of both bodies have well-defined and clearly articulated roles. Responsibility for programme approval lies with Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel [005–1.7 terms of reference] and the Academic Council [005–1.4 terms of reference]. The former is expected to conduct the formal approval events and sign off any approval conditions and recommendations [005–1.7 terms of reference], and final approval to be given by the Academic Council [005–1.4 terms of reference]. There is a clearly stated requirement for the involvement of independent external expertise in the formal approval procedures [005-2.21].

102   The team examined the programme design process for the BASc and found that the programme was designed by a development team led by the Director of Teaching and Learning [030 Background to Programme Development]. Minutes of the team's meetings [047a-d] evidence detailed discussions on a range of topics, such as the curriculum structure, expectations for academic standards and quality, rationale of individual modules, consideration of external reference points and proposed assessment strategies. Module drafts and other formative material were reviewed by a group of external interdisciplinary experts prior to submission for approval [030]. The minutes [047 a-d] also evidence that staff undertaking programme development were provided with training and briefing on their roles. A summary of the programme design process [030] outlines the various stages of programme design with a number of preparatory stages involving focus groups with students [034 focus group findings] and discussions with external experts [030]. The documentation gave the impression that there was also consultation with employers; however, staff who met the team clarified that employers were not formally consulted, and instead the School relied on research and its own informal discussions with potential employers to identify graduate attributes, knowledge and skills [M3 quality of academic experience meeting].

103   The Programme Approval Process document [035] which the team examined describes how the programme was approved in practice, evidencing an effective process that followed the School's procedures. The CEO and the Chair of Academic Council discussed the programme in principle and the Board of Directors approved the business case [035 Programme Approval Process]. Minutes of the formal approval event [031a] demonstrates detailed and thorough discussions of the programme proposal (see paragraph 79) and recommended approval to the Academic Council subject to four conditions and four recommendations. It is evident from the minutes of subsequent meetings [031b, 047a-d] that the development team gave due consideration to the panel feedback [031a] and fully addressed the recommendations [040 development team response]. Based on the feedback from the approval panel, the School revised its condonement and resit policy, mapped the pathways through the programmes and specified the pre and co-requisites of each route. It also mapped out the workload and assessment burden in years two and three and reviewed the specification of assessment methods to ensure requirements are expressed clearly to students [040 programme development team response], demonstrating that it has sound processes in place to monitor actions and giving the team confidence that any recommendations arising from future approval events would also be addressed effectively as there is appropriate oversight of follow-up through the approval panel.

104   Staff interviewed by the team demonstrated a clear understanding of the process and could coherently explain the steps outlined above, the role of externals and their own roles [M2 academic standards meeting]. This assures the team that the programme design and approval process was effective in practice and will yield reliable results when used in future for re-validation, modification of modules and the design and approval of new programmes.

105   The School plans to employ several processes that will allow it to secure and maintain the coherence of the programme. Initially, coherence was secured through the intensive internal scrutiny of the programme proposal involving external expertise as described above. The Programme Design, Development, Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures [005-2.21] contains clearly defined and sound processes for the modification of modules and programmes and their withdrawal, which the School intends to use to maintain programme coherence. The procedures distinguish between minor modifications, which do not require formal approval and can be agreed by the Director of Teaching and Learning, and modifications that will require formal approval by the Board of Examiners [005-2.21 programme approval procedure]. The Academic Council is expected to maintain oversight of proposed changes and ratify them. Any agreed changes would be logged by the Registrar and the definitive programme documentation amended accordingly [005–2.21 programme approval procedure]. A similarly robust process is expected to be employed for agreeing major modifications or the withdrawal of modules which would need to be approved by the

Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel and ratified by the Academic Council [005–2.21 programme approval procedure]. Where the proposed modifications are so extensive that the definitive programme documentation and particularly the programme specification would require far-reaching revision, a full programme re-approval event would be required, although this is not anticipated during the probation period [005–2.21 programme approval procedure].

106   At present, the School's programme does not involve or facilitate studying at a distance. Should changes be made to this approach, the New DAPs Plan [001] confirms that it would follow the processes set out above. Overall, the approach outlined above gives confidence to the team that robust measures are in place which are likely to ensure the coherence of the programme and that any future developments or modifications would be developed and monitored effectively.

107   The Academic Community Development Framework [011] examined by the team shows that curriculum development and design is expected to form part of the academic career development and there is a definitive training schedule. Training in module development for current academic staff is scheduled for the spring and summer of 2020 [011; 002 Key Activities by Quarter]. For staff still to be recruited, this will form part their induction training in September 2021 and September 2022 respectively with ad hoc refresher sessions and support to follow. If required, additional top-up training with external consultants may be arranged [011]. The content of the proposed training programme is appropriate and is expected to cover topics such as curriculum design process and the role of external input, the connection between curriculum design and assessment, the setting of threshold standards and enabling students to achieve beyond threshold standards [011]. The School also expects all staff involved in the programme approval process to be trained on the procedures and their roles and responsibilities in relation to them [011]. The effectiveness of this training is scheduled to be reviewed annually by the Registrar [051 Policies and Regulations Map]. The team concludes that the proposed approach to staff training in this area is sound and covers the necessary content, giving the team confidence that staff will be suitably informed and guided in their roles and responsibilities in relation to programme design, development and approval.

108   The New DAPs Plan [001] states that the link with learning support services in programme planning and approval arrangements is expected to be maintained through the presence of the Director of Admissions and Student Support on the Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel and the Academic Council which is evidenced in the respective terms of reference and membership [005–1.4; 005–1.7]. The School is aware of the importance of such links, evident from the academic staff training on curriculum design which is intended to cover the importance of identifying and flagging needs for appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support in order to deliver a high-quality academic experience [011 Academic Community Development Framework]. The programme approval minutes [031a-b] and discussions with staff [M3 quality of academic experience meeting] revealed how this worked in practice when the programme was approved, with the Director having provided input into student welfare and mental health arrangements in the design phase of the programme. Of particular note was the contribution to discussions on the condonement policy, the mapping of assessment loads and on learning resources to ensure that students who have low specification IT equipment will not be disadvantaged [M3 quality of academic experience meeting]. These examples assured the team that the mechanism to maintain links with support services in programme planning and approval are likely to be sufficiently strong and work effectively.

Learning and teaching

109   The Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy [012] which the School has developed sets out its vision and philosophy for teaching and learning. It is expected to be reviewed annually in line with the policy review cycle [002 Key Activities by Quarter] and is

supported by other key strategic plans such as the Access and Participation Plan [003], the Learning Resources Plan [038] and the Student Support Framework [007]. The School intends to review it annually as part of the Academic Council's policy review [001 New DAPs Plan]. It is clear, coherent and consistent with the School's mission and vision because it aims to address three institutional barriers the School identifies as preventing students from having an excellent learning experience, namely barriers between subjects, between students and teachers and between students and employers. To address them, 'the School's approach to learning and teaching will be entirely interdisciplinary and problem- and real-world-based. Therefore, the curriculum will be centred on real-world, complex problems that don't have a "right" answer' [012]. The School intends to implement this approach through a scaffolded approach to learning 'that will introduce students to working and research methodologies and guides them in curating relevant and authoritative materials which aid them in tackling the problem. To habituate students to key contemporary working practices, where feasible, students will learn the interdisciplinary content "just in time". In parallel students are expected to devote longer periods to studying both quantitative and qualitative methods and techniques in order to deepen and develop their intellectual and practical problem-solving toolkit. These methods will be increasingly integrated into the problem cycle as students progress through the programme'. The interdisciplinary learning will require a variety of methods and environments, therefore 'learning will not only take place online and in the classroom, but also through field trips, visits, and research projects' [012].

110   The School's planned approach to learning and teaching is credible and robust and based on extensive empirical evidence in learning, pedagogy and assessment [012 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy]. Its approach to assessment is closely aligned with the UK Quality Code's advice and guidance on assessment and will include diagnostic examinations and assessments, and formative and summative assessments [012]. The approach to learning will not focus on traditional discipline areas; instead, the curriculum will be structured around problems and methods. The planned teaching strategy aligns with its academic objectives and will comprise a hybrid of several proven pedagogical approaches, such as remote, project-based and experiential learning, Socratic questioning and interpersonal interaction [012]. The School envisages that student:teacher ratios will be low with 10 students per member of academic staff planned at launch. Most classes will be small group or seminar based with larger classes and lectures used in delivering the 'methods' part of the curriculum [012].

111   The School has chosen to adopt an iterative approach to its curriculum development which is expected to involve academic governance committees and boards, external academics and professionals [012 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy]. While such an approach may not be feasible for large institutions, the volume of the planned academic provision, a strong approach to student engagement, the use of external experts, and appropriate selection and training of staff makes this a feasible strategy for the School. The team also found that the design of the staff training programme outlined in the Academic Community Development Framework [011] is likely to help facilitate the implementation of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy because it focuses on enabling staff to be highly competent in curriculum design, pedagogy and assessment.

112   There are clear lines of accountability in the academic governance structures for the development and maintenance of physical, virtual and social learning environments. The team found that it is the responsibility of the School's Learning Resources and Property Working Group [009 terms of reference], a working group of the Academic Council which the School has established, to 'develop and monitor the School's strategy for learning resources and facilities, including the inclusivity of facilities, the safe and effective use of facilities, and the use of digital and virtual environments'.

113   The School has developed a detailed and credible plan with timelines for the acquisition and development of a physical site led by the working group [001 New DAPs Plan]. It has identified a preferred site from a shortlist of three and the estate plan's timelines

envisage a signature of contracts at the end of 2020, site development to be starting in early 2021, fit out in summer 2021 before programme launch in September 2021 [019 estates plan]. The teaching and learning space requirements as outlined in the plan should enable the School to provide adequate space that can accommodate the anticipated growth of the student body due to the proposed modular nature of the development. The plan demonstrates due consideration for learning and teaching spaces, including accessibility and inclusivity needs. It is planned to include spaces for one-to-one discussions between staff and students, co-working group rooms, broadcasting and technology studios, a creative studio/workshop allowing for virtual interaction, a science laboratory, a common room with no fitted screens to promote spontaneous interaction and a quiet workroom for individual study [019 estates plan; 074 updated estates plan]. These spaces would be able to support the School in developing active learners, by enabling communication, and creating opportunities for interdisciplinary learning, collaboration and innovation, thus aligning with its Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy [012]. Sufficient consideration has also been given to the needs of students with physical disabilities in the floor plan layout with easy access to a lift, accessible facilities and parking [019 estates plan], aiding comfort, access, and inclusivity in the teaching and learning environment and supporting student wellbeing.

114   The team examined the School's Disability Policy [006–1.3], the Dignity at Work and Study Policy and Procedure [006–1.2], and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy [006–1.1] and collectively these were considered to provide a suitable and comprehensive framework for maintaining learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable because they address barriers to inclusion, promote the development of a study environment where all students are treated equally, and with dignity, respect and courtesy. The Safeguarding Policy and Procedure [006–3.1] and the Health and Safety Policy [006–3.2] also demonstrate the School's commitment to a safe physical and social learning environment through the provision of mechanisms to raise concerns, the completion of risk assessments, regular checks with the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and clear health and safety arrangements.

115   The School's Learning Resources Plan [038] evidences a considered approach to the provision of physical and digital resources which is characterised by inclusivity and equity. It focues on the provision of sufficient resources through the curation of a resource collection (with clearly identified required resources). It also aims to ensure accessibility to resources by leveraging publicly available content, including open access and using institutional partnerships to supplement the collection. Access to other digital resources to support students, such as the learning management system, digital tools and software packages and baseline IT equipment [038 Learning Resources Plan] is also provided for (see paragraph 201 below for details). Overall, the plans for the provision of physical, virtual and social environments are credible and reflect the School's policies on equality and diversity. These comprehensive plans, complemented by a range of policies, have the potential to aid the provision of a safe, accessible and reliable environment for students and demonstrate a good understanding of this criterion.

116   The team found that the School has a clear understanding of how it plans to facilitate students to monitor their progress and thus further their academic development. The New DAPs Plan [001] states that it plans to use three main vehicles to enable this, which include the provision of rapid feedback on assessments, interaction with the academic tutor and accessing the student record system. The School has made provision in its Student Support Framework [007] for students to meet an assigned tutor at least twice per term. A short student success plan will be created and monitored with students expected to reflect on their skills development and have the opportunity to identify challenges and devise strategies to address them [007 Student Support Framework]. The School also plans to provide feedback on summative assessments within two weeks of results being confirmed by the Board of Examiners. Feedback is expected to be based on the assessment criteria and will clarify to the student how the mark was derived and the extent to which learning outcomes have been met [005–2.18 assessment regulations], thus enabling checks on the

extent of progress made. In addition, the School has planned for feedback on formative assessment which it intends to provide to students within two weeks of submission [012 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy]. Through the student record system students are expected to be able to track grades and credits gained [026 Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure]. To maximise accessibility, the School intends for this to also operate on a smart phone [M4 student support meeting] and has got a clear timeline and plan in place to configure and test the system by August 2021 [054 Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure Implementation Timelines]. Overall, the proposed mechanisms evidence a coherent approach to enabling students to monitor their progress and show that the School understands the criterion and its plans are credible.

Assessment

117 The School has developed a range of comprehensive and interlinked policies and procedures to ensure that assessments are fair, reliable and secure which are designed in such a way as to allow students to meet the learning outcomes. These include policies on the recognition of prior learning, assessment design, marking and moderation, security of the assessment process, extensions and extenuating circumstances, and external examining [001 New DAPs Plan; 005 – general academic regulations]. It intends to start implementing them from programme launch in September 2021, although they are not expected to be implemented in their entirety until 2023-24 when the first cohort graduates [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. All policies have been approved by the Academic Council and the School intends to review them on an annual basis during the probation period in the third quarter of each year [002 Key Activities by Quarter].

118 The School's assessment approval procedure [005–2.6] outlines its approach to ensuring the validity and reliability of assessment through a process of assessment design and summative assessment approval, including alternative assessments and retakes [005–2.16]. Summative assessments must be drafted in alignment with the programme specification, relevant module form and the School's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and prior approval of assessments by an external examiner is expected to be mandatory. The School plans to rely on external judgement for assurance that the assessment of student performance is robust, reliable and of a standard that matches equivalent programmes offered by UK higher education institutions [005–2.16]. The team considered this to be a robust approach that was appropriate to its status as a new higher education provider.

119 The team examined the School's Policy and Procedure on the Recognition of Prior Learning [005–2.10] and considered this to be explicit and transparent in how prior certificated or experiential learning can lead to exemptions from modules. Decisions to exempt students and award specific credit are expected to be based on the identification, description and assessment of equivalence of learning outcomes and are planned to take into account relevance, level, authenticity, currency and sufficiency [005-2.10]. It is evident from the policy that there is likely to be transparency with clearly articulated lines of responsibilities and principles of decision-making [005-2.10], thus ensuring reliability, validity and fairness of assessment decisions.

120 The assessment security procedures reviewed by the team [005–2.17] confirm that the School plans to ensure the integrity of the assessment process through the implementation of a range of protocols and a robust system of invigilation to minimise opportunities for students to commit academic misconduct. It has developed clear guidelines and protocols for invigilation, authoring, storage, printing and transport of assessment instruments, the collection, storage and delivery of student assessment scripts, the creation of records of results and the release of results [005–2.17 assessment security procedures].

121 The processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks of summative assessments are clearly articulated in the School's Marking and Moderation Policy [005–

2.9]. The team considers that the proposed process is robust and is likely to aid the validity and accuracy of decision-making as it involves a comprehensive and staged process consisting of standardisation, marking, moderation, sign-off by the assessment leader and external moderation of samples by the external examiner. Standardisation, which is planned to precede marking, is designed to involve group marking of a number of scripts and discussion of the outcomes to ensure that assessor are marking consistently in accordance with the marking scheme [005–2.9]. Similarly, moderation is likely to ensure that the marking scheme and criteria have been consistently applied by markers through examination of a selection of scripts from a range of grade bands [005–2.9] with clear requirements if any discrepancies are found [M3 quality of academic experience meeting]. Only correctly marked scripts can be signed off by the assessment leader and external moderation of sample scripts by the external examiner is likely to help ensure reasonable marking standards that are in line with sector standards. The identified opportunities for rescaling of marks or amendments under clearly defined circumstances have the potential to support valid and reliable decision-making [005–2.9]. The Academic Community Development Framework [011] outlines an annual training programme on assessment in September of each year, and staff attendance of the annual Advance HE assessment symposium. The School also plans to assure the reliability of assessment outcomes through use of a single marking scale across all summative elements [005–2.3 assessment and classification framework]. The team found that the School's assessment and classifications framework [005–2.3] has clear rules on the calculations of module grades, condonement and retakes. Provision is also in place for the consideration of deferrals, extensions and extenuating circumstances by a panel with clearly defined criteria, which has the potential to help ensure transparency and fairness of process [005–2.12 deferral, extension and extenuating circumstances policy].

122   The School's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy [012] sets out specific requirements for assessments, which include the mapping of summative assessments to programme learning outcomes and clearly articulated assessment criteria, including weightings and levels. Summative assessment scheduling is planned to allow students to learn from formative feedback provided and the amount of assessed work required must provide a reliable and valid profile of achievement [012]. The external examining process [005–2.19] is expected to require external comment on the extent to which the School's assessment instruments enable students to demonstrate the achievement of the learning outcomes for the module(s) or programme. Overall, this evidences a sound approach to assessment and a thorough understanding of the requirements to ensure valid and reliable assessment processes. The assessment instruments [036] examined by the team demonstrate the conscientious application of the requirements set out in the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy with clear mapping as outlined above. Assessment tasks and weightings are clearly specified together with levels and credit values [036]. This gives confidence to the team that assessment processes discussed above are likely to be implemented consistently in future.

123   Academic judgements on assessments is planned to be rubrics-based to make threshold standards and beyond visible to students [036 assessment instruments]. The School has a clear plan to develop students' assessment literacy and understanding of academic judgements through induction training. This will be repeated in the third quarter of each year [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. The induction plan [055] includes information-sharing sessions on assessment requirements, feedback and key policies on assessment [055]. Assessment requirements and criteria are also to be communicated at the beginning of each module and prior to assessment [012 Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy] and more detail on the expected content was outlined by the staff met [M3 quality of academic experience meeting]. Learning outcomes and criteria for success are clarified to students in the student handbook [029], programme specification [014] and module forms [036] which clarify the type, volume, weighting and timings of assessments. An examination of the draft student handbook [029] revealed that the information on assessment, while brief, contained information on the type and range of assessments, together with the purpose of rubrics.

124   The School's plans for addressing unacceptable academic practice are outlined in its Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure [005–2.11] which focuses on prevention through the design of assessments that minimise opportunities for students to commit academic misconduct, including plagiarism, self-plagiarism and contract cheating. Wherever possible, the School intends to use a variety of assessment methods to reduce opportunities to incorporate plagiarised work by another author, or previous work by the student [005–2.11 academic misconduct policy]. The New DAPs Plan [001] states that the policy will be signposted in the student handbook, the learning management system, and the website with expectations on good academic practice being communicated at induction [055 induction plan] and ongoing refresher training, for example before periods of formal assessment. The draft student handbook [029] has a section on academic good practice and misconduct which directs students to the policy, assessment regulations and training that will be provided. The School intends to embed good academic practice skills in the ongoing delivery of the curriculum [005–2.11 academic misconduct policy] and to teach students what constitutes academic poor practice and academic misconduct [029 student handbook]. The team considers this approach to be credible as it is proactive and has the potential to prevent or minimise academic malpractice. The School's policy is scheduled for annual review by the Academic Council during the third quarter of each year and will be evidenced through the minutes of the committee and any supporting papers [002 Key Activities by Quarter].

125   The team established that there are clear protocols for investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice in the Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure [005–2.11] which are likely to ensure that academic malpractice is speedily detected and appropriately responded to. For example, written assessments will be submitted online and plagiarism-detection software will be used to detect any irregularities, which is consistent with the Learning Resources Plan [038]. The School's approach distinguishes between poor academic practice and misconduct, takes account of the stage of the student's studies, establishes a hierarchy for the manner of response and includes penalties that vary according to severity [005-2.11]. The team found that there is a clear protocol for the reporting of suspected cases and a transparent process for addressing cases, including provision for a formal panel investigation with definitive timescales for the consideration and resolution of cases [005–2.11]. The Academic Misconduct Panel [005–1.8 terms of reference] has clearly defined terms of reference and membership, avoiding any potential conflicts of interest. For proven cases of academic misconduct the School is planning to apply a scale of penalties within clearly specified parameters based on a points system [005–2.11].

126   Overall, the School's proposed approach to operating processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice is credible with robust mechanisms to protect the academic integrity of the programme and sound measures that are likely to enable students to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice.

External examining

127   The New DAPs Plan [001] states that external examiners are expected to provide the Academic Council with annual reports including comments and recommendations, and it is planned that the Academic Council responds to these in a timely and considered way. The School's approach for the use of external examiners and their reports is articulated in detail in its External Examiners Policy and Procedure [005–2.19] and the Marking and Moderation Policy [005–2.9]. The policies are scheduled to be reviewed annually by the Academic Council in the third quarter of each year from year two onwards [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. The School intends to appoint external examiners in the first quarter of year one and the appointment criteria for external examiners are likely to ensure that examiners with the right skills are recruited to perform the functions outlined in the policy [005–2.19 external examiner policy].

128   The team considered the School's proposed approach to using external examiners to be sound with examiners being responsible for scrutinising and approving all summative assessment instruments, including coursework and examination papers and reviewing and moderating assessed work [005–2.19 external examiner policy; 005–2.9 marking and moderation policy]. Specifically, external examiners are expected to evaluate students with a module result in the fail-grade band and review the results of students in the highest-grade band, either individually or using sampling; and review results from each grade boundary. They are also expected to review samples of the work of students proposed for each category of award and for failure, make recommendations on marking or conduct of assessment and consider the reliability of assessment. The School also intends to consult with external examiners on a sampling method for moderation, changes to the assessment regulations and the assessment strategy. External examiners are expected to attend the meetings of the Board of Examiners and participate in the decision-making on module results, progression between levels and final awards [005–1.5 terms of reference].

129   The external examiner policy [005–2.19] expects examiners to submit an annual report to a standard template. This policy is comprehensive in that it requires comment on student performance, academic standards and the effectiveness of the assessment process and will prompt recommendations for improvement [005–2.19]. The School intends to make external examiners' reports available in full to students, with the exception of any part marked confidential [005–2.19]. The team found that there are clear lines of responsibility for the consideration of reports and the formulation of responses, with the Academic Council scrutinising reports and agreeing action plans [005–2.19]. Responses are expected to be drafted by the Director of Teaching and Learning as Chair of Academic Council [005–2.19], however, the School has not specified any timelines for this. Staff who met the team reported that any potential conflicts of interest will be mitigated with external members of Academic Council leading the debate on the response [M3]. The School also explained that while the institution is small, the whole report and response would go to Academic Council to ensure visibility for academic staff who are all members. This may change in future as the institution expands [M3 quality of academic experience meeting]. All of the above demonstrates to the team that the School is likely to make scrupulous use of external examiners, if implemented as intended. The role of external examiners is clearly defined, the activities they are expected to engage in are clearly outlined and there is a transparent process for considering and responding to reports, providing assurance to the team that the School understands the requirements and is likely to give full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations in external examiners' reports.

Academic appeals and student complaints

130   The New DAPs Plan [001] outlines a credible and robust approach to the proposed handling of complaints [005–2.14 complaints policy] and academic appeals [005–2.13 appeals policy]. This includes the publication of clear procedures for their handling with separate policies and procedures for admissions complaints and appeals [005–2.6] and appeals on the basis of extenuating circumstances [005–2.12]. The School intends to review the policies annually during the probation period as part of the Academic Council's policy review cycle, starting in the first quarter of the second year [079 New DAPs milestones] and the Registrar will report annually to the Academic Council on cases and outcomes [001 New DAPs Plan].

131   The team found the School's policies and procedures for handling student complaints [005–2.14] to be clear and definitive. The procedures describe an escalating three-stage approach which includes early resolution; formal complaint and determination, and internal appeal against the School's decision. Processes are transparent because they clearly state what students can complain about and what is excluded and the possible outcomes. There is a detailed description of the various complaint stages, evidence required, timelines for the resolution and the decision-making authority. Confidentiality is likely to be appropriately assured, with information only released to those who need it to

investigate or respond to a complaint. The right to escalate complaints to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) after internal procedures have been exhausted is clearly indicated [005–2.14 complaints procedure].

132	Similarly, the team found the processes and procedures for the proposed handling of academic appeals based on procedural irregularity [005–2.13] to be clear and definitive as they state the conditions under which students can appeal and the grounds. They are transparent because they detail the three-stage process to be followed, including clarification, initial consideration of the appeal, and formal determination by the Academic Appeals Board [005–2.13]. Evidence requirements, timeframes for resolution at each stage and the decision-making authorities are also clearly described. The procedures also refer to students' right to escalate appeals to the OIA upon completion of internal procedures [005–2.13 appeals procedures]. Separate procedures for handling appeals on the basis of extenuating circumstances, contained in the Deferral, Extension and Extenuating Circumstances Policy and Procedure [005–2.12] cover appeals with regards to summative assessments that have been adversely affected by unforeseen circumstances beyond students' control. The procedure broadly sets out definitions of such circumstances and is transparent, setting out a two-stage process consisting of initial consideration and a formal board hearing. Timelines for the various stages are clearly defined, together with the decision-making authority with a precise indication of their remit and the possible outcomes. Unlike other academic appeals, outcomes and recommendations from the formal hearing will be reported to the Board of Examiners which will action them as appropriate [005–2.12 extenuating circumstances policy].

133	An Applicant Complaints and Appeals Procedure [005–2.6] is applicable in circumstances where applicants are dissatisfied with the admissions process. It clearly states grounds for a complaint or appeal and is expected to be made available to applicants at research, application and offer stage. The procedure is transparent as it clearly sets out the two stages of informal and formal resolution with specific timelines for the latter, the decision-making authority and possible outcomes and actions that the School plans to take as a result [005–2.6 applicants complaints and appeals procedure].

134	Furthermore, students will also have the opportunity to appeal decisions of the academic misconduct panel [005–2.11 academic misconduct policy], decision of the actions taken under the Academic Progress Policy [005-2.15] and decisions made under the Recognition of Prior Learning Policy and Procedure [005–2.10] relating to the exemption from modules. The appeals processes are clearly set out in the relevant policies and procedures.

135	The team considers that complaints and appeals procedures are likely to be fair and deliver timely outcomes, if properly implemented, because the formal investigations are expected to be carried out by independent panels, judged against clearly defined criteria, and the timescales for the resolution align with those specified in the good practice framework of the OIA against which they have been developed [005–2.13 academic appeals procedure; 005–2.14 complaints procedure]. Information relating to the policies and procedures is likely to be easily accessible to students and staff on the learning management system (virtual learning environment) and signposting is currently included in the Draft Student Handbook [029].

136	There is a clear commitment to use appeals and complaints for enhancement with planned annual reports on the outcomes and effectiveness produced by the Registrar for the Academic Council. The procedures also confirm that outcomes as a result of annual reporting will be shared with staff and students [005–2.13 academic appeals procedure; 005–2.14 complaints procedure; 005–2.12 extenuating circumstances policy].

Conclusions

137   The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers.

138   The team found that the School's approaches and processes for the design and approval of its programme are credible, robust and effective and require involvement of independent external expertise. The School's procedures were effectively implemented when the programme it intends to deliver was developed and approved. Staff have a clear understanding of the process and could coherently explain the various stages, the role of externals as well as their own role within it. The New DAPs Plan contains clearly defined and sound processes for the modification and withdrawal of modules to maintain the coherence of programmes.

139   The School's planned approach to learning, teaching and assessment is credible and robust. A comprehensive staff training programme is likely to help facilitate the implementation of the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. The School has a coherent approach to enabling students to monitor their progress, demonstrating and understanding of the role this plays in quality of academic experience.

140   The School has developed a detailed and credible plan with timelines for the acquisition and development of a campus site. The planned teaching and learning space is likely to enable the School to provide adequate space that can accommodate the anticipated growth of the student body, and due consideration has been given to accessibility needs of staff and students and to inclusivity. Learning resources plans demonstrate a considered and timely approach to the provision of sufficient physical and digital resources.

141   The School's plans to ensure the validity and reliability of assessment process are robust and credible as they set out comprehensive and interlinked policies and procedures designed to ensure that assessments are fair, reliable and secure. Clearly articulated assessment criteria and the assessment instruments the School plans to develop demonstrate the conscientious application of the assessment requirements. The School's approach to the recognition of prior learning is explicit and transparent in how prior certificated or experiential learning can lead to exemptions from modules. The proposed processes for marking assessments and the moderation of marks for summative assessments are clearly outlined and robust and are likely to aid the validity and accuracy of decision-making. The School's plans for preventing unacceptable academic practice are sound. There are clear protocols for reporting suspected cases and a transparent process for investigating and responding to them. External examiners' roles are clearly defined and there are clear lines of responsibility and a transparent process for the consideration of external examiner reports.

142   The School has developed a credible and robust approach to the proposed handling of various types of complaints and academic appeals. Processes are transparent and are likely to be fair and deliver timely outcomes, with judgements being made against clearly defined criteria and formal investigations being carried out by independent panels with prompt resolution timelines.

143   The New DAPs Plan includes details of appropriate management, monitoring and self-critical evaluation and identifies sufficient, valid and credible sources of evidence arising from these activities, indicating when these will become available over the probation period. Learning opportunities are expected to be consistently quality assured through a comprehensive programme of annual policy and effectiveness reviews relevant to this criterion. Monitoring and review targets in the plan are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time bound.

144   Overall, the New DAPs Plan demonstrates an appropriate, considered and sustainable approach to the type of programme proposed, powers sought and projected student numbers. There is sufficient, credible evidence that appropriate staffing, physical and learning resources will be in place from the moment of New DAPs authorisation. Different sources of evidence consistently demonstrate the School's understanding and partial implementation of aspects of this DAPs criterion at this stage. The School's plans for meeting this DAPs criterion in full by the end of the probation period are clear, comprehensive in coverage, appropriate for its provision and credible in terms of structures, policies and procedures and plans for capacity building. Staff met by the team can explain their respective roles and responsibilities in meeting the criterion.

145   The team concludes, therefore, that the School understands this criterion and that its New DAPs Plan is credible and would enable the DAP criterion to be met by the end of the probation period.

Criterion C: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff

Criterion C1 - The role of academic and professional staff

146   This criterion states that:

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

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

147   The QAA assessment team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the Guidance for Providers, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the School's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes of the New DAPs test outlined in paragraphs 232 of the regulatory framework, namely to assess the provider's understanding of this criterion and to test the credibility of the provider's New DAPs Plan in relation to this criterion.

148   The team considered the School's New DAP Plan [001] and supporting documentation to test whether the School understands this criterion, its plans are credible and the criterion is likely to be met by the end of the probation period. Specifically, the team considered or assessed:

a   whether the School had made a rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise required to teach all students and to maintain appropriate staff:student ratios. The team therefore considered the New DAPs Plan [001], the Academic Community Development Framework [011], the Academic Staffing Calculations [044], non-academic staff workload calculations [073], the Academic Staffing Spreadsheet [022] and the organisation structure and staffing plan [020].

b   whether the School's staff recruitment practices are credible and robust. For this the team examined the New DAPs Plan [001], the Faculty Recruitment Process [021] the staff recruitment rubric [041], interview questions [043], student feedback on applicants [042], the Academic Community Development Framework [011] and the Recruitment Policy and Procedure in the staff handbook [027].

c   the level of academic and professional expertise of current academic and professional support staff, including academic staff expertise in curriculum and assessment design and the provision of feedback to students on assessed work, as well as external quality assurance roles; the current engagement of academic staff with pedagogic development; their understanding of and active engagement with current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline to a level commensurate with the level and subject of the qualification that will be offered, and the School's expectations in relation to this for future recruits. To do this the team considered academic staff CVs [017], non-academic staff CVs [024], the Academic Staffing Spreadsheet [022], the Register of External Appointments of Faculty [013], the academic staff pro forma contract [023], non-academic staff job descriptions [063], the Teaching Learning and Assessment Strategy [012], the Academic Community Development Framework [011] and met academic and support staff [M3].

d   whether the School's intended learning, teaching and assessment practices will be informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship and to identify the opportunities it intends to provide to teaching staff to engage in reflection and evaluation of their teaching and assessment practices. To come to a view on this the team considered the New DAPs Plan [001], the terms of reference of Academic Council working groups [009], Interdisciplinary Working Group minutes [045], Learning Sciences Working Group minutes [046], the staff handbook [027] and the Marking and Moderation Policy [005–2.9].

e   the nature of development opportunities the School intends to provide to academic and professional support staff to enhance their practice and/or scholarship, including opportunities to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design and to engage in quality assurance roles with other higher education providers for programme management staff. The team therefore examined the New DAPs Plan [001], the Academic Community Development Framework [011], the academic staff pro forma contract [023], the Staff Handbook [027], the draft Professional Development Programme [069], the faculty development programme for year 0 [071], the Student Support Framework [007], programme development team meeting minutes [047a-d] and the Key Activities by Quarter document [002].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

149   No sampling of evidence was applicable for this criterion as the School intends to run only one programme for which it wants to award qualifications and the volume of available documentation was such that all evidence could be considered.

What the evidence shows

150   The provider's plans in relation to this criterion are as follows.

151   The New DAPs Plan [001] states that this criterion is largely met at this stage with most academic and support staff already in place. It will be fully met by the time the probation period starts and the programme is launched in September 2021. Academic and non-academic staff numbers are expected to grow over time as the student body increases. Future recruitment rounds are planned for 2020-21 to be completed before programme launch [001 New DAPs Plan]. Out of a planned starting cohort of 13 teaching staff, 11 are currently in place. This is planned to increase to a total of 22 in year two and to 32 in year three of the probation period [011 Academic Community Development Framework]. Similarly, non-academic staff numbers are expected to grow from 29 in year one of the probation period, to 33 in year two and 36 in year three [020 organisation structure overview].

152   Staff engagement in reflection and evaluation of their teaching and assessment practices is expected to be led by two working groups of the Academic Council. The School intends to operate a career development programme underpinned by a training programme for academic staff. A corresponding programme for administrative staff is also planned.

153   The School intends for the Academic Council to review the Academic Community Development Framework and the effectiveness of staff training on assessment on an annual basis [011 Academic Community Development Framework]. It will also conduct deep-dive audits on the expertise of staff in giving assessment feedback in the second quarter of year two, and on the external engagement of academic staff with other higher education institutions in the fourth quarter of year two. The scholarship and pedagogic effectiveness of staff and staff development will be reviewed by the Academic Council in its annual quality review in the first quarter of each year [001 New DAPs Plan; 002 Key Activities by Quarter].

154   The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

155   The New DAPs Plan [001] acknowledges the importance of the number and quality of staff, in both academic and professional support functions. The School's Academic Community Development Framework [011] specifies the number of academic staff required and the skills and expertise they will have to demonstrate in the context of its aim to establish a self-critical interdisciplinary community of practice. To ensure it will recruit the right number of staff to maintain its proposed staff:student ratios, which are expected to stand at 1:10 in the first year of operation, the School has undertaken detailed calculations of the anticipated workload for academic staff during the first year [044 Academic Staffing Calculations], including teaching and assessment time, time spent on admissions and student support activities, administration and time for professional development and research. Based on this, the School calculated that, at launch, it will need 13 teaching staff of which 11 are currently already in place [011 Academic Community Development Framework]. Following a first round of recruitment in 2019, the School conducted a comprehensive mapping of academic staff expertise in interdisciplinarity, including expertise in the teaching of research methods and administrative/leadership expertise [022 academic staffing analysis] and the School envisages this mapping to continue in future recruitment rounds.

156   The academic staff team will be led and managed by the Director of Teaching and Learning (already in post) and areas of academic activity are expected to be led by a designated member of the founding faculty. With the growth in staff numbers from year two, new recruits will be responsible for teaching the incoming cohort of students. In order to provide a scalable structure and to ensure the distribution of managerial responsibilities, the School plans to move to a matrix management system [011 Academic Community Development Framework]. A set of adjunct responsibilities is planned to be distributed across teaching staff over time in line with experience and areas of interest covering interdisciplinarity and research, problem-based learning and assessment, learning resources, widening participation and external relationships, admissions, ethical approval, extenuating circumstances and evaluation of the student voice [011 Academic Community Development Framework]. A small number of academic support staff will be needed; two for the launch year, and increasing to three for years two and three of programme delivery [011 Academic Community Development Framework].

157   Similar to the workload calculations for academic staff, the School undertook a comprehensive calculation exercise for non-academic staff [073 support staff workload calculations] covering the student support, careers and networks departments. The organisation structure and staffing plan document [020] sets out the School's staffing plan at launch and during the probation period for non-academic roles. It shows that 12 out of the planned 29 managerial and support staff at programme launch are in place with another two in acting roles. This includes the CEO, all senior management staff at director level and the Registrar. The remaining roles are to be filled by September 2021. The recruitment plan up to the end of the probation period shows a steady growth of professional support staff roles from 29 in year one of the probation period to 33 in year two and 36 in year three to reflect the growing student population [020 organisation structure and staffing plan]. The team considered the staffing plan to be credible and appropriate for the School's mission, size and the academic provision it intends to deliver.

158   The New DAPs Plan [001] emphasises the commitment to recruiting and developing high calibre staff and outlines the staff recruitment process that the School has implemented so far. This shows a multi-stage process using a number of selection tools. The Staff Recruitment Policy and Procedure contained in the staff handbook [027] shows an understanding of the criterion and evidences a credible approach to recruitment because the School operates a principle of open competition in its approach to recruitment and seeks to recruit the best candidate for the job, based on merit. The School also intends to provide appropriate training, development and support to those involved in recruitment and selection

activities [027]. The team found the School's intended recruitment practices to be robust and fair because applicants are expected to be assessed objectively against set selection criteria by a minimum of two people to minimise bias. The School also plans for a range of selection methods suitable for assessing the criteria to enhance objective decision-making [027 staff recruitment policy]. For academic staff already recruited under this procedure, notes recording the salient points are taken, thus supporting objectivity in decision-making [027 staff recruitment policy] and giving the team confidence that decision-making is likely to be based on the stated criteria in the policy.

159   The first round of recruitment for academic staff began in June 2019, with shortlisting based on qualification, experience and the School's requirements. The Faculty Recruitment Process document [021] demonstrates that shortlisted candidates were asked to produce a three-minute video addressing the candidate's approach to interdisciplinary methods. Those selected for the next stage were asked to present a 30-minute class to a group of invited students and School staff, assessed by a scoring rubric [041] the School developed. The team examined completed forms from both recruiters and students 042] and found them to be useful tools in decision-making. The strongest candidates were then invited to interview in September 2019 that consisted of a group activity followed by an interview with senior members of the School using predefined questions [043 interview questions]. This process was repeated for another recruitment cycle starting in January 2020 for other subject discipline areas [021 Faculty Recruitment Process]. This approach demonstrates to the team rigour of process in the recruitment of staff and provides confidence that the School will operate credible and robust recruitment practices. Academic staff were recruited on the basis of their proven interdisciplinary excellence in higher education alongside their ability in teaching and have sufficient teaching experience at the required levels [017].

160   The New DAPs Plan [001] states that the School's founding faculty are highly qualified, with substantial experience in student teaching and assessment, and strong expertise within their relevant fields. The academic staff CVs [017] examined by the team, together with the academic staffing analysis [022], confirm that high calibre staff have been recruited so far and evidence an understanding of the criterion. The analysis is detailed and lists academic and professional qualifications of the recruited staff. It also indicates which staff have teaching qualifications and experience, experience of curriculum development and assessment design. Furthermore, the analysis lists staff's engagement with the pedagogic development of the discipline and their engagement with research and scholarship [022 academic staffing analysis]. For example, nine of the current teaching staff in post hold a PhD, two have a master's degree (with one currently studying for a PhD). All have teaching experience at Level 6 or higher as well as experience in curriculum development, marking and the provision of feedback to students and most are experienced in assessment design for taught programmes. Two staff have HEA recognition at fellow or principal fellow level. The register of external appointments [013] shows a healthy level of engagement of academic staff, with six founding faculty involved in external quality roles such as external advisers, examiners, reviewers and panel members. The assessment team concludes that academic and non-academic staff are well qualified, staff expertise is high and wide-ranging, and skills and expertise align closely with the School's mission. There is expertise among the academic staff team in curriculum development and assessment design as well as an appropriate engagement with pedagogic and subject-specific research and scholarship.

161   The Academic Community Development Framework [011] clearly outlines the School's expectations for current and future recruits in relation to the required and desirable academic and professional qualifications and expertise for roles. For senior academic managers, the expectation is that the role holder will have significant experience of senior academic leadership and management experience as well as an advanced understanding of UK higher education, including quality systems and processes [011]. Programme management and teaching staff are typically expected have a PhD (or be in the process of completing a PhD), be an inspiring teacher and able to communicate with academics, researchers and undergraduates. They should be able to demonstrate advanced

interpersonal skills, be able to work in groups and be interested in new ways of teaching. They may have existing expertise in facilitating problem-based learning groups and be highly interdisciplinary in their outlook and background [011]. Senior academic staff are expected to have a higher degree relevant to teaching area (normally PhD), extensive research and/or teaching experience and/or scholarship within multiple subject areas and a proven ability to devise or advise on learning programmes [011]. These requirements show that the School has given careful consideration to the type of staff it will need to recruit to fulfil its ambitions and is determined to attract high-calibre staff by setting high expectations. The School is confident that it will be able to attract the right applicants for the roles still to be filled based on its previous recruitment experience where it received over 700 applications [001 New DAPs Plan, M3 role of academic and support staff meeting]. The Academic Community Development Framework [011] also states that the skills set of academic staff in future recruitment rounds will be driven by the needs of the programme and the desire to increase the School's disciplinary range in line with its mission. The team concluded that there are clear and credible plans for staff recruitment which have been effectively implemented thus far and the School has a clear understanding of the skills and expertise it will need to attract in future recruitment rounds.

162   The Teaching Learning and Assessment Strategy [012] states that the School will not be recruiting full-time research academics to its teaching staff. Full-time academic staff are expected to be expert teachers and all academic staff are offered 20% of their contracted time for research [012]. The School's expectations with regard to scholarship and research are set out in the staff contract [023]. Staff will be entitled to the equivalent of '1 day per week' or up to 10 weeks (50 days) in total per year to dedicate to research. The nature of the research carried out must be agreed in advance with the Academic Lead. There is an expectation that staff research will either be of direct benefit to the undergraduate teaching or be of mutual benefit to the staff member and the School. Academic staff will not be obliged to undertake research and those who choose not to will be allocated curriculum or teaching development tasks [023 staff contract]. The team confirmed through scrutiny of the academic staffing analysis [022] that all current academic staff are actively engaged in scholarship and research through consultancy, professional practice, creative work and other activities and all have published research. While the staffing plan shows academic staff on fractional appointments, academic and support staff who met the team confirmed that they were all currently employed on fractional contracts but these would become full-time at programme launch [M3 role of academic and support staff meeting].

163   Non-academic staff CVs [024] show that the staff recruited thus far have appropriate levels of experience ranging from establishing educational institutions and academic infrastructure development to policy and strategy development, brand development, project management and graphic design in educational settings and the private sector. The job descriptions [063] for non-academic staff roles specify the School's requirements in terms of expected qualifications and experience. The team initially identified a potential gap in staffing digital learning support. A clarifying statement from the School [056] explained that the School did not intend to recruit specific technical or digital pedagogy staff. Instead, several identified role holders in the School's staffing plan will have responsibility for providing technical, management and pedagogical support. This includes digital and learning resources staff as well as selected academic staff with adjunct responsibilities for learning resources. Management and support staff who met the team also confirmed that they had plans to recruit digital technologists, but for digital learning pedagogy they wished to rely on the expertise of current academic staff [M3 role of academic and support staff]. The team cross-referenced digital pedagogy skills and experience from academic CVs [024] with the academic staff analysis [022] and found this to be a strong area of capability. The team concludes that the School is likely to have a strong and capable staff team in place for the launch of its programme in September 2021.

164   Opportunities for teaching staff to engage in reflection and evaluation of their teaching and assessment practices are clearly identified in the New DAPs Plan [001] and a

variety of mechanisms are expected to be available, some of which are already operational. To encourage the development of shared teaching practices through self-reflection and peer-led improvement, the School has created two working groups of the Academic Council in interdisciplinarity and learning sciences. The terms of reference [009] of the groups indicate that all academic staff are members. The Interdisciplinary Working Group is expected to lead the development of proposals relating to the School's self-critical understanding on interdisciplinarity and contribute to the research strategy. It is also planned to provide a forum to ensure that the School is positioned at the forefront of interdisciplinary scholarship; and to share insights on interdisciplinary research and best practice within the School [009]. The group has already commenced operation and the minutes of its first meeting show that it produced the Academic Community Development Framework for approval by the Academic Council [045]. The terms of reference [009] also outline the intention for the Learning Sciences Working Group to be a forum for sharing best practice. It is envisaged that members will be sharing teaching practice as well as discussing sector changes in pedagogical research and practice; contribute to a self-critical academic community within the School and propose enhancements to the School's Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy [009]. This group has also met once to date and the minutes [046] evidence discussions of development in recent pedagogical practice in the context of the School's Teaching and Learning Strategy. Based on the evidence presented, the plans are likely to ensure that academic staff engage regularly and sufficiently in reflection and evaluation of their teaching and assessment practices, thus contributing to the development of the academic community.

165   The staff handbook [027] identifies the opportunities the School intends to provide to teaching staff to engage in reflection and evaluation of their teaching and assessment practices and subject-specific and educational scholarship. This is expected to include seminars and workshops delivered by internal staff or external providers, including best practice sharing, fully funded, externally delivered training and development programmes, including Advance HE programmes. The School will also fund applications by academic and support staff for Advance HE fellowships [027]. Staff who met the team confirmed the School's commitment to funded development opportunities [M3 role of academic and professional staff meeting]. Furthermore, the School intends to encourage academic staff to reflect on professional practice in assessments through a series of staff development events delivered by the Director of Teaching and Learning. It is envisaged that they include new marker training, refresher training for experienced markers and calibration events, where new and experienced markers work together to ensure consistency when marking against a mark scheme or criteria [005–2.9 marking and moderation policy]. The team concludes that the School has credible plans for ensuring that its intended learning, teaching and assessment practices will be informed by reflection and evaluation. The planned training programmes focus on relevant areas and are to be delivered by staff with sufficient expertise, which evidences a thorough understanding of the criterion.

166   In the New DAPs Plan [001] the School states that one of its values is to 'keep learning' so staff can enhance their practice and/or scholarship to deliver an excellent student experience. The School's associated Academic Community Development Framework [011] shows how it plans to develop academic staff through induction, training and peer review, demonstrating a thorough understanding of the criterion. The School intends to operate a comprehensive and carefully crafted career development programme [011] and has developed an extensive training programme for academic staff which will be organised by the Director of Teaching and Learning. This will cover assessment, curriculum design, pedagogy (in conjunction with the Learning Sciences Working Group Lead) and research [011]. Programme development team meeting minutes [047a-d] evidence that some aspects of the plan with regard to academic subject and pedagogical staff development have already been delivered. In September 2020 the School intends to join Advance HE as an affiliate member which will create further development opportunities for academic staff. The faculty development programme for the next 12 months [071 year 0 development programme] sets out academic staff development opportunities in the period

January 2020 to August 2021. Ratification by Academic Council is expected for June 2020 and the document will then complement the training programme discussed above. Planned activities are expected to include weekly all-faculty meetings for knowledge-sharing, discussion and reflection, training seminars and thematic training days and learning sciences and interdisciplinarity working group meetings (see paragraph 168) [071 year 0 development programme]. The team concludes that, together, these programmes will provide staff with sufficient opportunities to enhance their academic practice and scholarship and to gain experience in key areas such as curriculum development and assessment design, demonstrating a good understanding of the criterion.

167   The Academic Community Development Framework [011] outlines the planned peer observation programme which will apply to all academic staff. To ensure consistency of approach, this is planned to be led by the Director of Teaching and Learning who is a Principal Fellow of Advanced HE. The School plans to use a set of agreed criteria against which staff will be observed with a view to identifying areas of strength and development needs [011]. In addition, the School plans to hold annual faculty awaydays and an annual symposium [001] which was confirmed by staff who met the team [M3 role of academic and professional staff meeting].

168   Staff development opportunities for non-academic staff are set out in the Staff Handbook [027]. However, a more comprehensive professional development programme was requested by the Executive Committee in April 2020 [069 draft Professional Development Programme] and is expected to replace the staff training plan in the staff handbook. The new draft programme is comprehensive and appropriate in that it plans to cover mandatory individual training related to the academic operation, regulatory requirements, IT systems and HR policies and codes of conduct. In addition, the School plans to hold a series of annual training events for the whole team on aspects of admissions and student support [069 draft Professional Development Programme]. Furthermore, each department is expected to meet on at least a monthly basis and members will be encouraged to foster self-criticality and engage in collective reflection. The planned training programme for student support staff is outlined in the Student Support Framework [007] and is expected to cover key areas such as the student records system, safeguarding, and supporting students with specific learning differences, including disabilities and mental health. The School plans to allocate a professional development budget of up to £1,000 to all staff for 2020-21 and this commitment is outlined in the training programme [069 draft Professional Development Programme]. Academic staff will also be entitled to the equivalent of one day per week for research [023 academic staff pro forma contract], demonstrating a firm commitment of the School to the development of its staff that is appropriately funded.

169   The Academic Council is expected to review the Academic Community Development Framework and the effectiveness of staff training on assessment on an annual basis. It is also planned that it conducts deep-dive audits on the academic staff expertise in giving assessment feedback in the second quarter of year two, and on the external engagement of academic staff with other higher education institutions in the fourth quarter of year two [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. In addition, the scholarship and pedagogic effectiveness of staff, the academic community of the School and other staff development are expected to be reviewed by the Academic Council in its annual quality review in the first quarter of each year [001 New DAPs Plan; 002 Key Activities by Quarter]. Appropriate evidence of these review activities will become available during the probation period through reports of the two working groups to Academic Council and the minutes of its meetings. There will also be outcome summaries of the School's annual symposium, faculty awayday, peer review and performance management processes [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. The team concludes that the planned approach to monitoring is robust as it covers all relevant areas and is likely to generate insights that will enable to School to enhance the effectiveness of its practices. The approach also demonstrates a clear understanding of the criterion.

Conclusions

170   The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers.

171   The School has made a rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise required of its academic and non-academic staff to teach and support all students and to maintain its target staff:student ratio for teaching. Staffing requirements, both in terms of skills and volume, have been carefully planned and staffing calculations are sound and realistic. The staffing plan is credible and appropriate for the School's mission, size and the academic provision it intends to deliver. It demonstrates a considered and sustainable approach to the type of programme proposed, the powers sought and projected student numbers.

172   The School's staff recruitment practices are credible and robust and have been rigorously implemented in the first rounds of recruitment. Staff are being recruited on merit through a clearly defined and appropriately documented process. Firm, credible plans and timelines are in place for the recruitment of further academic and non-academic staff before programme launch.

173   The School has given careful consideration to the type of staff it will need to recruit and has clearly articulated expectations with regards to the required and desirable qualifications, skills and experience of staff. The skills and experience of all staff recruited is of a high level and consistent with the expectations set by the School. All staff are appropriately qualified and have the required skills and expertise for their role. There is wide-ranging expertise among the academic staff team in curriculum development and assessment design as well as an appropriate engagement with pedagogic and subject-specific research and scholarship.

174   The School's intended learning, teaching and assessment practices are likely to be informed by sufficient reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship. The School has designed a range of opportunities for teaching staff to engage in reflection and evaluation of their teaching and assessment practices. Its planned career development and training offering for all categories of staff is extensive, well developed and carefully crafted to address the likely development needs of different staff groups. It is expected to be supported by a personal development budget, demonstrating a strong commitment for the development of both academic and professional support staff.

175   The New DAPs Plan includes details of appropriate monitoring and self-critical evaluation and identifies sufficient, valid sources of evidence and indicates when these will become available over the probation period. Monitoring and review targets in the Plan are specific, measurable, achievable, and time bound.

176   Overall, there is credible evidence that appropriate staffing resources will be in place from the moment of New DAPs authorisation and different sources of evidence consistently demonstrate the School's understanding of this DAPs criterion. The School's plans for meeting the DAPs criterion in full are clear, comprehensive and appropriate in terms of capacity building. The New DAPs Plan is detailed, coherent and realistic and articulates clearly how the School plans to meet the DAPs criterion in full by the end of the probation period.

177   The team concludes, therefore, that the School understands this criterion and that its New DAPs Plan is credible and would enable the DAP criterion to be met by the end of the probation period.

Criterion D: Environment for supporting students

Criterion D1 - Enabling student development and achievement

178   This criterion states that:

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

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

179   The QAA assessment team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the Guidance for Providers, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the School's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes of the New DAPs test outlined in paragraphs 232 of the regulatory framework, namely to assess the provider's understanding of this criterion and to test the credibility of the provider's New DAPs Plan in relation to this criterion.

180   The team considered the School's New DAPs Plan [001] and supporting documentation to test whether the School understands this criterion, its plans are credible and the criterion is likely to be met by the end of the probation period. Specifically, the team considered or assessed:

a   how the School intends to provide opportunities for all students to develop their academic, personal and professional skills and to make effective use of the learning resources, specialist facilities and virtual environments provided; how it will take a strategic and operational approach to determine and evaluate student development and achievement and equity of resources and support. To do this, the team considered the New DAPs Plan [001], the Student Support Framework [007] including the Academic Support Policy [007–3] and the careers and wellbeing frameworks [007–4; 007–5], the organisation structure [020], School policies and procedures including the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy [006–1.1] and the Disability Policy [006–1.3], the terms of reference of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee [005–1.10], the Access and Participation Plan [003], the Learning Resources Plan [038] and met academic management, teaching and support staff [M3; M4].

b   how the School intends to monitor the effectiveness of its student and staff advisory, support and counselling services and how it will consider any resource needs that arise. For this the team considered the New DAPs Plan [001], the Key Activities by Quarter document [002] and the Quality Framework [004].

c   how the School intends to advise students about, and induct them into, their programme of study and to assess whether these mechanisms will take account of students' needs. The team examined the Draft Student Handbook [029] and the draft student induction programme [055].

d   whether the School's intended administrative support systems will enable it to monitor student progression and performance accurately and whether they are likely to provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs. The team therefore considered the Learning Resources Plan [038] and Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure plan [026] and its implementation plan with timelines [054].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

181   No sampling of evidence was applicable for this criterion as the School intends to run only one programme for which it wants to award qualifications and the volume of available documentation was such that all evidence could be considered.

What the evidence shows

182   The School's plans in relation to this criterion are as follows.

183   The School has developed a Student Support Framework [007] which will be implemented from September 2021 onwards. During the probation period, the School plans to review its overall approach to, and strategies for, student support annually by the Academic Council in the third quarter of each year [001 New DAPs Plan]. Similarly, an annual review of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy by the Board of Directors is scheduled in the first quarter of each year together with an annual review of the equality report in the last quarter of each year and ongoing termly reviews of delivery against the Access and Participation Plan by Academic Council; that is, four times per year [002 Key Activities by Quarter; 004 Quality Framework].

184   Student support activities will be undertaken by academic tutors, welfare officers and the careers mentor as well as an internship manager who will be in post by September 2021 [007 Student Support Framework]. The Director of Admissions and Support, the Senior Student Support Manager and the Director of Careers and Networks are already in place [020 Organisation Structure Overview]. The School plans to support students in developing the skills to make effective use of learning resources through training and intends to put in place an administrative support system in the form of a student record system [001 New DAPs Plan]. The effectiveness of this support system is scheduled for annual review by the Academic Council during the probation period in the first quarter of years two and three [002 Key Activities by Quarter].

185   The School has purchased a learning management system (VLE equivalent) and initial system configuration is complete. Further elements that are required post enrolment are expected to be completed by December 2020 [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. Some components of the student record system are partially configured with a target date of August 2021 for the system to be fully configured and tested [054 Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure Implementation Timelines]. An annual review of the effectiveness of the learning management and student record system is planned for the fourth quarter of each year during the probation period [002 Key Activities by Quarter].

186   The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

187   The School has developed a Student Support Framework [007] drawing upon extensive research, what it considers to be best practices in the field and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Advice and Guidance: Enabling Student Achievement (2019). The framework is underpinned by three policies covering academic support, careers and wellbeing [007–3-5 student framework policies] and its strategy for student support comprises personal, academic and professional development of students. Each policy sets out the support strategy and activities, student induction into the availability and use of support systems, enablers, resourcing plans, and the monitoring approach for each policy [007 academic support framework]. The School intends to deliver these elements of student support through coordination of contact points between students and their assigned support staff; coordination between key student support staff through the student record system and flagging procedures for students at risk. In addition, there are planned termly meetings and cross-School student support training [001 New DAPs Plan; 007 Student Support Framework]. The team considers the planned approach to be credible and robust as it is

joined up and likely to address the full range of student support needs. The outlined approach also demonstrates that the School has a good understanding of this criterion.

188   The team found the Academic Support Policy [007–3] to be clear and comprehensive in that it sets out the School's planned system of academic support, focusing on personal academic tutors with whom students are expected to meet at least twice a term and individual student success plans for all students. The School also plans to assign 'super tutors'; that is, tutors with additional training or specific expertise to support students who have specific learning difficulties or who are deemed to be academically at risk [070 Student Support Framework]. The policy evidences a robust and considered approach to student academic support with a focus on supporting all students appropriately to achieve their desired academic outcomes.

189   The School's wellbeing framework [007–5] outlines its approach to personal development and wellbeing. The School states that this is informed by good practice in the sector in that the proposed personal development programme has its roots in the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL) model, and aims to foster the five core social emotional competencies in students: self-awareness; self-management; responsible decision-making; relationship skills; and social awareness. The School plans to augment this personal development programme with a series of wellbeing, social and extracurricular activities, and bolster it by personal support structures, including dedicated welfare officers, written advice and guidance, and in-house counselling provision for one day a week from September 2021 onwards [007–5 wellbeing framework]. The Director of Admissions and Student Support and the Senior Student Support Manager are already in place to ensure that appropriate systems and structures will be in place in time for the launch in September 2021 [020 Organisation Structure Overview]. The team concludes that the framework demonstrates a holistic approach to students' personal development and wellbeing with the needs of students at its heart and, as such, the team considers it to be credible.

190   The careers support framework [007-4] describes the School's employability model which draws on existing approaches. The framework details a suite of student employability activities aligned with this model, including a professional development induction session; a series of personal development workshops and recurring additional activities; yearly paid, optional, non-credit bearing internships; ongoing one-to-one professional development support and mentoring and post-graduation career support [007–4 careers support framework]. The team found that this approach is designed to help students understand the world of work and build social networks as the School views lack of social capital to be one of the key barriers to career opportunities. A range of optional workshops is intended to be available throughout the year with a strong emphasis on exposure to potential employers and external organisations [007–4 careers support framework]. The team considers this approach to be sound because it would enable the School to develop students who are ready for employment and equipped with relevant vocational skills and experience.

191   A strong and well-designed element of the careers support is the optional internships programme as evidenced in the Student Support Framework [007]. The School expects 80% of students to take up this opportunity and it is confident that it can secure the requisite number of internships based on its current and planned employer engagement, the interest from employers and the staffing already in place [M3 student support meeting]. As the School grows, it aims to expand the network of employers to ensure that there are sufficient internship opportunities. Staff met by the team explained that in the case of a deficit of opportunities, the School plans to increase the number of internships with existing employers or offer internal internships within the School [M3 student support meeting]. While this remains an ambitious plan, the measures taken by the School to date to form employer links, the forward planning evidenced [001] and appropriate resource allocation (the Director of Careers and Networks has already taken up post) [020 Organisation Structure Overview] gives the team the confidence that this plan is realistic.

192	The School's Student Support Framework [007] also includes a detailed and appropriate plan for students with specific learning differences with comprehensive pre and post-registration support arrangements which will be implemented from May 2021. The strategic measures to ensure equity in delivering the student experience are appropriate [007] and include access, success and progression objectives for students with different characteristics, and ambitious institutional targets are set out in its Access and Participation Plan [003]. The School has also developed an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy [006–1.1] and a Disability Policy [006–1.3] which is based on the principles of non-discrimination, equality of opportunity, and good relations between staff, students and external stakeholders. The quality framework [004] makes clear that, once the School has enrolled students, it plans to consult them on this policy so that it can enhance it further. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee is intended to oversee progress against the Access and Participation Plan at its quarterly meetings [005–1.10 terms of reference]. The team is of the view that this part of the plan demonstrates that the School takes seriously its commitment to widening participation and the proposed measures align with its mission, vision and values.

193	The Student Support Framework [007] also articulates the School's approach to integrate academic skills support within its curriculum which is to be undertaken by academic tutors rather than a dedicated academic skills team. Other student support activities are to be undertaken by welfare officers and the careers support tutors. The Director of Admissions and Student Support is to coordinate and oversee the delivery and integration of one-to-one support offered by academic tutors and welfare officers [007]. The team concludes that this approach is credible in that it is likely to provide sufficient support channels for students and is appropriate for the size and nature of the planned higher education provision. The academic and student support staff assured the team that the approach would be effective as they have appropriate measures planned which includes weekly staff meetings, internal training for 'super-tutors' and sharing of good practice among staff [M4 student support meeting; 071 year zero faculty development programme]. Moreover, staff explained that module leaders have identified how specific skills will be supported in different types of modules. This approach will be reviewed as part of the annual performance review, and student feedback and data analytics will provide indication of where further training might be needed [M4 student support meeting]. All of the above demonstrates to the team that the School understands higher education student support requirements and has taken account of relevant research and practice in the sector. Its plans for supporting students are robust and credible, providing a variety of support mechanisms and staff involved are likely to be well prepared for this role through training.

194	Staff already in post competently articulated the Student Support Framework and its constituent policies and frameworks and described in detail their roles and responsibilities in the framework [M4 student support meeting]. Academic management staff explained the holistic approach of student support captured in the student framework and its supporting policies and documents and stressed the School's commitment to equality and diversity. They also detailed the measures and targets for supporting students from disadvantaged backgrounds as set out in the School's Access and Participation Plan [M4 student support meeting]. The explanations provided by staff align with the explanations with the documented evidence and adds confidence that the plan is likely to be implemented as articulated.

195	As part of its New DAPs Plan the School has developed a Learning Resources Plan [038] which is based on the budgeted development of its own collection of materials for all modules; drawing on institutional partnerships to supplement the School's own collection of resources and taking full advantage of publicly available resources. The staff who met the team acknowledged that as the School will largely focus on acquiring core reading materials, there is a risk that students might limit their exposure to core readings only [M4 student support meeting]. However, the School believes that it has given careful consideration to mitigate this risk through the use of shared, less costly resources and partnerships with external libraries and has allocated a budget for core and supplementary resources which will

be available for 'just in time' procurement [038 Learning Resources Plan; M4 student support meeting]. Furthermore, the School plans to appoint a Head of Learning Resources in February 2021 who will be responsible for strategic development of learning resources, oversight and curation of resource access and facilitation of a programme to support students in making effective use of learning resources [038 Learning Resources Plan]. The team examined the plan and found that responsibilities for implementation are clearly defined, with the Chief Executive overseeing the design and delivery of the plan [038] and a Learning Resources and Property Working Group monitoring the effectiveness of the Learning Resources Plan [009 – terms of reference Learning Resources and Property Working Group].

196   The team concludes that the School's plan is credible and realistic because the delivery of the learning resource plan [038] has been carefully costed over five years from 2020 to 2025, takes account of the expansion of the student body, and the growth in the diversity of modules delivered over this period. It includes a growing amount of unallocated contingencies to absorb any additional costs that might be as yet unaccounted for and will emerge as the School grows [038 Learning Resources Plan]. The team considers the approach to learning resources to be well considered and appropriate for a single programme institution as it allows the School to grow its collection of resource assets over time in line with demand, while mitigating the need to own or hold large quantities of physical resources on site; and the significant human resource generally required to negotiate licenses and administer students' use of collections.

197   The Learning Resources Plan [038] specifies that the School expects students to provide their own computing device equipped to a specified standard and the Student Support Framework [007] allows for students who are unable to afford this to receive support and/or temporarily be able to draw on the School 'laptop bank'. However, despite these provisions, the team noted that this requirement is likely to affect more students from disadvantaged backgrounds, thus potentially weakening the School's commitment to equity. In discussion with the team, the School expressed confidence that its approach will not exclude students as all modules have been thoroughly assessed in terms of software needed and changes made so that most of the software is now free [M4 student support meeting]. In addition, the learning management system and the student record system are mobile friendly and therefore offer another access point where no laptops would be needed [M4 student support meeting]. This provided the team with assurance that any potential disadvantage will be mitigated and minimised.

198   The New DAPs Plan [001] outlines the School plans to support student learning through a learning management system which it intends to use for sharing and accessing programme and module information, institutional information and policies and learning materials; setting, submitting, and providing/responding to feedback on formative and summative assignments as well as communication between students and faculty. The initial configuration of the learning management system is complete and it is intended to be fully operational by May 2021 [054 Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure Implementation Timelines]. The team reviewed documentation regarding implementation which demonstrated that the School has a contractual relationship with the supplier, which includes both ongoing technical support and pedagogic advice and guidance, including delivery of induction and training programmes [054 Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure Implementation Timelines], giving reassurance to the team that it will be ready in time for programme launch and appropriately supported.

199   During the probation period the School intends to monitor the effectiveness of its student and staff advisory, support and counselling services through an extensive programme of quality annual reviews [004]. The team considered the proposals in the New DAPs Plan [001] and the Key Activities by Quarter document [002] and confirmed that the intentions were consistent with the provisions in the Quality Framework [004]. The School plans for Academic Council to review its overall approach in the third quarter of each year

[002 Key Activities by Quarter]. The Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is to be reviewed by the Board of Directors in the first quarter of each year, together with the equality report in the last quarter [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. An ongoing review of delivery against the Access and Participation Plan by Academic Council is planned four times per year. The effectiveness of the student support system is scheduled for review by the Academic Council in the first quarter of years two and three [002 Key Activities by Quarter; 004 Quality Framework]. The School also intends to monitor effectiveness through termly student feedback on support services which will be considered by the Academic Council alongside data on student retention, attainment and progression to inform the ongoing delivery and resourcing of student support activities [001 New DAPs Plan; 002 Key Activities by Quarter]. The team considered the proposed review plan to be comprehensive and demonstrates that the School has a good understanding of the requirements to monitor and review its arrangements with a view to making improvements to processes and increase the effectiveness of systems.

200   The draft Student Induction Programme [055] and Draft Student Handbook [029] show how the School intends to advise students about, and induct them into, their programme of study. The programme incorporates a variety of activities and engagements during the first term and beyond to support students. Induction week itself is planned to include a range of information-sharing and relationship-building activities. The School plans to supplement information-sharing on its policies and regulations by refresher training, for example sessions on academic good practice and malpractice before formal assessments, and condensed induction refresher sessions to returning students [055]. The School also plans to develop an induction feedback survey to gauge student satisfaction and use the results to inform future induction sessions [011]. The planned approach demonstrates that the School has robust and credible plans as it views induction as extending beyond induction week and includes continuous improvement. The planned activities are likely to provide students with the necessary information and should enable a positive experience of getting to know their peers and School staff.

201   The team reviewed the Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure Document [026] and found that all of the School's intended digital administrative support systems will be cloud based and cloud middleware will be the School's own data store. This will aggregate all relevant data from all systems, safeguard against data loss and enable analytics and reporting that combines data from multiple sources. The document shows that the School has procured and implemented several key support systems to enable it to monitor student progression and performance accurately and to provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy management information needs on the basis of their suitability for its purposes [026 Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure; 054 Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure Implementation Timelines]. Key systems include the School website, an online application portal, student records and learning management systems, a library discovery platform and a plagiarism checker [026]. In some instances, procurement is ongoing, or the contract is yet to be initiated and the team noted that clear timelines for this have been established [054 Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure Implementation Timelines]. The School is working with consultants on a detailed plan for configuration of the student record system with a target of date of August 2021 for the system to be operational [054 Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure Implementation Timelines]. The School also aims to recruit the Head of Digital by spring 2021 [020 Organisation Structure Overview] to ensure that the digital and IT infrastructure is ready in time for September 2021. This was confirmed by the staff meeting with the team who stated that the implementation of the systems was on track [M4 student support meeting].

202   The School has procured a student record system which it intends to be its core database, holding all key information about students and enabling key processes within the student journey [026 Digital Systems and Infrastructure]. If implemented as planned it would enable the School to record and display (to staff and students) students' academic progression and performance, calculate grades, and store and release transcripts, and

through integration with the learning management system (also procured already), should enable it to offer timely displays of academic information. The student record system also contains the online application portal, which is already configured [054 Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure Implementation Timelines], where staff would be able to track applications, drill down into individual records and manage and record all formal communication centrally [026 Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure]. The student-facing systems are intended to be supported by analytics and reporting features which should enable the School to monitor and improve aspects of programme delivery. For the learning management system this would include fortnightly reports to management on engagement trends and areas for improvement across modules and bespoke reports for programme leaders and teaching staff on student performance and engagement with learning materials [026 Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure]. Non-academic student information, such as pastoral, wellbeing and internships information, attendance and finance, would also be held on the system and reporting to external bodies would be supported. The School has developed clear policies for managing security, disaster recovery and data backup [026 Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure]. Staff who met the team expressed confidence that the School had chosen the right systems for its needs reassuring the team that the chosen systems would be fit for purpose [M4 student support meeting].

203   The digital infrastructure and IT development plan the team examined is underpinned by a carefully considered staffing structure with clear delineation of responsibilities across roles and a staggered implementation timeline for digital systems and IT infrastructure [026; 054 Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure Implementation Timelines] demonstrating that the School has a sound understanding of system requirements and the resources required. The plans for the acquisition and implementation of the student record and the learning management systems are realistic as they take account of the need to be strategic about aligning the systems with the recruitment of personnel who have responsibilities directly related to the setting up and future management and operational timescales [038 Learning Resources Plan]. An annual review of the effectiveness of systems is planned for the fourth quarter of each year [002 Key Activities by Quarter], showing the team that the School understands the need to monitor and enhance its systems to ensure they remain fit for purpose and reliable.

Conclusions

204   The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers.

205   The School's plans for meeting this criterion are clear, comprehensive and appropriate with realistic plans for the development of support structures and capacity building to enable adequate staffing, physical and learning resources to be in place from the moment of New DAPs authorisation.

206   The School's plans to enable student development and achievement are well considered and demonstrate an understanding of this criterion. The intended Student Support Framework is appropriate for the nature of the School and its likely student body and is underpinned by clear policies which should enable the School to facilitate strong academic, pastoral and careers support. The plans include appropriate provision for the support of students with specific learning difficulties and aim to ensure equality of opportunity and equity of access to support and resources.

207   The School's plans for the development of learning resources and the support of student learning are well advanced and are likely to enable sustainable growth. When fully implemented, the intended administrative support systems should enable it to monitor student progression and performance accurately and are likely to provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs. Plans for their procurement, testing and implementation are realistic in terms of timescales

and credible in light of the progress made to date. The School's planned programme of student induction is comprehensive and appropriate. Staff met by the team are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities in meeting this criterion and can explain the School's approach to supporting students.

208   The School has credible and robust plans for monitoring the effectiveness of its student and staff advisory, support and counselling services through an extensive programme of annual reviews by the Academic Council and the Board of Directors during the probation period. The plan identifies meeting minutes and supporting documentation as sufficient and credible sources of evidence and indicates when these will become available over the probation period. Staff met by the team are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities in meeting this criterion and can explain the School's approach to supporting students.

209   Overall, the New DAPs Plan and different supporting sources of evidence consistently demonstrate the School's understanding of the criterion. The team concludes, therefore, that the School understands this criterion and that its New DAPs Plan is credible and would enable the DAPs criterion to be met by the end of the probation period.

Criterion E: Evaluation of performance

Criterion E1 - Evaluation of performance

210   This criterion states that:

E1.1:   An organisation granted degree awarding powers takes effective action to assess its own performance, respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths.

The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

211   The QAA assessment team assessed this criterion by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the Guidance for Providers, in particular the suggested evidence outlined in Annex 5 and the School's submission. The assessment team identified and considered this evidence for the purposes of the New DAPs test outlined in paragraphs 232 of the regulatory framework, namely to assess the provider's understanding of this criterion and to test the credibility of the provider's New DAPs Plan in relation to this criterion.

212   The team considered the School's New DAPs Plan [001] and supporting documentation to test whether the School understands this criterion, its plans are credible and the criterion is likely to be met by the end of the probation period. Specifically, the team considered or assessed:

a   the School's planned approaches to internal and external monitoring and review of its higher education provision, including how internal and external expertise will be utilised for the enhancement of programme design, approval, delivery and review arrangements. Therefore, the team considered the New DAPs Plan [001], the Key Activities by Quarter document [002], the Quality Framework [004], the Programme Design, Development, Monitoring and Evaluation Procedure [005–2.21], the Academic Community Development Framework [011], academic staff CVs [017], the Strategy and Business Plan [015], programme development [030] and approval background documents [035] the minutes of the Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel [031a-b] and the Provisional Data Collection Schedule [077]. The team also met academic management, academic and professional support staff [M4].

b   how the School intends to take action in response to matters raised through monitoring and review processes and identify the mechanisms proposed for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision. For this the team considered the New DAPs Plan [001], the Key Activities by Quarter document [002], the Quality Framework [004], the Programme Design, Development, Monitoring and Evaluation Procedure [005–2.21], the Academic Community Development Framework [011], the academic [049] and organisational risk registers [053] and the milestones and accountabilities document [079]. The team also met senior staff [M5].

How any samples of evidence were constructed

213   The team did not conduct any sampling as the volume of material available was such that all evidence could be reviewed by the team. Furthermore, the School only intends to run one programme in the immediate future for which it intends to award a qualification.

What the evidence shows

214   The School's plans in relation to this criterion are as follows.

215   The New DAPs Plan [001] sets out a schedule of relevant governance meetings, planned reporting and internal and external reviews to 2024 which the School intends to use to evaluate its performance. Relevant key milestones are identified, beginning in year one, quarter one with a quality review by the Academic Council on areas that the School already operates (admissions, student services, scholarship of staff, academic community and staff development, student facilities and resources, compliance with conditions of registration) and the effectiveness of the administrative systems [001 New DAPs Plan; 002 Key Activities by Quarter; 079 New DAPs milestones]. Midway through the probation the School has planned for an externally commissioned report on governance and quality reviewed by the Audit and Compliance Committee, with recommendations for changes planned to be made to the Board of Directors and Academic Council. By the end of the probation period the School will have conducted three reviews of its general policies and procedures, three reviews by Academic Council of academic regulations and frameworks, their implementation and effectiveness, and three reviews of governance effectiveness, with recommendations for improvements made by the Audit and Compliance Committee to the Academic Council and Board of Directors [001 New DAPs Plan; 002 Key Activities by Quarter; 079 New DAPs milestones].

216   The School plans to use internal and external expertise to set standards through its programme design and approval processes [005–2.21], and to ensure the quality of teaching and learning through a peer observation process [011 Academic Community Development Framework] where all faculty staff are observed at least annually, typically by quarter two [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. Throughout the probation period, the School intends to build explicit connections to the workplace and complex real-world problems, developing a large network of professional organisations who want to contribute to its undergraduate programme through the provision of internships [001 New DAPs Plan]. The School plans to undertake regular monitoring and review of programme delivery through its annual programme review process [005–2.21], which it regards as the cornerstone of its quality assurance process [001 New DAPs Plan] the outcomes of which will be scrutinised by Academic Council in quarter four of each year [002 Key Activities by Quarter].

217   The assessment team's analysis of the evidence led to the following observations.

218   The School's approaches to internal and external monitoring and review of its higher education provision are well planned in that they include regular scheduled opportunities for specific reviews through key governance bodies set out in the Quality Framework [004] and in line with the Programme Design, Development, Monitoring and Evaluation Procedure [005–2.21]. For example, there is a planned review by Academic Council of the academic regulations and frameworks, their implementation and effectiveness in quarter three of each year [004 Quality Framework]. In quarter two there are planned internal audits of academic areas reviewed by the Academic Council, with actions to be agreed and outcomes to be reported to the Board of Directors [004 Quality Framework]. Documentation from the development and approval of the planned programme demonstrates that ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation were used [030; 035; 031a-b] which demonstrates to the team the School's capacity for critical self-assessment and the robustness of its procedures for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny of its academic provision.

219   In addition to the regular annual cycle, the School plans to hold one-off reviews in a number of areas [001 New DAPs Plan; 002 Key Activities by Quarter] to provide assurance and identify opportunities for enhancement, both in terms of the broader governance piece and with regard to the effectiveness of newly implemented student-facing systems (as outlined in paragraph 215 above). In addition, staff whom the team met confirmed the areas of key focus for evaluation and testing both currently and throughout the probation period [M4 evaluation and performance meeting]. Collectively, these planned reviews demonstrate to the team that the School has a good understanding of the requirements to monitor and

review its arrangements with a view to making improvements to processes and to increase the effectiveness of systems.

220   The School is able to evidence where it has already used ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation to support the setting of standards in its arrangements for programme design and approval [005–2.21 programme design and approval procedure]. The Strategy and Business Plan [015] notes that research, testing and iteration were used to inform the general design of the programme, including structured engagement with a range of employers. The formal approval of the programme was prefaced by some broad 'pre-formal' preparatory discussion and consultation which included a range of credible and relevant internal and external sources [030 Background to Programme Development]. Similarly, minutes of the programme approval event shows the inclusion of two independent external members of Academic Council, an external scrutineer, an external adviser and a student representative, together with two School staff [031a-b] (see paragraph 79 for details). Throughout the probation period, the School intends to build explicit connections to the workplace and complex real-world problems and develop a network of professional organisations offering internships [001 New DAPs Plan]. Collectively, this demonstrates to the team a considered and robust approach to the use of internal and external expertise and gives confidence in the School's planned approach over the probation period.

221   The programme monitoring procedure [005–2.21] and Academic Community Development Framework [011] outline how the School intends to use internal expertise to contribute to the maintenance of standards and to identify opportunities to enhance the quality of the student experience through monitoring and review. For example, the planned class observation process has clear aims for reflection and enhancement and will be led by a senior member of faculty staff who is a Principal Fellow of Advance HE and assisted by other senior staff chosen for their experience in teaching [011]. Each member of faculty will be observed in their teaching at least once a year by a peer [011 Academic Community Development Framework]. These senior staff are already in post and their CVs [017] demonstrate that they have the requisite teaching expertise and professional recognition to undertake these roles. A summary of matters arising from the teaching observation process [011] in relation to staff development and pedagogical practice will be included in the annual reports on the pedagogical effectiveness of staff and staff development to the Academic Council [004 Quality Framework].

222   The broader annual programme monitoring is planned as a critical reflection and comprehensive review of various aspects of delivery, including analysis of key data, sector benchmarking and analysis of external examiner feedback, including descriptions of responses to any issues raised [005–2.21 annual monitoring procedure, 001 New DAPs Plan]. The procedure [005–2.21] is appropriately designed in that it is likely to give the School the opportunity to evaluate its performance, to identify good practice and flag any issues requiring resolution. The School intends to follow up any actions arising from programme monitoring in the next monitoring cycle [001 New DAPs Plan]. The School's planned annual programme review process will culminate in a summary report to Academic Council on outcomes and associated action plans [005–2.21 programme annual monitoring procedure] in quarter four of each year [002 Key Activities by Quarter]. The team considers that the School's plans for programme monitoring and review are appropriate, timely and are likely to provide a sound basis for effective ongoing scrutiny of processes and outcomes over the probation period.

223   The School's planned rolling internal audit programme consists of intermittent deep-dive thematic reviews on areas of academic and non-academic provision, focusing on two to three areas each year [004 Quality Framework]. All reports arising out of internal academic audits are to be reviewed by the Academic Council, with steps for improvement agreed, and with findings and agreed actions reported to the Board of Directors [004 Quality Framework]. All reports on non-academic activities are intended to be reviewed by the Board of Directors and steps for improvement agreed. Thematic review reports are to include a self-evaluation

statement, external perspectives on the School's delivery, student feedback and internal peer review [004 Quality Framework]. The team concludes that these plans are credible as they are thorough in approach and clearly identify the mechanisms proposed for assigning and discharging action in relation to the monitoring of academic provision.

224   The team examined the Provisional Data Collection Schedule [077] and found that it comprehensively maps out the internal and external reporting requirements and identifies the data required, the data source, the frequency of data aggregation as well as responsibilities for their collation and analysis and the intended audience. The schedule includes data pertaining to the standards and quality of the proposed programme, annual performance reviews and reviews of effectiveness, 'deep-dive' thematic audits and the quarterly tracking of performance against the SMART targets in the New DAPs Plan [077 Provisional Data Collection Schedule]. It clearly identifies the data sets which are to be considered by the various committees and boards of the academic governance structures. This includes data on student admissions, retention, progression and achievement which the Academic Council is expected to review [077 Provisional Data Collection Schedule]. The team considers that the schedule evidences a good understanding of the need for sufficient oversight of internally generated data and their consideration.

225   Both the School's academic [049] and the wider organisational risk register [053] describe a wide range of potential risks and appropriate mitigations, with ownerships and responsibilities clearly identified. The specific academic risks include academic governance arrangements, student retention and success, the learning environment and support. Planned oversight of associated actions will be through Academic Council and the Board of Directors, as appropriate. These planned arrangements are appropriate and considered.

226   Staff whom the team met [M5] were clear that responsibility for discharging actions identified through these various mechanisms would be identified in the relevant governance body and recorded in minutes. The School's quality cycle [004 Quality Framework] incorporates all the planned reports scheduled at key governance committees, with a spreadsheet to identify responsibilities for each. The Quality Framework [004] indicates that the Registrar will have oversight of the timely and satisfactory delivery of the majority of quality instrument milestones, and for ensuring they are tabled at the appropriate meeting. An overarching summary of ownership and oversight responsibilities for the delivery of the milestones set out in the New DAPs Plan [079 New DAPs milestones] identifies a process designed to ensure linkage of milestone accountabilities and mechanisms for discharging actions. A collated organisational action plan will form part of the annual overview report and action plan [005 Governance and Academic Regulations]. This comprehensive approach provides reassurance that the School's plans to ensure oversight of identified actions will be effective over the probation period.

Conclusions

227   The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers.

228   The School's planned approach to the review and evaluation of its academic provision is considered and thorough, with clear and appropriate mechanisms for identifying resulting actions, and for assigning and discharging responsibilities both for carrying them out and for oversight. Through a clear and appropriate schedule of governance and reporting, the School plans to monitor various aspects of its operations and performance to identify opportunities for improvement and drive the enhancement of the student academic experience. The New DAPs Plan sets out the schedule of relevant governance meetings, associated monitoring reports and planned internal and external reviews of the effectiveness of its arrangements up to 2024 and clearly identifies relevant key milestones, beginning in year one, quarter one.

229   The School's commitment to taking effective action to critically assess its own performance, to consider the effectiveness of systems and processes, to respond to identified weaknesses and develop further its strengths is integral to its operation. It has made appropriate use of ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation in its development, in its arrangements for programme design and approval, in its approach to benchmarking and through external members of key boards and committees. It also plans to make effective use of internal expertise to enhance delivery through peer observation of teaching and learning.

230   The New DAPs Plan articulates clearly how the School will meet this criterion and identifies appropriate sources of evidence, including scheduled monitoring reports and indicates when these will become available over the probation period. Overall, the School's plans for meeting this criterion in full by the end of the probation period are comprehensive, coherent and realistic.

231   The team concludes, therefore, that the School understands this criterion and that its New DAPs Plan is credible and would enable the DAP criterion to be met by the end of the probation period.

New DAPs overarching criterion

232   The New DAPs overarching criterion is that 'the provider is an emerging self-critical, cohesive academic community with a clear commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective (in prospect) quality systems'.

Conclusions

233   The team considers the School to have an emerging academic community. Its comprehensive academic governance structures, academic policies and regulations are likely to provide a robust framework for managing academic standards and quality and support its mission, aims and values. There is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in the School in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its higher education provision. Appropriate depth and strength of academic leadership support the School's development, with wide and appropriate expertise and experience evident from staff CVs. Academic and non-academic staff who have already been recruited are appropriately qualified and have the required skills and expertise for their role. There is wide-ranging expertise among the academic staff team in curriculum development and assessment design as well as an appropriate engagement with pedagogic and subject-specific research and scholarship. The School has suitable plans in place to become a cohesive academic body. Staff who will be involved in teaching or supporting learning, and in the assessment of student work, will have opportunities to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design. The School has also designed a range of opportunities for teaching staff to engage in reflection and evaluation of their teaching and assessment practices. Its planned career development and training offering for all categories of staff is extensive, well developed and carefully crafted to address the likely development needs of different staff groups.

234   The School demonstrates a clear commitment to the assurance of standards. Its regulatory framework and quality systems are well designed and have the potential to be effective. The School has developed a comprehensive quality framework that is fit for purpose and is likely to enable it to identify limitations and deficiencies in its activities and take timely and effective remedial action. Responsibilities for the management, oversight and review of regulations, policies and procedures are clearly articulated. The School's approaches and processes for the design and approval of programmes are credible, robust and effective and the planned processes for reviewing and monitoring the operation of programmes are sound. A set of comprehensive and interlinked assessment policies and procedures is likely to ensure that assessments are fair, reliable and secure. The School's plans for the use of external reference points and external input in programme design, assessment and confirmation of credits and qualification are credible and are likely to ensure scrupulous use of external examiners. Their role is clear and the activities they are expected to engage in are clearly defined. The intended processes for handling appeals and complaints are transparent and likely to be fair and deliver timely outcomes.

235   Plans are in place for regular monitoring and review. During the probation period the School has planned for an extensive programme of annual reviews to ensure that the governance arrangements, policies and regulations are effective and evolve appropriately with the growth of the School and changing needs of students. Performance reviews and reviews of effectiveness as well as 'deep-dive' thematic audits are also planned, demonstrating a self-critical approach. Plans for staff membership of the governance bodies are likely to enable sufficient involvement in the development and monitoring of policies and procedures.

236   The team therefore concludes that the School has an emerging self-critical, cohesive academic community with a clear commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective (in prospect) quality systems.

Proposed changes to the New DAPs Plan

237   The team did not identify any changes required to the New DAPs Plan at this stage of the School's application for a new DAPs authorisation.

Annex

Evidence

001	New DAPs Plan
002	Key Activities by Quarter
003	Access and Participation Plan
004	Quality Framework
005	Governance and Academic Regulations
006	General Policies and Procedures
007	Student Support Framework
008	Admissions Background Document
009	Academic Council Working Groups Terms of Reference
010	Student Engagement Framework
011	Academic Community Development Framework
012	Teaching Learning and Assessment Strategy
013	Register of External Appointments of Faculty
014	Programme Specification
015	Strategy and Business Plan
016a	Academic Council Minutes (18 November 2019)
016b	Academic Council Minutes (16 March 2020)
017	Academic Staff CVs
018	Regulatory Lessons Learned Document
019	Estates Plan Update for Academic Council (4th June 2020)
020	Organisation Structure Overview
021	Faculty Recruitment Process
022	Academic Staffing Spreadsheet
023	Academic Proforma Contract
024	Non-Academic Staff CVs
025	Non-Academic Proforma Contract
026	Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure
027	Staff Handbook
028	Register of External Examiners and Advisors
029	Draft Student Handbook
030	Background to Programme Development
031a	Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel Minutes (26 February 2020)
031b	Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel Minutes (9 March 2020)
032	Application Form Testing Sample
033	Prelaunch Engagement with Students
034	Prelaunch Surveys and Focus Group Findings
035	Programme Approval Process
036	Sample Module Forms and Assessment Instruments
037	Programme Learning Outcomes Matrix
038	Learning Resources Plan
039	Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel Outcome Note (26 February 2020) learning resources plan
040	Programme Development Team Response to Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel
041	Scoring Rubric for Faculty Applicant Classes
042	Sample of Student Feedback on Faculty Applicant Classes
043	Structure Questions for Faculty Interviews
044	Academic Staffing Calculations
045	Interdisciplinary Working Group Minutes (3 February 2020)
046	Learning Sciences Working Group Minutes (18 January 2020)

047a	Programme Development Team Subcommittee: Methods Area Leaders Minutes (11 January 2020)
047b	Programme Development Team Minutes (20 January 2020)
047c	Programme Development Team Subcommittee: Methods Area Leaders Minutes (3 February 2020)
047d	Programme Development Team Minutes (10 February 2020)
048	Board of Directors Approval to seek New Degree Awarding Powers (10 February 2020)
049	Academic Risk Register
050	not used
051	Policies and Regulations Map
052	Student Consultation in Setting Academic Standards
053	Organisational Risk Register
054	Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure Implementation Timelines
055	Student Induction Plan
056	Clarification on the Provision of Digital and Pedagogy Staff
057	Clarification on whether there will be Multiple Copies of 'Required' Resources
058	Clarification on the Provision of Academic Skills
059	Changes Made as a Result of Student Engagement
060a	Board of Directors Minutes (17 December 2019)
060b	Board of Directors Minutes (10 February 2020)
060c	Board of Directors Minutes (27 April 2020)
061	not used
062	Summary of Evidence Available during the Probationary Period by Quarter
063	Job Descriptions Non-Academic Staff
064	not used
065	Policies and Regulations Map (Updated)
066	Module Form (Updated) - Capstone Project (Level 6)
067	Programme Learning Outcomes Matrix
068	Risk Management Policy (Updated April 2020)
069	Professional Development Programme
070	Super Tutor System
071	Faculty Development Programme Year 0
072	Student Summative Assessment Load
073	Student Support Staff Work Calculations
074	Further Information on Estates Plans
075	not used
076	Provisional New DAPs SMART Targets
077	Provisional Data Collection Schedule
078	not used
079	New DAPs Milestone Accountabilities
080	Academic Council Meeting Minutes (5 May 2020)
Virtual meetings	
M1	Academic governance
M2	Regulatory framework and academic standards
M3	Quality of the academic experience and role of academic and professional staff
M4	Supporting students and evaluation of performance
M5	Final meeting