



Designated Quality Body
in England

Assessment for Variation of Degree Awarding Powers

University College of Estate Management



Review Report

December 2021

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Summary of the assessment team's findings

Underpinning DAPs criteria	
Criterion A: Academic governance	Met
Criterion B1: Regulatory frameworks	Met
Criterion B2: Academic standards	Met
Criterion B3: Quality of the academic experience	Met
Criterion C: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff	Met
Criterion D: Environment for supporting students	Met
Criterion E: Evaluation of performance	Met
Overarching Full DAPs criterion	
The provider is a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective quality systems	Met

About this report

This is a report of an assessment of the University College of Estate Management conducted in accordance with the process outlined in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers, December 2019*.

Assessment for the variation and revocation 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 delivered by a provider in England that has an existing DAPs authorisation and where variation or revocation is to be considered.

The assessment was conducted in order to inform advice to the OfS on whether the provider's existing renewable powers be granted on an indefinite basis.

Provider information

Legal name	University College of Estate Management
Trading name	University College of Estate Management
UKPRN	10008173
Type of institution	Higher education institution
Date founded	1919 as College of Estate Management; incorporated by Royal Charter in 1922; University College title in 2015
Date of first HE provision	1938
Application route	Variation of powers: assessment for the variation of powers from time-limited to indefinite powers

Level of extended powers applied for (if applicable)	None	
Location(s) of teaching/delivery	Horizons 60 Queen's Road Reading RG1 4BS	Unit 2 16/F Tower II Admiralty Centre 18 Harcourt Road Admiralty Hong Kong
Subject(s) applied for	CAH13-01 Architecture, building and planning	
Current powers held	Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP) up to and including Level 7	
Date current powers granted (if applicable)	2013	
Number of current programmes as of 14 October 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 master's (1 MBA, 4 MSc) programmes • 1 postgraduate single module programme • 1 postgraduate access programme • 5 bachelor's (BSc Hons) • 1 Certificate of Higher Education • 1 undergraduate single module programme • 1 BSc access module • 2 degree apprenticeship programmes • 1 master's degree apprenticeship programme • 1 other apprenticeship programme <p>The following UCEM programmes and awards are being taught out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Diploma of Higher Education/Foundation Degree Science in Surveying and in Construction Practice • Certificate of Higher Education in Surveying Practice • RICS Associate 900 Study Hours Programme 	
Number of students as of 14 October 2021	Total: 3,824 (139 full-time, 3,685 part-time) of which 2,255 are undergraduate and 1,569 postgraduate students. This includes 1,070 students studying on an undergraduate apprenticeship programme and 244 on a postgraduate apprenticeship programme.	
Number of staff as of 14 October 2021	239 staff	
Current awarding body arrangements (if applicable)	NA	

About University College of Estate Management

The University College of Estate Management was founded in 1919 as the College of Estate Management. It was incorporated by Royal Charter in 1922. In 2015 it achieved University College title and became University College of Estate Management (UCEM).

UCEM is an independent higher education institution that provides programmes by distance learning for people in the real estate development and construction industries throughout the world. Most of its programmes are accredited by UK and international professional bodies such as the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), the Chartered Institution of Building Engineers, the Chartered Institution of Engineering Surveyors and the Hong Kong Institute of Construction Managers. The vision of UCEM is 'to be the Centre of Excellence for Built Environment Education'. The core purpose of UCEM is 'to provide accessible, relevant, and cost-effective education, which enhances careers, increases professionalism and leads to a better built environment'.

UCEM has delivered higher education programmes since 1938 when it gained recognition from the University of London to provide tuition for its internal degree. In 1967 it formed an association with the University of Reading and its UK office is in Reading. UCEM also has a campus in Hong Kong where it has delivered its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes for over 40 years. In January 2013 UCEM was awarded time-limited taught degree awarding powers up to and including Level 7. These were renewed in January 2019 for a further period of six years and are due to expire in December 2024.

UCEM offers a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes in Building and Quantity Surveying, Construction and Construction Management, and Real Estate:

- BSc (Hons) Building Surveying
- BSc (Hons) Construction Management
- BSc (Hons) Quantity Surveying
- BSc (Hons) Real Estate Management
- BSc (Hons) Building Control
- MSc Building Surveying
- MSc Construction Management
- MSc Quantity Surveying
- MSc Real Estate
- MBA Construction and Real Estate

UCEM offers four apprenticeship programmes:

- Building Control Surveyor Degree Apprenticeship
- Chartered Surveyor Apprenticeship
- Construction Site Management Degree Apprenticeship
- Senior Leader Master's Degree Apprenticeship.

UCEM also delivers a BSc Access Module, a Certificate of Higher Education in Built Environment Studies and undergraduate single module study programmes. There is also a postgraduate Access programme and a postgraduate single module study programme as well as professional development modules, training and Continued Professional Development (CPD) programmes.

At the time of the assessment UCEM was teaching out:

- Diploma of Higher Education/Foundation Degree Science in Surveying and in Construction Practice
- Certificate of Higher Education in Surveying Practice
- RICS Associate 900 Study Hours Programme.

Since the award of taught degree awarding powers in 2013, UCEM moved away from its validating partners the University of Reading and The Open University and now no longer delivers programmes leading to awards from these universities. During 2013 and 2014 UCEM introduced its own suite of undergraduate and postgraduate awards. These awards were specifically designed for online only delivery. In 2015 UCEM opened a new office in Hong Kong. Also in 2015, UCEM commenced offering apprenticeship provision and joined the Register of Apprenticeship Training Providers in May 2017. It now holds contracts for the delivery of apprenticeship training for both levy-paying and non-levy paying employers.

UCEM is governed and controlled by its Board of Trustees. The Principal, who is an ex-officio Trustee, acts as UCEM's Chief Executive and has overall responsibility for policy implementation and for leading and directing UCEM's academic activities and internal management. The Board of Trustees delegates responsibility of the guardianship of the academic activities of UCEM to the Academic Board as the senior academic authority. The Academic Board is chaired by the Principal.

How the assessment was conducted

The QAA assessment team completed an assessment of the provider according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers, December 2019*.

The OfS referred the University College of Estate Management to QAA for an assessment for the variation of powers on 25 August 2021 and the provider's submission and supporting evidence was received on 14 October 2021. The assessment began on 15 October 2021, culminating in a final report to the Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers on 3 March 2022 and final advice to the OfS.

The team appointed to conduct the assessment was as follows:

Name: Alison Cotgrave
Institution: Liverpool John Moores University
Role in assessment team: Institutional and subject assessor

Name: Mark Davies
Institution: University of Sunderland
Role in assessment team: Institutional assessor

Name: Lesley Smith
Institution: University of London
Role in assessment team: Institutional assessor

The QAA Officer 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 subject expertise.

Collectively the team had experience of the management and delivery of higher education programmes from academic and professional services perspectives, included members with regulatory and investigative experience, and had at least one member able to represent the interests of students. The team included at least one senior academic leader qualified to doctoral level. Details of team members were shared with the provider prior to the 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 the OfS's regulatory framework. To support the clarity of communication between providers and QAA, the DAPs criteria and evidence requirements from the OfS's regulatory framework have been given unique identifiers and are reproduced in Annex 4 of Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA.

As part of the assessment, the team read 312 documents in support of the application, with 194 initial documents provided as supporting evidence with the self-assessment document. Following a desk-based assessment of this initial evidence, against the DAPs criteria, a request for additional evidence was made. The request covered areas from all DAPs criteria which had been identified as requiring further evidence and clarification and included access to the virtual learning environment (VLE) as all student learning takes place online. An additional 118 documents and VLE access were provided in response. The assessment had been referred by OfS as a desk-based assessment only and after the receipt of the additional evidence the team agreed that it had sufficient evidence to reach judgements about UCEM's provision and a visit was not warranted. As UCEM initially provided a significant number of evidence documents, the team found that there was no need to request samples of further evidence and instead requested specific examples of evidence following lines of enquiry across all DAPs criteria.

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 assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers (December 2019)*.

The evidence considered, and why and how 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 provider's submission.

4 Specifically, the review team considered or assessed the following:

a To determine whether UCEM will manage successfully the responsibilities that would be vested in it were it to be granted indefinite degree powers, the team examined the self-evaluation, [001] the organisation chart, [051] the Royal Charter and Byelaws, [006] the terms of reference of the Board of Trustees, [007] the Executive, [008] the Senior Leadership Team, [009] the corporate governance structure including the terms of reference of the Academic Review Committee [019] and the Audit Committee, [018] the academic governance structure [010] including the terms of reference of the Academic Board, [014] the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee, [042] the Academic Regulations and Specifications subcommittee, [011] the External Examiner Appointment Committee subcommittee, [012] the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee, [030] the Apprenticeship Quality Monitoring Committee [013] and Programme Committees, [159] as well as the minutes of the Academic Board, [207] the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee, [208] the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee [209] and the Programme Committees. [268] The team also examined the Academic and Programme Regulations 2021-22 [034] and minutes of the Apprenticeship Quality Monitoring Committee. [247, 248]

b To determine whether the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority is clearly articulated and consistently applied, the team examined the self-evaluation, [001] the Royal Charter and Byelaws, [006] the terms of reference of the Board of Trustees, [007] the Academic Board [007] and the Audit Committee, [018]

the minutes of the Board of Trustees, [163] student representative updates to the Board of Trustees [057, 058] and extracts of deliberative committee minutes on student items, [045] the papers [196-206] and minutes of the Academic Board [107, 207] and the Audit Committee [178] and the academic risk register. [017]

- c To determine whether there is clear differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in relation to the academic governance structures and arrangements for managing higher education provision, the team considered the terms of reference of the Quality, Standards and Enhancement Committee, [042] the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee [030] and the Research Committee, [046] as well as the minutes of the Quality, Standards and Enhancement Committee [208] and the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee [209] and the annual reports for 2018-19, [249] 2019-20 [250] and 2020-21 [251] of the Research Committee.
- d To establish whether UCEM's higher education mission, strategic direction and associated policies are coherent, understood and applied consistently and academic policies support UCEM's higher education mission, aims and objectives, the team examined the self-evaluation, [001] the Vision and Strategy to 2025, [027] the website, [<https://www.ucem.ac.uk>] the terms of reference of the Executive, [008] the Senior Leadership Team, [009] Academic Board, [014] the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee, [030] the Quality, Standards and Enhancement Committee [042] and the Research Committee, [046] guidance for members of deliberative committees, [040] the institutional scorecard, [044] Academic Board minutes [207] and the academic governance review action plan. [047] The team also reviewed the academic policies on Admissions and Recognition of Prior Learning Policy, [036] Neurodiversity, Disability and Additional Needs, [037] and Equality and Diversity. [038]
- e To determine how UCEM develops and implements its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff and students and external stakeholders, the team examined the minutes of the Academic Board, [207] the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee [208] and the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee. [209]
- f To determine whether there is appropriate depth and strength in the academic leadership team, the team examined the curricula vitae of the senior leadership team. [224]
- g To assess whether students are individually and collectively engaged in the governance and management of UCEM and its higher education provision and whether students are supported to be able to engage effectively, the team considered the self-evaluation, [001] the terms of reference and membership of the Board of Trustees, [007] Academic Board, [014] the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee, [042] the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee, [030] the Code of Practice chapter on Student Engagement [053] and the Student Charter. [064] The team also reviewed the minutes of Academic Board, [207] the Board of Trustees, [163] the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee, [208] the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee, [209] extracts of minutes on student items from deliberative committees, [045] the student submission for UCEM's internal institutional review, [056] the student submission action plan, [202] the student hub pages on the VLE, [312] the student representative job description, [055] student representative and ambassador meeting minutes, [211] the student handbook, [065] the briefing document for validation, periodic review and revalidation panel members, [063] and reports of programme approvals and reviews. [105, 106, 218]

5 UCEM does not work in collaboration with any other body to deliver learning opportunities and accordingly sub-criterion A1.3 is not reported on here.

How any samples of evidence were constructed

6 The team did not construct any sampling for this criterion as the volume of material available was such that all evidence could be reviewed by the team.

What the evidence shows

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

8 UCEM is governed and controlled by its Board of Trustees. [007 BoT ToR, 006 royal charter and byelaws] The Board of Trustees delegates responsibility of the guardianship of the academic activities of UCEM to the Academic Board as the senior academic authority. The Academic Board is responsible for the academic integrity, quality and standards of UCEM's academic awards, academic policies in teaching, assessment, and research and is chaired by the Principal. [014 AB Tor and membership, 006 royal charter and byelaws]

9 The institutional strategic approach is set by the Board of Trustees [007 ToR BoT] in collaboration with the Executive, which is made up of the Principal, Deputy Principal and University College Secretary, Vice Principal Learning and Teaching, Vice Principal Digital Education and Professional Services. [051 organisational chart, 001 self-evaluation] The Principal, who is an ex-officio Trustee, acts as UCEM's Chief Executive and has overall responsibility for policy implementation and for leading and directing UCEM's academic activities and internal management. To increase the breadth of expertise and to ensure all of UCEM's six departments are represented at this level, in August 2021 membership of the Executive was extended to include four Executive Directors, namely the Executive Director of Innovation and Partnerships, the Executive Director of Commercial and Business Development, the Executive Director of Finance and the Executive Director Regulation. [001 self-evaluation] As this change was made very recently, the team was unable to assess its impact upon the operation of the governance arrangements. The Senior Leadership Team (SLT) has responsibility for the leadership, coordination and overall management of the academic activities of UCEM. [001 self-evaluation]

10 Since the award of taught degree awarding powers in 2013, UCEM strengthened its corporate governance structures through the introduction of the Academic Review Committee in 2015 and the Audit Committee in 2017 as subcommittees of the Board of Trustees. The Academic Review Committee acts as the advisory body on all aspects of academic delivery, and in particular the auditor of academic review processes and performance data, [019 ToR ARC] whereas the Audit Committee reviews the adequacy and effectiveness of UCEM's audit arrangements related to financial reporting, internal control and risk management. [018 ToR AC] Additional subcommittees of the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee were also added to its academic governance structure in 2015. These include Academic Regulations and Specifications [011 ToR ARS] and the External Examiner Appointments [012 ToR EEA] subcommittee.

11 The establishment of these new committees had a positive impact on academic governance as it has allowed UCEM to consider certain areas in greater depth in these committees leading to enhancements. An example of this is the amalgamation of its then Assessment, Progression and Award regulations and Academic and General Regulations into a single document which became the Academic and Programme Regulations. [034] This work was undertaken by the Academic Regulations and Specifications subcommittee whose remit is the evaluation, review and amendment of all academic regulations. [011 ToR ARS]

12 In 2019 another subcommittee, the Apprenticeship Quality Monitoring subcommittee [013 ToR AQM] was established to specifically monitor the quality and standards of the apprenticeship programmes. The addition of this committee has been equally beneficial as it allowed UCEM to review quarterly position statements, apprenticeship key performance indicators (KPIs) and quality enhancement plans which has supported UCEM to raise standards so that it can rate itself as good against the Ofsted Education Inspection Framework. [247, 248 AQM minutes, 001 self-evaluation]

13 Finally, at programme level the Boards of Studies were disbanded and replaced with Programme Committees which have responsibility for monitoring and enhancing the academic programmes [159 ToR PC] leading to enhanced monitoring of programmes. Minutes of their meetings [268] evidence a focus on the monitoring of programmes during delivery through the consideration of student engagement with modules and student success rates. From all of the above, the team was satisfied that UCEM would manage successfully the responsibilities that would be vested in it where it to be granted indefinite degree awarding powers.

14 The Royal Charter and Byelaws [006] clearly set out the constitutions and differential functions of the Board of Trustees and Academic Board. The terms of reference of the Board of Trustees [007] are sufficiently detailed to guide business. Academic Board, a standing committee of the Board of Trustees, [014 ToR AB] is responsible for the academic integrity, quality and standards of UCEM's academic awards, academic policies in teaching, assessment, and research, [001; 014] and its minutes [107, 196-204] fully reflect this responsibility. The team formed the view that the function and responsibility of the senior academic authority is clearly articulated.

15 Minutes of the Board of Trustees [163] revealed activity in accordance with its terms of reference, [007] the Board receiving sufficient information from UCEM to conduct its business. Student members keep the Board apprised both verbally and by written reports [057; 058 student rep updates] of issues of relevance to students, in particular and of late, disruption caused by the CoViD-19 pandemic. The minutes of Academic Board are presented to the Board of Trustees, [163] thus the latter maintains oversight of academic matters.

16 Although the self-evaluation document [001] noted that the Board of Trustees reviews the academic risk register, [017] the team did not find this activity in the Board minutes [163] made available by the provider. However, detailed scrutiny of the register is delegated to the Board's subcommittee, the Audit Committee [018 ToR AC] and its minutes [178 AC minutes] evidence consideration of the risk register. Salient academic risks are reported periodically at Academic Board. [207 AB minutes] The Board of Trustees continues to have oversight by receiving reports from these subcommittees. The academic risk register [017] itself is comprehensive, encompassing a broad range of academic risks including those related to student satisfaction and student outcomes, and identifies credible mitigating actions, controls and early warning signs.

17 The membership of Academic Board [014 AB ToR and membership] is drawn from across the institution and includes staff appointed from the senior educationalist or academic community, staff appointed from the academic or programme leaders community, tutors and professional support staff, thus ensuring appropriate representation. There are also two industry representatives which further strengthens the Board in relation to UCEM's vocational strategy, as well as an external academic representative. Students are represented on the Academic Board [014 AB ToR and membership] and their views are presented via a standing item. [045] The papers and minutes of Academic Board [107, 196-206, 207] show that the Board's business includes a broad range of governance matters, fully in line with its terms of reference, and through reports from its subordinate committees it

maintains a full understanding of academic activity across the institution, taking appropriate decisions as necessary. The minutes also show that the Board is kept abreast of changes to the higher education landscape in the UK, including the regulatory landscape. Further the minutes show that the Board responds systematically in a responsible and positive manner to student concerns. For example, students were concerned about apparent inconsistency in marking. [198 AB meeting pack March 2021] Following investigation, the issue identified was not of marking but of differential feedback to students [196 AB meeting pack September 2021] and additional guidance for staff was created and shared with students. The team was therefore satisfied that the function of the senior academic authority was consistently applied and in accordance with its terms of reference.

18 The Academic Board delegates certain responsibilities to subcommittees such as the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee (QSEC), the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee (LTEC) and Research Committee. QSEC has responsibility for securing the standards of awards and reviews the effectiveness of strategies, policies and procedures. [042 ToR QSEC] LTEC oversees the development and implementation of the learning, teaching and assessment strategies across all programmes. [030 ToR LTEC]. The Research Committee provides leadership on and monitors all research activities. [046 ToR RC] The team reviewed the minutes of the last three years for these subcommittees [208 QSEC, 209 LTEC, 249-251 RC annual reports] and was able to confirm that all operate in accordance with their terms of reference. Based on the above, the team concludes that there is clarity differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in relation to the academic governance structures and arrangements for managing higher education provision.

19 The 'Vision and Strategy to 2025' [027] document is readily available online. [<https://www.ucem.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/UCEM-Vision-brochure-Digital.pdf>] The mission and vision are written in accessible language, and there is clear linkage to elements of the strategic plan, which emphasise the vocational nature of the mission and vision, and accessibility.

20 The remits of deliberative and executive bodies in general show attention to the ethos of UCEM, for example those of the Executive Team [008 terms of reference Executive Committee] and the SLT [009 terms of reference SLT] make direct reference to creating, maintaining and monitoring the overall strategy and vision, and those of Academic Board [014 terms of reference AB] to implementing them. UCEM has produced guidance notes for members of deliberative committees [040] and these not only reflect in general UCEM's strategy, but also remind members to keep the strategy in mind. The terms of reference of the subcommittees of Academic Board [030 ToR LTEC, 042 ToR QSEC, 046 ToR RC] again reflect in general principles outlined in the vision and mission, and operationally reflect the strategic plan. For example, the terms of reference of the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee [030] reference UCEM's vocational nature through liaison with employers and sponsors.

21 Performance against the objectives in the strategic plan is monitored using a detailed 'institutional scorecard', [044] which charts monthly performance using red-amber-green ratings. The scorecard is updated at meetings of the SLT and Executive, [001 self-evaluation] and the self-evaluation [001] indicated that the scorecard is shared with staff at fortnightly all-staff meetings. The team was satisfied that UCEM's higher education mission and strategic direction are coherent, published, understood and applied consistently.

22 UCEM conducted a review of its academic governance, in part through analysing questionnaire data from deliberative committee members, which reported to Academic Board in September 2020. [207 AB minutes] The team considered that while such a review indicated a degree of self-reflection and criticality, it also noted that UCEM's view was that the review would 'support UCEM's application for Permanent Degree Awarding Powers' [047

academic governance review action plan]. The review resulted in several recommendations designed to enhance performance, including one concerning an annual performance review for deliberative bodies and the recommendations have been incorporated into an action plan for implementation. [047 academic governance review action plan] The team concluded that the outputs of the review were justified because UCEM accurately identified areas that could be enhanced such as the performance review of Academic Board and the involvement of students in boards and committees. The team also concluded that UCEM's academic governance structures continue to support its higher education mission, aims and objectives, in part evidenced by the review and its outputs.

23 Academic policies relating to Admissions and Recognition of Prior Learning, [036] Neurodiversity, Disability and Additional Needs, [037] and Equality and Diversity [038] as part of UCEM's overall Code of Practice also show clear linkage to the vision and mission, particularly in promoting access to higher education. The team was therefore satisfied that academic policies support its higher education mission, aims and objectives. The minutes of the Academic Board, [207] the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee [208] and the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee [209] evidence that UCEM develops and implements its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff and students as staff and student committee members actively engage in discussions with regard to the development and approval of policies and the monitoring of their implementation.

24 The curricula vitae of the SLT [224] revealed appropriate expertise and experience in managing higher education at senior levels, including strategy development and implementation, and operational management, particularly in relation to digital delivery. There was additional evidence in ongoing activity that demonstrates an awareness of the higher education landscape, for example Board-level posts in a mission group, JISC and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). Moreover, senior staff had broad experience at senior levels in industry bodies relating to the programmes taught at UCEM. [224 senior staff CVs] Given these attributes the team concluded that there is sufficient depth and strength in academic leadership.

25 In addition to representation on the Board of Trustees [007 ToR and membership BoT] and Academic Board, [014 ToR and membership AB] students are represented on the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee [042 ToR and membership QSEC], and the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee [030 ToR and membership LTEC], and standing items are used to ensure student feedback is captured. Student representatives are appointed at programme level. [001 self-evaluation] Although there is no student-led organisation, such as a students' union, UCEM funds one student, designated the Lead Student Representative, for five hours per week to engage the student representative and general student community. The Lead Student Representative is also a Trustee. [001 self-evaluation] The Code of Practice chapter on student engagement [053] makes plain that learning is a partnership between students and sets out principles relating to the partnership, representation, and inclusivity. These principles allow for cooperative working between UCEM and its students to create a shared oversight of academic governance because they give a clear steer to what is expected of the partnership arrangements. The Student Charter, [064] produced in cooperation with students, emphasises the partnership nature of the relationship between the students and the institution and specifies in detail how UCEM expects its students to contribute to shaping its activity. Minutes of the Board of Trustees, [163] Academic Board, [045;207] the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee [208] and the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee [209] showed good levels of student participation in terms of attendance and contribution to debate and decision-making.

26 UCEM prepared for an internal institutional review (postponed owing to the pandemic) [001 self-evaluation] by asking the Lead Student Representative to prepare a student submission. [056] This document showed that students were generally supportive of

UCEM and made some recommendations to enhance performance including more information for applicants on the website, access to past examination papers for students and more support for academic writing for international students. The submission and its recommendations were considered by Academic Board [207 minutes AB] who formulated an action plan [202 student submission action plan in AB meeting pack] to address some of the issues raised. Some of the recommendations have resulted in changes to practice, for example in online careers guidance provision, [312 VLE student hub pages] clear procedures concerning mitigating circumstances in assessment, [164] and the provision of summary information to students on complaints received and actions taken. [001 self-evaluation]

27 At programme level UCEM plans for two student representatives per programme, but concedes that filling these positions is difficult, given the predominantly part-time nature of the student population. [001 self-evaluation] As an incentive UCEM offers a monetary reward, but also demands representatives undergo mandatory training for the role. [055 student rep job specification] The student representative job specification [055] clearly sets out what is expected of representatives, plainly itemising duties and responsibilities. Student representatives contribute to monthly Student Representative and Ambassador (students representing and promoting awareness of a particular segment of the student community such as Diversity, International, LGBTQ+) meetings. [001 self-evaluation; 211 meeting minutes] Although these meetings are minuted, they serve solely as a channel for feedback from the students to UCEM, thus there is no action planning and previous minutes are not considered. [211 meeting minutes] The nature of student representation at all levels is clearly communicated to students in their handbook [065 student handbook] with an appeal for interested students to become representatives.

28 The briefing document for validation, periodic review and revalidation panel members [063] and reports of these events [105, 106, 218 validation/re-validation periodic review reports] show that students, or recent graduates, are involved as mandatory members of programme validation and review panels. The document offers useful guidance on the role of panellists, specifies the particular inputs that students can bring to the processes, and offers a range of prompts in the form of potential questions that might be asked from a student perspective. [063 briefing document]

29 The team concludes that, overall, students have ample opportunities to contribute, and do contribute, to academic governance. Through representation and consultation students are full partners in academic governance arrangements.

Conclusions

30 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers, in particular Annex 4.

31 From the evidence presented the team concludes that effective academic governance is present, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability for academic responsibilities. UCEM's higher education mission and strategic direction as articulated in its published Vision and Strategy are coherent and consistently applied. It is widely communicated to staff and students on the website. Achievement of its aims and objectives is supported by key institutional strategies and policies that show clear links to the mission and strategy and support the higher education aims and objectives set out in the vision statement.

32 Through its committee structure, UCEM develops and implements its academic policies and procedures in collaboration with staff and students. The functions of the Academic Board as the senior academic authority and its three subcommittees, the Quality

Standards and Enhancement Committee, the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee and the Research Committee are set out in their terms of reference, which reflect the general principles outlined in the vision and mission, and operationally reflect the strategic plan. The function of the Academic Board as the senior academic authority is clearly articulated and consistently applied. There is appropriate upward reporting from the subcommittees which are able to undertake detailed oversight of their respective areas. Minutes of these committees confirm that they are operating in line with their stated remit and business schedules. Notwithstanding the delegation of responsibility to its subcommittees for specific matters, Academic Board retains ultimate academic authority.

33 The academic leadership team has sufficient depth and strength and there is clear differentiation and complementarity of function across UCEM's deliberative and executive structures with clear reporting lines. The curricula vitae of the SLT show appropriate expertise and experience in managing higher education at senior levels, particularly in relation to digital delivery.

34 Students are involved as partners in academic governance at a variety of levels including the Academic Board and its subcommittees and all aspects of the control and oversight of the higher education provision is conducted with substantial involvement of and in partnership with students. The review team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

Criterion B: Academic standards and quality assurance

Criterion B1 - Regulatory frameworks

35 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.

36 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers (December 2019)*.

The evidence considered, and why and how the team considered this evidence

37 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 provider's submission.

38 Specifically, the review team considered or assessed the following:

- a To understand the extent to which the academic framework is comprehensive and transparent; appropriate to UCEM's current status and fully and consistently implemented, the team scrutinised the self-evaluation, [001] the academic regulations, [034] the Code of Practice development programme [073] and the chapters of the Code on admissions and recognition of prior learning, [036] learning, teaching and assessment, [069] external examining, [070] student appeals and complaints, [071] board of examiners, [072] partnerships, [068] programme development and validation, [080] programme planning, monitoring and evaluation, [084] the procedures for programme development and validation, [081] programme monitoring and review, [085] programme amendment and discontinuation, [086] academic misconduct, [116] student complaints [126] and appeals [127] and mitigating circumstances. [164]
- b To assess whether UCEM's academic regulations governing its higher education provision are appropriate and to understand where responsibilities reside to ensure that these continue to be appropriate, the team examined the academic and programme regulations, [034] the minutes of module boards, [228, 230, 232, 234, 236] progression and award boards, [229, 231, 233, 235] the terms of reference of the Academic Regulations and Specifications Subcommittee [011] and the minutes of the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee [208] and Academic Board. [207]
- c To identify how UCEM maintains definitive records of programmes and qualifications, the team considered the website, [<https://www.ucem.ac.uk>] the Code of Practice chapter on Programme Development and Validation, [080] the programme development and validation procedure, [081] the programme specification template, [082] the programme amendment and discontinuation

procedure, [086] the Code of Practice chapter on Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, [084] and examples of undergraduate and postgraduate programme specifications. [077, 219]

- d To establish whether students and alumni are provided with appropriate records of study, the team considered the self-evaluation, [001] a sample graduation certificate, [089] examples of degree certificates, [214] the diploma supplement template, [088] examples of diploma supplements [212, 213] and programme specifications. [077, 219]

How any samples of evidence were constructed

- 39 The team did not construct any sampling for this criterion as the volume of material available was such that all evidence could be reviewed by the team.

What the evidence shows

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

41 Since the award of taught degree awarding powers in 2013, UCEM has moved away from the academic framework set out by its former validating partners. It developed its own Code of Practice, [036, 069, 070, 071, 072, 080, 084] which was updated over time to cover new areas of provision such as the apprenticeship programmes, and has created its own academic regulations [034] and a range of supporting procedures such as those governing programme development and validation, [081] programme monitoring and review, [085] programme amendment and discontinuation, [086] academic misconduct, [116] student complaints [126] and appeals [127] and mitigating circumstances. [164]

42 Principles that underpin the academic regulations are contained in the comprehensive Code of Practice. Chapters of relevance to this criterion comprise: Chapter 2a Admissions and Recognition of Prior Learning; [036] Chapter 4 Learning, Teaching and Assessment; [069] Chapter 8 External Examining; [070] Chapter 9 Student Appeals and Complaints; [071] and Chapter 14 Board of Examiners. [072] These chapters contain policy developed from the underpinning principles of the Code, and procedures developed from the policy. For example, the chapter on student appeals and complaints [071] indicates that students should be treated fairly and with regard to applicable laws, then sets out policy in terms of definitions of complaints and appeals, what matters students can and cannot make representation about, and timeliness of processes, and then describes in detail the procedures to be followed by students and the institution. Collectively, the chapters set out a comprehensive academic framework that covers all aspects of the student academic lifecycle, from admissions, through teaching to assessment and award. The chapters use as reference points, and make reference to, the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and its associated advice and guidance. Although UCEM does not work with any other organisations to deliver learning opportunities it does have a chapter on Partnerships [068] that sets out the nature of any such partnership activity, which the team viewed as prudent.

43 Chapters follow the same format: setting out general principles, detailing policy, and clearly stating procedures, such that there is a transparent articulation between principles and procedures. By way of example, Chapter 2a Admissions and Recognition of Prior Learning [036] sets out in detail UCEM's principles in relation to widening participation and equality and diversity. It uses these to develop a detailed admissions policy that stipulates specific admission requirements, commensurate with study at Level 4, and this policy is translated into operating procedures for making decisions and for recognition of prior learning and credit transfer. The chapter is comprehensive in that it deals with a broad range of eventualities, including the procedure to be followed when an applicant wishes to

complain or appeal about an admission decision. The team found that UCEM implements its Code of Practice chapters fully and consistently (see paragraph 112 recognition of prior learning, paragraphs 95-101 learning and teaching, paragraphs 106-116 assessment, paragraphs 117-120 external examining and paragraphs 121-125 progression and award appeals and complaints in section B3 for details). Currency of the Code of Practice is monitored at meetings of the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee, [001 self-evaluation] most recently September 2021, and the Code of Practice development programme [073] gives a review date for each chapter. No chapter is overdue for review. The team formed the view that collectively the Code of Practice regulates procedures that are appropriate to UCEM's current status.

44 The Academic and Programme Regulations [034] are contained in a single document, which sets out the criteria for granting final awards and intermediate exit awards, gives comprehensive coverage of the approach to awarding credit, and details how award classifications are calculated. Also specified are registration periods, progression rules, assessment compensation and resubmission arrangements. The team found that the academic regulations are consistently implemented by module and progression and award boards [228-235 minutes module boards, progression and award boards] (see paragraphs 111 and 118 in section B3 below for further information). The regulations are written in plain language directed at a student reader, [034 academic and programme regulations] such that there is no requirement for any explanatory documents. Appendices to the regulations, one for undergraduate and one for postgraduate study, inform students of the regulations that apply to them if they began their studies before the regulations were revised in 2020, [034 academic and programme regulations] making plain that the purpose of the appendices is to ensure that students are not disadvantaged. The academic regulations are approved by the Academic Board. [034 approval history academic regulations] The team concluded that the academic frameworks and regulations governing UCEM's higher education provision are coherent and appropriate to its current status.

45 The regulations are reviewed annually as the main function of the Academic Regulations and Specifications Subcommittee [011 ToR] of the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee. Membership of this subcommittee includes academic staff representatives and the Vice-Principal for Learning, Teaching and Apprenticeships as well as senior members of the professional services staff, thus there is broad representation from a variety of perspectives. [011 ToR and membership] The evidence shows that any changes recommended by this subcommittee are reviewed by Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee [208 QSEQ minutes] before being discussed, formally approved and adopted by Academic Board as the senior academic authority. [207 AB minutes] An example is the development and approval of a new programme monitoring and review procedure which follows this process. [208 QSEC minutes, 207 AB minutes] The team viewed this annual review process as robust because it involves a variety of stakeholders and results in changes endorsed by the senior academic body.

46 The definitive record of each programme is the programme specification, published on the website. [<https://www.ucem.ac.uk/programme-specifications-and-academic-regulations/>] Although the production of a programme specification is not featured in the Code of Practice chapter on Programme Development and Validation, [080] it is mandated in the Programme Development and Validation Procedure. [081] Programme specifications should include their validity period and information on programme aims and learning outcomes, admission criteria, programme structure and modules, delivery structure, professional, statutory and regulatory body (PSRB) accreditations, mapping to relevant Subject Benchmark Statements and against professional body requirements, [081] all to a specific template. [082] The team examined examples of undergraduate and postgraduate programme specifications [077, 219] noting that they followed the required template. Each contained sufficient material to define the programme in such a comprehensive manner that

the programme could be recreated by an unfamiliar subject expert.

47 UCEM has developed a procedure for programme amendment [086] to operationalise the types of changes specified in the Code of Practice chapter on Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation. [084] The procedure for making editorial, minor and major changes is clear and includes who is responsible at which stage and who signs off the process and specifies that changes must be reflected in a revised programme specification. While the team did not see the revision process in operation it regards the procedure for maintaining the currency of definitive documents as strong because it is tightly specified. [086 programme amendment procedure] The definitive record is produced and stored centrally by the Academic Quality Unit (AQU). The team was satisfied that UCEM maintains definitive and up-to-date records of each qualification to be awarded and each programme being offered.

48 Students who gain an award are provided with a hard copy results letter, accompanied by a diploma supplement. [001 self-evaluation] The diploma supplement [088 diploma supplement template, 212-213 example diploma supplements] provides information on the programme, including award title and entry requirements, overall classification achieved, start and end dates of study, information identifying the student, explanatory text about the UK higher education system, including a diagram of the FHEQ, and an academic transcript table with all module results and attempts. The team checked the contents of diploma supplements and confirmed that they aligned with the awards, modules and credit requirements as set out in the respective programme specifications. [077, 219] However, in a diploma supplement for a master's programme, the programme studied was referred to as 'Master of Science UCEM'. [213 diploma supplement example] In a corresponding diploma supplement for a bachelor's programme the programme studied was listed as 'Bachelor of Science (Hons)'. Given that the assessment team only viewed one example at each award level it cannot form a firm conclusion as to whether the addition of 'UCEM' to the 'programme studied' section of the master's diploma supplement was a systematic or a typographical error on that particular diploma supplement.

49 Students are also provided with an award certificate. The team confirmed that the certificate contains relevant summary information on award gained and classification. [214 certificate examples] Owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, UCEM has introduced e-certificates to be issued alongside hard copy certificates which can be accessed by students online. [001 self-evaluation] The team concluded that there is evidence that students are provided with records of study.

Conclusions

50 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers, in particular Annex 4.

51 The review team concluded that UCEM has in place a transparent and comprehensive academic framework and associated regulations that govern how it awards academic credit and qualifications. These are appropriate to its current status and are fully implemented. To ensure their currency the academic regulations are reviewed annually, and any changes are approved by the senior academic authority, the Academic Board.

52 The team also determined that UCEM maintains a definitive record of each programme and qualification that it approves, and of subsequent changes to it, in the form of a programme specification. These are comprehensive and form the basis for the delivery, assessment and review of the programmes. There are clear lines of responsibility for the oversight of definitive programme documentation which is centrally held by the Academic Quality Unit. Based on these programme records students are provided with certificates and

diplomas of study as a record of study. The review team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

Criterion B2 - Academic standards

53 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.

54 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers (December 2019)*.

The evidence considered, and why and how the team considered this evidence

55 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 provider's submission.

56 Specifically, the review team considered or assessed the following:

- a To assess whether the UCEM's higher education qualifications are offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ and meet PSRB requirements, the team examined the programme specifications [077, 079, 219] and external examiner reports for 2019-20. [125]
- b To determine whether the programme approval arrangements are robust, applied consistently and ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets threshold academic standards for the qualification, the team considered the Code of Practice chapter on Programme Development and Validation, [080] the programme development and validation procedure, [081] an example of business and academic case approval, [236, 237] the internal scrutiny checklists, [090, 091] the action plan on meeting validation conditions and recommendations, [296] minutes of the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee, [208] the rationales for revalidation/review, [102, 103] programme specifications, [077, 079], undergraduate and postgraduate revalidation reports, [105, 106] and external examiner reports. [125]
- c To determine the robustness of the process for programme monitoring and evaluation and its consistent application and to assess whether academic standards are being maintained, the team considered the self-evaluation, [001] the Code of Practice chapter on Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, [084] the programme monitoring and review procedure, [085] examples of annual programme review reports, [095a, 095b] the degree outcome statement for 2021, [026] minutes of the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee, [208] Academic Board [207] and the Academic Review Committee, [210] as well as the degree outcome statement. [026]

- d To ascertain that credit and qualifications are awarded only where the achievement of learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment and both UK threshold standards and UCEM academic standards have been satisfied, the team examined module descriptors [078] and programme specifications, [077, 079 219] the Academic and Programme Regulations, [034] the list of external examiners, [131] as well as module board [228; 230; 232; 234] and progression board minutes. [229, 231, 233, 235]
- e To determine whether the provider makes use of appropriate external and independent expertise in establishing and maintaining standards, the team examined the Code of Practice chapter on External Examining, [070] module board minutes, [228, 230, 232, 234] progression board minutes, [229, 231, 333, 335] external examiner reports and responses to reports for 2019-20, [125] the lists of appointed external examiners and advisors, [131, 225] the annual review of external examiner reports 2019-20, [093] examples of programme annual review reports, [095a, 095b] minutes of the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee [208] and Academic Board, [207] the Code of Practice chapter on Programme Development and Validation, [080] the validation procedure, [081] and validation, revalidation/review reports. [218,105, 106]

How any samples of evidence were constructed

57 The team did not construct any sampling for this criterion as the volume of material available was such that all evidence could be reviewed by the team.

What the evidence shows

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

59 All modules that make up a qualification are carefully mapped in terms of skills against Levels 4-6 of an FHEQ bachelor qualification [077, 219 programme specifications] or, in the case of postgraduate programmes, the Level 7 master's degree qualification specification. [079, 219 programme specifications] The example undergraduate programme specifications [077, 219] show that module learning outcomes clearly relate to programme learning outcomes and there is appropriate progression from Level 4 to Level 6. There is also a brief explanation how each module or groups of modules will develop each skill; [079 programme specifications] for example, for each programme learning outcome, a list of modules where the module learning outcomes will allow students to develop the skill or knowledge is provided. The programme learning outcomes grouped by knowledge and skills are clearly stated and modules that will demonstrate the achievement of these are mapped to each learning outcome. The module list states the credit value of each module that makes up the qualification and identifies core and elective modules. With the exception of the undergraduate and postgraduate projects (40 credits) all modules are of equal credit value (20 credits). [077, 079, 219 programme specifications]

60 The team found that the programmes satisfy the knowledge and skills development of an FHEQ Level 6 or 7 qualification. All programme specifications [077, 079, 219] examined show that the learning outcomes are set at standards appropriate to the FHEQ level of the relevant qualification and take account of relevant external reference points, thus evidencing coherent and consistent academic standards. External examiner reports for the academic year 2019-20 [125] comment positively on the programme structure and confirm that all programmes fully align with the FHEQ and take account of relevant external reference points including PSRB requirements and apprenticeship standards, where applicable. All external examiners are also satisfied that student performance is consistent with that of programmes at other UK higher education institutions. The team therefore

formed the view that UCEM's higher education qualifications correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ and take account of relevant external reference points. Academic standards are appropriate for the level of the respective award and set at a level that meets UK threshold standards for each qualification.

61 UCEM has clear mechanisms for setting and maintaining academic standards. The process for programme approvals with separate business and academic case approvals [237] for each proposed new programme prior to formal programme approval by a validation panel is detailed in the Code of Practice chapter on Programme Development and Validation [080] and the associated programme development and validation procedure. [081] While validation and review panels undertake detailed scrutiny of programmes, Academic Board has overall authority to approve/reapprove programmes. Minutes of Academic Board [107] show consideration of the latest programme approval reports and there is appropriate follow up and monitoring of any reapproval conditions and recommendations through an action plan [296 action plan on meeting validation conditions and recommendations] monitored by the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee. [208 QSEC minutes]

62 The business and academic approval process is credible and robust in the examples seen by the team because it enables the consideration of sufficient programme and market information to ensure that only sound academic programmes that are financially viable and meet demand are considered at validation [236, 237 academic and business case approvals] (see paragraph 86 in section B3 for further details). The subsequent validation process includes pre-event scrutiny of documentation by a panel that establishes the appropriateness of programme entry requirements, delivery and assessment methods, resources and student support arrangements. [090, 091 internal scrutiny checklists and recommendations]

63 The documentation for the latest undergraduate and postgraduate revalidation/review events includes a comprehensive rationale [102 UG, 103 PG revalidation rationale] that provides a detailed account of changes being proposed to programme content and delivery and evidences consultations with internal and external stakeholders such as staff, students, employers, external examiners and external academics in programme development. The documentation also contains a description of the institutional context, a review of the existing provision drawing on admissions data, external examiner reports and student feedback, a review of student support arrangements and resources. [102, 103 rationale UG and PG reviews] The programme specifications [077, 079] examined by the team show that proposed changes have been incorporated into the revised programmes. For example, the suite of undergraduate programmes was restructured and refocused to better align with industry needs. [102 revalidation rationale, 105 UG validation reports] All programme approval and reapproval reports [105, 106] demonstrate participation of independent external experts and students and show detailed discussions on academic standards and learning opportunities with in-depth consideration of programme content and the curriculum, including the alignment to the FHEQ and progression between levels. External examiner reports, [125] on which the programme reapproval arrangements draw, confirm that the standards set and maintained by UCEM above the threshold are reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies.

64 The team concludes that the programme approval process is robust and applied consistently. It takes appropriate account of independent external expertise and UCEM designs and delivers programmes and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ.

65 The module descriptors [078] and programme specifications [077, 079 219] evidence that the award of credit which leads to qualifications is based on students achieving learning outcomes and the Academic and Programme Regulations [034] clearly

show how academic credit is to be awarded, what is required to achieve each award and how degree classifications are to be calculated. To confirm that credit and qualifications are awarded where learning outcomes have been achieved, UCEM employs both academic and practitioner external examiners. [131 list of current EEs] Undergraduate and postgraduate module board minutes [228; 230; 232; 234] and progression board minutes [229, 231, 233, 235] demonstrate that the principles for the award of credit outlined in the Academic and Programme Regulations are being adhered to. Module boards are presented with module statistics and a summary of the performance of students in each module. They give due consideration to the profile of marks, averages and standard deviations and confirm module results for each student. Meetings are fully quorate with representation from academic and industrial external examiners and their comments are noted in detail. [228, 230, 232, 234] Minutes from award and progression boards [229, 231, 233, 235] show that the award of credits and awards are also adhered to fully. The minutes show participation of external examiners and confirm the number of awards made by degree classification (undergraduate and postgraduate taught), the number of alternative exit awards and the number of students with deferred decisions pending outcomes of academic misconduct investigations. In the meetings, external examiners confirm that the required standards are being achieved at each level of study and it is evident that credit and qualifications are only awarded where students have demonstrated the achievement of module and programme learning outcomes. [229, 231, 233, 235 award board minutes] The team found the arrangements for the award of credit and qualifications to be sound and concluded that UCEM has demonstrated it awards credit and qualifications only where the achievement of learning outcomes has been sufficiently demonstrated through assessment.

66 The Code of Practice chapter on Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation [084] and the programme monitoring and review procedure [085] outline the process used for the review of programmes. These are detailed and comprehensive documents and their consistent implementation is evidenced in the most recent annual programme review reports. [095a, 095b] The reports provide evidence that changes required to improve programmes are considered in detail on an annual basis. Reports are structured thematically and pull in detail and data from other reporting mechanisms such as admissions, student retention and success data, external examiner reports and student feedback sources. The undergraduate and postgraduate reports [095a, 095b] examined by the team are rich in detail. Student numbers are considered to determine the viability of programmes and there are comments on the characteristics of programme applicants. There is also detailed discussion of student retention and success as well as an evaluation of the suitability of the resources to deliver the programmes. In addition, each report contains a lengthy section summarising student feedback from a number of different sources including module evaluation questionnaires, the student experience survey and the National Student Survey, and outlines how this feedback is being addressed. Finally, the external examiner and other external stakeholder feedback is evaluated, and changes proposed if needed. Actions are clearly linked to UCEM strategies and policies. [095a, 095b annual programme review reports] The team concludes that UCEM's programme monitoring arrangements are robust and applied consistently. Programme monitoring addresses explicitly whether the academic standards UCEM set are being maintained.

67 In order to assure itself of the maintenance of academic standards over time, UCEM recently convened a task group reporting into the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee to review its degree classification data over the last four years and to identify any changes to the data. [001 self-evaluation] The resulting degree outcome statement for 2021 [026] was discussed by the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee, [208 QSEC minutes] Academic Board [207 AB minutes] and the Academic Review Committee [210 ARC minutes] and is now also published on the website. It shows an upward shift in the degree classification profile for first class honours (from 10% to 23%) and good honours (from 57% to 71%) between 2015-16 and 2018-19 while the percentage

of second-class honours has remained roughly at the same level. [026 degree outcome statement] UCEM attributes the upward trend to improvements made to its own programmes compared to those previously validated by the University of Reading and the fact that 2019-20 is the first year degree apprenticeship students have been included in the dataset. As they constitute 15% of the current student cohort, UCEM states that this has impacted on the overall figures. UCEM intends to review its student degree outcome data and revise the degree outcome statement on an annual basis. [001 self-evaluation]

68 The expertise of external examiners is used in a variety of ways. For example, external examiners are invited to approve summative assessments and they contribute to maintaining standards via moderation sampling of assessment. [070 Code of Practice external examining, 228, 230, 232, 234 module board minutes] They are also consulted on proposals for the introduction of changes to existing programmes and attend assessment boards where credits are awarded, progression is confirmed and awards are made [070 Code of Practice external examining, 228-235 module and progression board minutes] (also see paragraph 117-120 in section B3 below). Their reports, [125] the format of which UCEM specifies, explicitly discuss the maintenance of academic standards and identify strengths and areas for improvements. UCEM has appointed an academic external examiner to each programme to confirm standards are correctly set and being maintained, and an industry based external examiner [131 list of external examiners] who along with confirming standards are set at the appropriate level of the FHEQ, assures UCEM that the programmes are meeting PSRB requirements and are current and relevant in their content. For the degree apprenticeship programmes, UCEM has one external adviser [225 list of advisors] who advises on all aspects of the provision. The team concluded that UCEM makes robust use of appropriate external expertise in establishing and maintaining standards.

69 UCEM makes diligent use of external examiner reports because a comprehensive response to each report is drafted by the Programme Leader [125 EE reports and responses] and external examiner feedback is logged and tracked in the quality enhancement plans which form part of the annual programme review reports. [095a, 095b] Examples of annual programme review reports examined by the team demonstrate careful consideration of external examiner comments and identification of actions which address the issues raised. [095a, 095b] The team saw evidence of actions being implemented. For example, in the report for the MSc (Hons) Quantity Surveying, [125] the external examiner commented that there were improvements in the quantification skills of the students in 2019-20 because of the change in the pedagogic approach to the delivery of the subject. In the MSc Construction Management programme, comments from the external examiners have led to the inclusion of risk management as a topic across the suite of programmes. [125 response to EE report]

70 UCEM compiles an annual overview of external examiner reports [093] which is considered by the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee [208 QSEC minutes] and by Academic Board. [207 AB minutes] The team found the latest report [093] to be detailed and comprehensive. It analyses external examiner comments on academic standards (including the alignment with national and professional benchmarks, requirements of professional practice, currency of the curriculum and marking criteria and criteria for degree classification), the assessment process and the conduct of examination boards. It also identifies themes, for example strengths of programmes and areas for development and good practice and innovation in relation to learning, teaching and assessment. Even though comments were very positive about programme design, the quality of the student work and the setting and maintenance of standards, UCEM has identified improvement actions. [093 annual overview of external examiner report] As a result, critical thinking, a key attainable attribute at postgraduate level, and elements of its importance have been included in the programme and module leaders' introductory student webinars. In addition, content within the study skills section and within modules' pre-assessment drop-in sessions will have a

stronger focus on critical thinking. [093 annual overview of external examiner report]

71 UCEM also makes robust use of other independent external expertise for the setting and maintenance of standards because validation panels include external academics and practitioners. [105, 106, 218 validation reports] All panels included the required number of external experts as set out in its policies and procedures [080 Code of Practice chapter Programme Development and Validation, 081 validation procedure] and they actively contributed to the discussions on standards at the events. [105, 106, 218 validation reports] The team concluded that in establishing and maintaining academic standards UCEM makes appropriate use of external and independent expertise.

Conclusions

72 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers, in particular Annex 4.

73 The review team concluded that UCEM has robust mechanisms for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its higher education qualifications which are clearly articulated in programme approval, monitoring and external examining policies and procedures. Its policies and procedures for the approval and monitoring of programmes are appropriate and consistently implemented. Approval reports and definitive programme documentation demonstrate that UCEM is able to design and deliver courses and qualifications that meet the threshold academic standards described in the FHEQ. Processes for the award of credit and qualifications are robust and require students to demonstrate the achievement of relevant learning outcomes through assessment, thus ensuring reliability over time. In setting and maintaining standards at threshold level and beyond, UCEM makes scrupulous use of independent and external expertise, thus ensuring that standards are reasonably comparable to those set and achieved by other UK degree awarding bodies. The review team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

Criterion B3 - Quality of the academic experience

74 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.

75 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers (December 2019)*.

The evidence considered, and why and how the team considered this evidence

76 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 provider's submission.

77 Specifically, the review team considered or assessed the following:

Design and Approval of Programmes

- a To assess whether UCEM operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes that provide a high-quality academic experience for all students, the team examined the self-evaluation, [001] Academic and Programme Regulations Level 4-7 2021-22, [034] the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2020-25 [035] and the Code of Practice chapter on Learning, Teaching and Assessment, [069] programme specifications [077, 079, 219] and module descriptors, [078] the tutor support guide on module development, [108] the 'designing learning' at UCEM guide, [113] module design jam and resource workshop information, [109] initial validation reports [218] and undergraduate [105] and postgraduate revalidation reports, [106] the Code of Practice chapter on Programme Development and Validation, [080] and the programme development and validation procedure, [081] the rationales for the undergraduate [102] and postgraduate [103] revalidations 2019, the terms of reference of the Product Board, [100] examples of business and academic case approvals, [236, 237] internal scrutiny checklists and reports for approval/reapproval events, [090, 091] PSRB reports, [223] the Code of Practice chapter on Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation [084] and the programme monitoring and review procedure, [085] examples of annual programme review reports, [095a, 095b] and external examiner reports and responses to their comments. [125]
- b To identify whether the panel members allocated to the task of validating/revalidating programmes are informed and provided with guidance and support on these procedures and their roles and responsibilities in relation to them, the team examined the briefing document for validation, periodic review and revalidation panel members. [063]
- c To determine whether responsibility for the approval of new programme proposals is clearly assigned and subsequent action is monitored, the team examined the Code of Practice chapter on Programme Development and Validation, [080] the programme development and validation procedure, [081] and the terms of reference

of the Academic Board, [014] the action plan and follow-up on meeting validation conditions and recommendations, [296] and minutes of the Quality and Standards Enhancement Committee. [208]

- d To determine how the coherence of programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways is secured and maintained, the team considered the programme approval/review documentation consisting of periodic review rationales, [102, 103] periodic review reports [105, 106] and validation reports. [218]
- e To determine whether close links are maintained between learning support services and UCEM's programme planning and approval arrangements, the team examined the Code of Practice chapter on Programme Development and Validation, [080] the programme development and validation procedure, [081] programme approval/review documentation consisting of periodic review rationales, [102, 103] periodic review reports [105, 106] and validation reports. [218]

Learning and teaching

- f To verify whether UCEM articulates and implements a strategic approach to learning and teaching which is consistent with its stated academic objectives, the team reviewed the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2020-25, [035], the Vision and Strategy to 2025, [027] the Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy implementation framework and action plan, [239] Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee minutes [209] and the 'designing learning at UCEM' document. [113]
- g To establish whether UCEM maintains virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use, the team examined the accessibility statement, [111] the student' guide to the VLE, [112] and the online safety guidance. [173]
- h To determine whether robust arrangements exist for ensuring that the learning opportunities provided to distance learning students are effective, the team considered the self-evaluation, [001] the VLE, [312] the student guide to the VLE, [112] module evaluations, [220] examples of annual programme review reports, [095a, 095b] Academic Board committee papers [274, 275, 277] and Academic Review Committee papers [282, 283] on student outcomes, and quarterly business reviews on student outcomes. [156, 256]
- i To determine whether there are sufficient and effective mechanisms for every student to monitor their progress and further their academic development, the team reviewed the self-evaluation, [001] VLE course pages, [312] the academic support tutor job description, [158] student experience survey results 2020, [170] NSS survey results 2020 [096a] and 2021, [096b] and external examiner reports for 2019-20.

Assessment

- j To identify whether UCEM operates valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought, the team reviewed the self-evaluation, [001] the Code of Practice chapters on Learning, Teaching and Assessment [069] and on Admissions and Recognition of Prior Learning, [036] the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, [035] the assessment handbook,

[098] examples of assignment briefs, [241] module descriptors, [078] the Alternative Assessment Policy and Procedure, [313] the assessment handbook, [098] the mitigating circumstances procedures, [164] the Code of Practice chapter on Board of Examiners, [072] module boards terms of reference, [123] progression and award boards terms of reference, [124] the Academic and Programme Regulations Level 4-7 2021-22, [034] award board minutes, [229, 231, 233, 235] the 2019-20 external examiner reports, [125] PSRB visit reports [223] and minutes of the Recognition of Prior Learning Panel. [269]

- k To determine whether the processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are clearly articulated and consistently operated, the team reviewed assessment marking guide [118] and the moderation guide, [122] module board minutes [228, 230, 232, 234] and external examiner reports. [125]
- l To determine whether staff and students have a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made, the team reviewed assessment handbook, [098] the 'breaking down an assessment' document, [176] sample assignment briefs [241] and the 2021 NSS results. [096b]
- m To establish whether students are provided with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice and to determine whether the organisation operates effective processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice, the team reviewed the online induction module, [312] the 'writing in your own words' resource, [177] the guide to referencing and citation, [115] the academic misconduct procedure, [116] the terms of reference of the Academic Misconduct Panel, [117] examples of academic misconduct cases [245, 246] and the summary of academic misconduct cases by programme. [271]

External examining

- n To determine whether UCEM makes scrupulous use of external examiners including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work and gives full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations contained in external examiners' reports and provides external examiners with a considered and timely response to their comments and recommendations, the team reviewed the Code of Practice chapters on External Examining [070] and Board of Examiners, [072] the rationales for periodic review of the undergraduate [102] and postgraduate provision, [103] minutes of module boards [228, 230, 232, 234] and progression and award boards, [229, 231, 233, 235] external examiner reports and responses to their comments, [125] the feedback template, [121] minutes of Academic Board [207] and the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee, [208] examples of annual programme review reports [095a, 095b] and the annual review of external examiners reports 2019-20. [093]

Academic appeals and student complaints

- o To assess whether UCEM has effective procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of the academic experience, that these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement and that appropriate action is taken following an appeal or complaint, the team reviewed the Code of Practice chapter on Student Appeals and Complaints, [071] the student appeals [126] and complaints procedures, [127] the student policy pages on the VLE, [312] quarterly business reviews, [129] the annual appeals and complaints report 2019-20, [074] the equality impact assessment - student appeals and

complaints, [067] examples of student complaints [066a] and appeals, [066b] and the Code of Practice audit report on student appeals and complaints. [169]

How any samples of evidence were constructed

78 The team did not construct any sampling for this criterion as the volume of material available was such that all evidence could be reviewed by the team.

What the evidence shows

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

Design and Approval of Programmes

80 The design of programmes is guided by the Academic and Programme Regulations [034] which provide the framework for the operation of all programmes of study and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy [035] which sets out UCEM's vision for its pedagogy and the approach to assessment with a clear focus on improving the student experience and student outcomes. Responsibility for the development of new modules/programmes and qualifications for validation approval rests with the Dean/Associate Dean of School of Built Environment with input from the Online Education Department.

81 The Code of Practice chapter on Learning, Teaching and Assessment [069] sets out the key principles for learning and teaching at UCEM. The principles include a focus on student outcomes through the design of modules to an agreed baseline standard to ensure consistency in the quality of the student learning experience, and the provision of tasks and activities that support students to develop the skills and knowledge they need to develop these outcomes and undertake assessment. [069 Code of Practice LTA] The team found that the programme design principles have been consistently adopted and link back to strategy. For example, the programme specifications [077, 079, 219] provide evidence that programmes are industry-relevant and that there is a clear theme of sustainability in each of the programmes which is a strand of the industry excellence aim in the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy.

82 To translate these principles into practice, support is provided to academic staff to design modules and learning activities. [108 tutor support guide module development, 113 designing learning] The team found the guidance to be helpful and formed the view that staff are provided with sufficient support to fulfil their programme design responsibilities. New modules or units are designed using a template to break down learning outcomes and develop a sequence of learning activities. [108 tutor support guide] The module development process is undertaken in a focused brainstorming session (design jam) or a resource workshop. [109 design jam resource workshop] The team formed the opinion that the template approach should ensure consistency of the student experience with regard to module design and provides a suitable framework within which designers are supported.

83 Close links are maintained between learning support services and the planning approval process of programmes because these services are actively involved in module and programme development with library and core services forming part of the development team. [108 tutor support guide, 001 self-evaluation] Service representatives also take part in the discussions of programme proposals at approval events. [106 PG revalidation report]

84 The Code of Practice chapter on Programme Development and Validation [080] clearly sets out UCEM's expectations for the approval of programmes, which includes alignment with external reference points such as the FHEQ and engagement with students and external stakeholders. Revalidation documentation examined by the team [102 UG, 103

PG rationales] confirm extensive consultation with students and staff, external examiners and other external academic experts and employers in programme design and development (also see paragraph 68 in section B2 above).

85 The Code of Practice chapter Programme Development and Validation [080] was reviewed and updated in November 2018 in order to capture the different types of programmes that UCEM is planning to offer. The revalidations/reviews of UCEM's undergraduate and postgraduate provision which took place in 2019 and 2020 were conducted under these revised protocols. UCEM operates a proportionate approach to programme approval which is based on an assessment of the risk inherent in the nature of a particular proposal. There are different approval processes based on the type of provision being proposed with separate processes for full validation and apprenticeship approval, framework validations and apprenticeship programme validations where additional pathways are added to original programmes and processes for the approval of integrated and non-integrated apprenticeships. [080 Code of Practice Programme Development and Validation, 001 self-evaluation] Coherence of programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways is secured and maintained through framework validations. These approval types are used specifically when additional modules or new routes/pathways or awards are added to an existing programme or apprenticeship programme. [080 Code of Practice Programme Development and Validation]

86 All programmes require initial consent by the Product Board [100 ToR Product Board] and the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) which comprises an evaluation of the business case. Approval for the business case is undertaken in a staged sign-off process involving internal stakeholders and the Product Board before a final sign off by a member of the SLT. Academic case approval by the Quality and Standards Enhancement Committee and the Academic Board follows on from business case approval. Responsibility for signing off the academic case rests with the Chairs of the committee and board. [236, 237 business and academic case approval] These processes are robust and consistently implemented. The business approvals seen by the team show consideration of alignment with UCEM's strategic vision, market research, financial viability and resource implications. They also include a financial, operational and reputational risk assessment. The academic case approvals demonstrate an in-depth consideration of the objectives of the programmes and their accessibility to a range of potential learners as well as their strategic fit with the wider UCEM academic offer. [236, 237 academic case approvals]

87 Internal scrutiny of the documentation by a panel prior to approval events taking place provides an additional quality check to ensure that discussions at events are based on comprehensive and well-articulated documentation such as approval rationales, programme specifications and module descriptors. [090, 091 scrutiny reports] The examples of scrutiny reports examined by the team revealed thorough consideration of documentation with regard to the logic and content of proposals and review of evidence of engagement with employers with helpful recommendations for programme teams on matters that require further attention. This usually involved an update to the approval rationale in light of the discussions the scrutiny panel had with the programme team. [090, 091 internal scrutiny reports]

88 Undergraduate and postgraduate programmes without apprenticeship provision are validated and revalidated/reviewed using the protocols set out in the programme development and validation procedure. [081] An approval event with separate programme documentation is also required for new apprenticeship programmes. If the proposed apprenticeship programme also contains a new academic award, the apprenticeship approval can be combined with the validation of that award if there is appropriate expertise on the validation panel programme. [080 Code of Practice Programme Development and Validation]

89 The team concluded from the review of approval documentation [102-103 rationales; 077, 079, 219 programme specifications, 078 module descriptors] and approval reports, [105-106 re-validation/review reports; 218 validation reports] which included apprenticeship and non-apprenticeship provision, that the procedures were followed and consistently implemented. Approval reports [218, 105-106] demonstrate input from external experts, students and alumni in discussions about the curriculum, teaching and assessment. The resulting definitive programme documentation in the form of programme specifications [077, 079, 219] and module descriptors [078] show that the approved programmes provide a high-quality academic experience for students with industry-relevant curricula aligned with the relevant levels of the FHEQ, the development of appropriate intellectual, subject practical and transferable skills, flexible routes of learning that meet students' needs and a wide range of assessment tools that test the achievement of learning outcomes. Module learning outcomes at undergraduate and postgraduate levels [078 module descriptors] are current and relevant to each programme and will ensure that programme learning outcomes are achieved through completion of the specified modules. The undergraduate programme approval report [105] shows careful scrutiny of programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways such as degree programmes that are included in different apprenticeship programmes, an example of which is the BSc (Hons) Construction Management which is part of the Chartered Surveyor Apprenticeship and the Construction Site Management Degree Apprenticeship.

90 The team noted that all of UCEM's programmes are accredited by relevant PSRBs who have strict rules regarding curriculum content. PSRB visit reports [223] demonstrate that UCEM fully complied with PSRB requirements for curriculum design.

91 UCEM develops its programmes on an ongoing basis through annual monitoring and review according to the requirements of the Code of Practice chapter on Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation [084] and the associated programme monitoring and review procedure. [085] Examples of annual programme review reports [095a, 095b] examined by the team evidence a clear focus on the enhancement of the student experience and improvement of student outcomes through the review of student data and feedback from students and external examiners and the development of programme quality enhancement plans with clear and measurable actions and tracking of action progress. Actions from the latest reports include a revision of the curriculum for one programme in response to external examiner comments [095a UG annual programme review report] and the provision of additional support for students on the Level 7 project module. [095b PG annual programme review report] External examiner reports [125] confirm that programmes provide a good academic experience for students and the responses to their comments [125 responses to EE comments] document shows that recommendations made which aim to improve the student experience are acted upon in a timely manner and through appropriate actions.

92 Based on the evidence considered and discussed above, the team found that UCEM operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes because they are clearly documented and consistently implemented with a strong focus on the quality of the student experience and student outcomes, which is also confirmed in external examiner and PSRB reports. Close links are maintained between learning support services and the planning approval process during module/programme development and approval and the coherence of programmes is effectively secured and maintained through the framework approval events which cover the addition of new modules, pathways or awards.

93 UCEM adequately supports internal and external approval and review panel members in the fulfilment of their duties through a helpful guidance document. [063 panel briefing document] The panel briefing document provides a detailed overview of the validation and revalidation processes including the structure of approval events, the

composition of panels and the documentation panels will receive. The team found that staff involved in programme approval and review are sufficiently informed about their roles and responsibilities in relation to this activity because clear instructions are given to panel members such as the chair, internal and external panel members, student/alumni representatives and the panel secretary about their specific roles and there is sufficient information on the possible outcomes and follow-up actions in response to conditions and recommendations. [063 panel briefing document]

94 There are clear lines of responsibility for programme approval with an approval panel conducting validation/revalidation and periodic review events with defined outcomes, for example approval with or without conditions and recommendations or rejection of proposals [080 Code of Practice – programme development and validation; 081 programme development and validation] and Academic Board having oversight of approval outcomes. [014 AB ToR] Fulfilment of approval of any conditions set and recommendations made by panels are addressed in an action plan which is closely monitored by the Quality and Standards Enhancement Committee. [080 Code of Practice – programme development and validation; 081 programme development and validation procedure] The action plans on meeting conditions and recommendations [296] following the latest revalidations/reviews of the undergraduate and postgraduate provision set out in detail how each condition and recommendation is being addressed together with the deadline for the completion of actions and notes progress made against each action. Minutes of the Quality and Standards Enhancement Committee [208] evidence that progress with the plans is carefully monitored at regular intervals. The team concludes that UCEM has clearly assigned responsibilities for the approval of new programmes which are documented in policies and procedures and implemented in practice, and any actions following approval/reapproval and review events are appropriately monitored.

Learning and teaching

95 UCEM articulates a strategic approach to learning and teaching that is set out in the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy [035] which is reviewed every five years. The strategy underpins the educational ambitions through six strategic priorities: a student-centred approach to learning; teaching and assessment; industry excellence; widening access and participation; improvement of student outcomes and student satisfaction; and the strategic use of technology. The team found this to be consistent with the academic objectives in UCEM's Vision and Strategy to 2025 [027] 'to be a centre of excellence for built environment education, to build capability to deliver improved student outcomes and satisfaction, to provide accessible study routes to a broader and more diverse student audience and enable greater access to professional careers in built-environment'.

96 The team found that the Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy implementation framework and action plan [239] provides a suitable roadmap for the implementation of the strategic approach set out in the vision and strategy because it details how UCEM will meet each strategic aim and the actions to be taken or already completed. The action plan reveals that all actions that were due for completion in the academic year 2020-21 have been completed. Minutes of the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee [209] show that progress against actions is routinely monitored with RAG ratings.

97 UCEM describes its pedagogical approach as building 'knowledge, skills and competencies valued in industry through active engagement with learning content, engagement among learners, engagement with industry networks, within the VLE and openly on the web'. [113 designing learning] The approach to teaching is characterised by 'tutoring and facilitating asynchronous and synchronous online presence from the beginning of the module...to create a holistic supported learning environment. [113 designing learning document] This means that students can take flexible routes through their study, choosing

where and when they want to study, and what resources and activities they engage with. While weekly learning activities are provided to support students in planning their time, none are compulsory. Instead students are offered a range of options to engage with content and exchange with fellow students and staff. [113 designing learning document] The team formed the view that this approach provides flexibility for students to balance their study, work and home commitments, while working towards their career goals which meets the needs of the UCEM student body where most students are in employment and study part-time.

98 The team was able to confirm UCEM's strategic use of technology to satisfy the needs of its distance learners through an examination of the VLE [312] through which all teaching, learning and assessment takes place. The team found the site easy to navigate with a wide range of programme, module and assessment materials, learning and study support resources, peer and tutor communication tools. Evaluation tools provide opportunities for students to give feedback on the learning experience. [312 VLE dashboard and course pages] The VLE (accessible from the website) is reliable for every student because students on all programmes, locations and study modes have access to it 24 hours a day and according to UCEM it has a reliability rate of 98%. [001 self-evaluation] The VLE is externally hosted and receives regular updates.

99 UCEM also uses a number of other learning technology systems such as plagiarism-detection software, a real-time collaborative web platform in which users can upload, organise, and share content to virtual bulletin boards, a platform for distributing, accessing, consuming and engaging with digital textbooks and course materials, and videoconferencing software, all of which are accessible from within the VLE. [001 self-evaluation] There are also asynchronous public discussion fora and private direct messaging facilities which provide privacy if students do not wish to share content widely or want to discuss sensitive matters. [312 VLE, 112 student guide to the VLE]

100 UCEM published an accessibility statement [111] according to which its website is partially compliant with the 2018 accessibility regulations and guidelines for public sector bodies. UCEM is taking steps to make it fully compliant and has already incorporated an accessibility adjustment plugin 'to customise the website which allows persons with specific disabilities to adjust the website's user interface and design it to their personal needs'. Additionally, it utilises an application that 'adapts its functionality and behaviour for screen-readers used by blind users, and for keyboard functions used by individuals with motor impairments'. [111 accessibility statement]

101 Based on the evidence examined, the team concluded that UCEM clearly articulates a strategic approach to learning and teaching in its Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy and associated policies which is consistent with its stated academic objectives. The stated approach is consistently implemented through the strategic use of technology in programme delivery and the VLE is accessible to all students and reliable.

102 To ensure safety of use, the online safety guidance [173] provides clear guidance to students on the use of usernames and passwords, sharing of personal information, up and downloading and copying of materials, and the taking and distribution of images. To ensure dignity, courtesy and respect in the use of the VLE, students have to abide by its terms of use. For example, students are not permitted to post anonymously in discussions forums and are encouraged to use language carefully as there is greater potential to be misunderstood in online communication. Students are also encouraged to be polite and courteous online, and the use of language that could be considered racist, sexist, homophobic, transphobic or derogatory in any way is not permitted. [112 student guide to VLE] The student guide to the VLE [112] also provides useful tips on how to de-escalate disagreements and the online safety guide [173] clearly sets out what action students should

take if they encounter undesirable behaviour such as cyberbullying, sexting, grooming and pornography, hate speech, radicalisation and extremism and digital crimes such as hacking, viruses and scams. The team concludes, therefore, that UCEM maintains virtual and social learning environments that are safe, and actively promotes dignity, courtesy and respect in their use.

103 Modules on the VLE have a progress bar so students can also monitor that they are keeping up with their learning. [312 VLE, 001 self-evaluation] Students can also monitor their academic progress through feedback on formative and summative assessments. Students test their knowledge through self-assessment activities and there are discussion fora for modules where students receive formative feedback from peers and tutors. [001 self-evaluation, 312 VLE course pages] In addition, students have access to academic support tutors to help them understand feedback and monitor their progress and who also provide additional study skills support and guidance, if needed. [001 self-evaluation, 158 JD academic support tutor] The team formed the view that there are sufficient mechanisms for every student to monitor their progress and further their academic development.

104 UCEM has targets to ensure that written feedback on coursework submissions is provided within four weeks and, according to UCEM, in 2021 99.74% of marks were returned to students on time. [001 self-evaluation] The majority of students (73%) who completed the National Student survey (NSS) perceive their feedback to be helpful. [096aa NSS results 2020] Satisfaction rates for students who were not eligible to complete the NSS varied from 61% for Level 6 apprenticeship students to 79% for undergraduate students and 81% for postgraduate students in 2020. [170 student experience survey results] The team noted, however, that satisfaction levels in the NSS had declined to 63%, showing the impact of the pandemic. [096b NSS results 2021] While external examiner reports [125] generally praise the quality of feedback provided to students, the team did not examine the quality of student feedback directly and therefore could not draw any firm conclusions as to its helpfulness.

105 UCEM regularly monitors the effectiveness of its distance learning arrangements through the analysis of student outcomes at module [220 module evaluations] and programme level [095a, 095b annual programme review reports] through deliberative committees which receive papers and reports on student retention and outcomes [274-275 AB papers student retention and success, 277 AB and LTEC papers student success, 282-283 ARC papers student outcomes] and quarterly business reviews. [156, 256] The team therefore concluded that the arrangements in operation for ensuring the learning opportunities provided to distance learning students are robust and effective.

Assessment

106 UCEM's approach to assessment is set out in the Code of Practice chapter on Learning, Teaching and Assessment [069] and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. [035] UCEM's procedures for assessment and marking are described in an assessment handbook [098] which contains guidance and good practice for students, assessment authors and markers.

107 The assessment tools used reflect the level of study [241 assignment briefs] and are fit for purpose to test the achievement of the module and programme learning outcomes. [078 module descriptors] Assessments are clearly linked to learning outcomes [241 assignment briefs, 078 module descriptors] and there is appropriate progression from Level 4 to Level 7, that is, assignments set are appropriate to each FHEQ level. [241 assignment briefs] Where appropriate, assessments are designed to provide students with an opportunity to draw in and reflect on examples from their workplace or professional practice. [241 assignment briefs] In 2020 UCEM removed examinations from the assessment portfolio to enable students to undertake assessments which are similar to the type of formats that

they will be required to produce in the workplace. [001 self-evaluation] The examples of assignment briefs [241] provided show that assessment and grading criteria are clear and known to students as they form part of the assignment briefs. Assessment plans are in place with weightings assigned for each assignment [078 module descriptors] and deadlines for submission specified on each assignment. [241 assignment briefs] A key principle of UCEM's approach to assessment is proportionality, that is the amount of effort required by students to demonstrate that they have achieved the module learning outcomes should be proportionate to the amount of credit they will receive for doing so. This approach is evident in the assessment weightings at each level and the specified word count for each assignment. [078 module descriptors, 241 assignment briefs]

108 The team found the assignment briefs viewed [241] to be inclusive and equitable because assessment types used do not disadvantage or advantage certain types of students. The team observed that there were some practical assessments that part-time students working in the construction industry would find easier than full-time students with no experience. Vice versa, there were some assessments that full-time students with recent educational experience would find easier. However, the team believe that, overall, the assessment types are balanced and do not disadvantage or advantage certain types of students. UCEM has an Alternative Assessment Policy and Procedure [313] and develops additional support plans for students with specific learning needs which make recommendations to assessors for actions that must be taken to ensure assessments are accessible so that such students are not disadvantaged. [001 self-evaluation] Alternative assessments will only be offered in exceptional circumstances where the student's or cohort's needs for assessment cannot be met through the assessment offering or reasonable adjustments under the disability and additional needs procedure, or the mitigating circumstances procedure. [313 alternative assessment policy]

109 Clear rules and formal processes for the consideration of mitigating circumstances [164 mitigating circumstances procedure] are available on the VLE. The procedures document gives a detailed explanation as to what constitutes mitigating circumstances and what is excluded. It guides students through how they should apply for mitigating circumstances, including any evidence requirements, and sets out how the Mitigating Circumstances Panel will come to its decision. The team considered the process to be credible and formed the opinion that, if implemented as intended, this will lead to fair outcomes for students.

110 Internal moderation of marks and external moderation by external examiners are used by UCEM to ensure the consistency of the marking approach and reliable assessment outcomes. The assessment marking [118] and moderation guides [122] provide comprehensive guidance to staff on the processes for marking assessments and the internal moderation of marks. Expectations with regard to the quality of marking and moderation and the recording of outcomes including mark adjustments are clearly articulated. Feedback from external examiners at module boards [228, 230, 232, 234 module board minutes] and in their annual reports [125] on the internal moderation process is positive, indicating that processes are consistently operated. The team finds therefore that processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks are clearly articulated and consistently operated by those involved in the assessment process.

111 Formally constituted assessment boards with a clear remit and appropriate external input from external examiners to confirm assessment outcomes [072 Code of Practice chapter Board of Examiners, 123 Module Boards Terms of Reference, 124 Progression and Award Boards Terms of Reference] are in operation. The classification processes in the Academic Regulations [034] are clear and consistently applied by award boards as evidenced by the board minutes. [229, 231, 233, 235 award board minutes] All external examiner reports for the academic year 2019-20 [125] seen by the team are positive about

all aspects of assessment. They comment on the good standard of work produced by the students, the type, nature and the currency and relevancy of the assessment tasks and the quality of the assessment feedback to students. The accrediting PSRBs also comment positively on assessment [223] and highlight the alignment of assessment tasks with the work environment.

112 The recognition of prior learning is governed by the Code of Practice chapter on Admissions and Recognition of Prior Learning. [036] Applicants to both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes can be awarded credit for prior learning through credit transfer. Normally, at least one third of any award must be accumulated as a result of learning at UCEM and subject to any overriding PSRB requirements. [036 Code of Practice RPL] The team formed the view that the policy is credible because all credit upon which award classifications are to be made must have been assessed by UCEM and applications for the recognition of prior learning must be accompanied by evidence to demonstrate that applicants have achieved the learning outcomes for the modules against which exemption is being sought. While credits may not be counted towards a second qualification that is both at the same level as the first or in a similar subject, they may be used to count towards a qualification at a higher level. [036 Code of Practice RPL] The policy delivers the stated outcomes because minutes of the Recognition of Prior Learning Panel [269] showed careful consideration of cases based on mapping of learning outcomes. The team therefore concluded that UCEM operates valid and reliable processes for the recognition of prior learning and that decision making is sound and in line with policy.

113 Overall, the team concluded that UCEM operates valid and reliable assessment processes, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the learning outcomes for the credits and qualifications sought. Assessment policies and procedures are clear and consistently implemented which is confirmed by external examiners.

114 Clear and comprehensive information is given to students on assessment. The assessment handbook, [098] which is written as a student guide provides an explanation to students as to what academic judgement is and outlines the basis (that is, the generic assessment criteria) on which academic judgements are made. These are set out in detail for each level of study from Level 4 to Level 7, thus enabling students to review their own work and determine what mark they could be awarded, and to make improvements to the work where required. In addition, the 'breaking down an assessment' document [176] is a useful tool for students as it provides guidance on how to undertake assessments to achieve the standards by explaining how the marking criteria indicate where students might gain or lose marks in assignments. In addition, sample assignment briefs [241] examined by the team show the detailed requirements for each assessment including the assessment criteria and provide a significant amount of information for students to understand the assessment expectations. This is corroborated by students because in the last National Student Survey 74% of the students agreed that the criteria used for marking had been made clear in advance. [096b] The team concluded that UCEM provides sufficient information to students to enable them to have a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made.

115 UCEM provides students via an induction module [312] with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice and how to prevent committing academic misconduct. There is clear guidance and information about the different forms that academic misconduct may take and how important it is that students do not engage in this practice. The module also contains the 'writing in your own words' resource [177] on referencing and further referencing and citation guides [115] are available from the e-library. [312 VLE e-library] These include information on good practice in referencing and also makes it clear that incorrect or incomplete referencing could

lead to an accusation of academic misconduct. The team concluded that students are provided with opportunities to develop an understanding of good academic practice.

116 Policies on academic misconduct [116 academic misconduct procedure] exist and academic misconduct cases are formally considered by an academic misconduct panel. Its remit and terms of reference [117] are sufficiently detailed. Staff and students are sufficiently informed about the rules and penalties because the academic misconduct procedure, [116] which is accessible to students on the VLE, is clear about how the extent of misconduct is calculated, what tariffs will be applied in different scenarios and what the penalties are for the various tariffs that may be applied. The process of considering cases is clearly outlined, including a section on how students can appeal against the decision of a panel. Examples of academic misconduct cases reviewed by the team [245, 246] provide evidence that the process is being followed rigorously and is consistently applied. The examples demonstrated to the team that careful consideration of all required evidence has taken place, penalties have been correctly applied and it is clear on what basis the decisions were reached. The 2021 summary of academic misconduct cases by programme [271] shows that there were 48 cases of academic misconduct at postgraduate level and 69 at undergraduate level. Of those, 23 (undergraduate) and 34 (postgraduate) were referred to the academic misconduct panel. No students were referred for the most serious offences. The team concluded that UCEM operates effective processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice and outcomes are regularly monitored.

External examining

117 The Code of Practice chapters on External Examining [070] and Board of Examiners [072] clearly set out how UCEM makes use of external examiners. For example, external examiners are required to be involved in programme development and review, scrutiny of summative assessments, moderation of summative assessments, confirmation of assessment outcomes at assessment boards and to provide formal written feedback in the form of annual reports. [070 Code of Practice EE, 072 CoP Board of Examiners] Exceptionally they may also be used in the consideration of academic misconduct cases and conduct of viva voce exams. [070 Code of Practice EE]

118 External examiners are consulted in programme development. [102 UG, 103 PG revalidation rationales] The programme documentation shows how their views have influenced the design of programmes. For example, external examiners queried the new proposed assessment approach for the undergraduate programmes which was addressed in the form of a separate assessment overview paper, [102 UG rationale] Minutes of module boards [228, 230, 232, 234] and progression and award boards [229, 231, 233, 235] evidence the active role external examiners play in the review of internal marking and moderation of grades, confirmation of outcomes for summative assessment at module boards and the confirmation of progression decisions and degree classifications at progression and award boards.

119 UCEM makes good use of the annual external examiner reports it receives. Each report is considered and responded to by the programme team and the responses examined by the team [125] show that their comments are carefully considered and, where required, appropriate actions are raised. For example, one external examiner noted that while feedback to students on assessed work was generally good, it could be improved in a couple of cases. The programme team responded that they had produced a feedback template [121] to guide staff as to the content of detailed and useful feedback. External examiners confirm that they receive timely responses to their reports [125 EE reports] and the responses seen by the team evidence that this is the case [125 EE report responses] (see also paragraph 69 in section B2 above).

120 UCEM also produces a detailed annual review report [093] of external examiner reports which is considered by the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee [208 QSEC minutes] and Academic Board. [207 AB minutes] It analyses all external examiner reports and identifies discernible themes, thus providing institutional oversight (see also paragraph 70 in section B2 above). The implementation of actions, however, is delegated to programme teams. Comments from external examiners feed into annual programme review reports and the examples reviewed by the team demonstrate that progress with actions raised in response to external examiner reports are monitored to completion. [095a, 095b] Overall, the team concludes UCEM makes scrupulous use of external examiners, gives full and serious consideration to their comments and provides timely responses to any issues raised.

Academic appeals and student complaints

121 The Code of Practice chapter on student appeals and complaints [071] clearly sets out the approach to, and processes for, dealing with complaints and appeals. Separate comprehensive procedures for complaints [126] and appeals [127] provide definitions of admissible appeals and complaints and set out the stages of each process. Both appeals and complaints are three-stage processes with an informal resolution, formal and review of decision stage and the option to escalate cases to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator if students are not content with the outcomes of the final internal stage. [071 Code of Practice appeals and complaints]

122 The appeals and complaints procedures and any associated forms to be completed are easily accessible to all students on the VLE. [312 student policies page] The procedures [126, 127] are fair because the scope for making appeals and complaints is clearly defined, processes for the consideration of appeals and complaints including timelines, and responsibilities and evidence requirements and possible outcomes are comprehensively set out. Furthermore, formal investigations are undertaken by independent persons, and all cases are judged on their merit against published criteria, that is, valid grounds. Therefore, the team formed the view that the appeals and complaints processes are likely to be effective.

123 In 2020 UCEM conducted an equality impact assessment of its appeals and complaints procedures. [067] While it did not identify any negative impact on particular groups of students with protected characteristics (including higher education students), it suggested minor adjustments to enhance accessibility, for example through the removal of jargon and the inclusion of a statement in the complaints procedure that no student will be disadvantaged as a result of making a complaint. [067 equality impact assessment] In addition, it conducted an audit of the effectiveness of its complaints procedures. [169 audit report] The audit report [169] found the procedure to be effective with timescales for the consideration and resolution of formal complaints fully met. The team concurs with the findings that procedures are effective because the vast majority are resolved at the informal stage and students receive timely resolution of their appeals and complaints.

124 The team was able to confirm this through the review of complaints and appeals examples and responses by UCEM. Of the complaints [066a] seen by the team most related to student finance matters and the evidence shows that each complaint was considered and resolved in line with the stated procedure. Similarly, the appeals against assessment decisions, [066b] which include consideration of appeals at the various procedural stages, set out the basis on which appeal decisions have been reached and outcomes are clearly communicated to appellants. They are also informed about the next stages in the process if they are dissatisfied with the outcome. The team formed the view that the procedures are being consistently implemented with appropriate action taken following an appeal or complaint. Decisions are fair and reached in line with the published policies and led to timely

outcomes for students.

125 UCEM maintains appropriate oversight of appeals and complaints through quarterly business reviews [129] and annual reports [074] to the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee and the Academic Board, thus enabling enhancement. While the former reviews the volume of appeals and complaints and the number of outstanding responses for consideration by the SLT, [129 QBR complaints and appeals] the latter also includes a reflection on the reasons for appeals and complaints, the demographic of students that used the processes and the effectiveness of the procedures including lessons learnt and the identification of actions for enhancements to be made. The latest report [074 annual report appeals and complaints] indicates that the number of appeals and complaints received in 2019-20, which also include non higher education provision, stands at 0.8% of the total student population. The majority are resolved after stage one and only 0.1% of appeals and complaints reached the formal resolution stage. The majority of complaints and appeals in 2018-19 and 2019-20 were about assessment and decisions made at examination boards regarding claims for mitigating circumstances by the students that have been submitted late or students have not submitted claims when they should have. [074 annual report appeals and complaints] The annual report includes a 'lessons learnt' section that identifies actions relating to the applicant experience, online communication between staff and students, student support, quality management and service standards. For example, additional guidance and training for the admissions team was identified to ensure that the language used in the provision of advice to applicants does not steer their decision making. Other actions included improvements to the management of online discussion forums and the internal assessment brief scrutiny process. The team concluded that UCEM's oversight arrangements for appeals and complaints enable enhancements to be made.

Conclusions

126 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers, in particular Annex 4.

127 UCEM operates effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes that provide a high-quality academic experience for all students. Approval responsibilities are clearly articulated, and programmes are approved following established that are consistently applied. The scrutiny involves a range of internal and external expertise, including students. There is sufficient institutional oversight of the outcomes of programme approval and review, and the fulfilment of any approval conditions.

128 UCEM articulates and implements a strategic approach to learning and teaching which is consistent with its stated academic objectives as set out in its vision and the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy. All teaching, learning and assessment takes place online and UCEM maintains reliable and safe VLEs that are accessible for every student and promotes dignity, courtesy and respect in their use. Online learning is effective and regularly monitored with a number of learning technology systems and resources accessible to students that allow for individual learning as well as collaboration. Sufficient opportunities exist for students to monitor their learning progress and adequate human and digital support is available for those who need extra help.

129 UCEM operates valid and reliable assessment processes through a range of fit-for-purpose assessment tools to test the achievement of the module and programme learning outcomes. Assessment methods are appropriate for online learners and there is appropriate progression from Level 4 to 7. Assessments are inclusive and equitable because the assessment types used do not disadvantage or advantage certain groups of students. Assessment and grading criteria are clear and known to students, and comprehensive guidance is given to them on what is expected from them. There are sound documented

arrangements for the recognition of prior learning which are consistently operated.

130 The processes for marking and moderating of assessments are clearly articulated and fully implemented with internal and external moderation being used to ensure consistency of approach and reliable assessment outcomes. Staff and students have a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made with sufficient information available to students on the application of grading and marking criteria. Students have sufficient opportunities to develop an understanding of good academic practice through a range of online resources. UCEM operates effective processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice.

131 UCEM makes scrupulous use of external examiners including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work. It gives full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations contained in external examiners' reports and provides external examiners with a considered and timely response to their comments and recommendations.

132 UCEM operates effective procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints. These procedures are fair, easily accessible to students and enable timely resolution of cases. Procedures are consistently implemented and enable enhancement through regular consideration of reflective summary reports with improvement actions being identified. Appropriate action is taken following an appeal or complaint which is documented.

133 The review team concludes that UCEM is able to design and deliver courses that provide a high-quality academic experience to all students from all backgrounds, irrespective of their location, mode of study, academic subject and previous educational background. Learning opportunities are consistently and rigorously quality assured. Therefore, the criterion is met.

Criterion C: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff

Criterion C1 - The role of academic and professional staff

134 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.

135 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers (December 2019)*.

The evidence considered, and why and how the team considered this evidence

136 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 provider's submission.

137 Specifically, the review team considered or assessed the following:

- a To assess whether learning, teaching and assessment practices are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship, the team considered the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2020-25. [035]
- b To ascertain whether learning, teaching and assessment are informed by sufficient academic and professional expertise, the team considered the self-evaluation, [001] core staff information, [179] information on module leaders and deputy module leaders, [186] module tutors, [187] and module markers and project supervisors, [188] as well as the digital staff team [184] and the learning and teaching enhancement team. [185] The team also examined the list of module tutors and markers for UG and PG provision, [288] external examiner reports for 2019-20 [125] and the 2019-20 annual review of UCEM external examiner reports. [093]
- c To assess whether UCEM provides opportunities for staff to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice, the team examined the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2020-25, [035] staff role descriptions for module tutors, [143] work-based project lead subject supervisors [181] and module markers, [182] as well as the mandatory training courses on module marking, [252] module tutoring, [253] project supervising [254] and work-based learning project supervising. [255] The team also considered the educational development programme [031] and staff participation rates [292] together with the educational development programme annual report 2020-21 [132] and minutes of the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee [209] and Academic Board. [207]
- d To evaluate whether staff have an understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline and that such knowledge and understanding directly informs and enhances their teaching and to establish whether staff are actively engaged with research or advanced scholarship to a level commensurate with the level and subject of the qualifications offered by UCEM, the team examined the self-

evaluation, [001] the Code of Practice on Research and Advanced Scholarship, [133] the Property and Construction Research Centre [135] and the Online Learning Research Centre [136] update reports 2019, the Research Committee Terms of Reference, [045] the annual overview reports on research activity for 2018-19, [134] 2019-20 [249] and 2020-21 [251] and the Knowledge Foundation's monthly newsletter. [137]

- e To assess whether UCEM provides opportunities for staff to engage in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice, the team considered the self-evaluation, [001] the peer review guide, [138] the educational development programme, [031] the peer review annual report 2020-21, [195] minutes of the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee, [209] module evaluation reports [220] and staff participation rates in the performance and development review. [258]
- f To ascertain whether UCEM offers opportunities for staff to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design and to engage with the activities of other higher education providers, the team examined the self-evaluation, [001] programme approval reports, [105, 106, 218] the Transform project specification, [032] the learning design centre repository, [140] the list of external positions held, [174] the Research Committee annual reports 2018-19, [249] 2019-20[134, 250] and 2020-21, [251] and the Property and Construction Research Centre [135] and the Online Learning Research Centre [136] update reports 2019.
- g To assess whether staff have sufficient expertise in providing feedback on assessment, which is timely, constructive and developmental, the team considered the assessment handbook, [098] the assessment feedback template, [121] the assessment marking guidance, [118] and external examiner reports for 2019-20. [125]
- h To assess whether UCEM has appropriate staff recruitment practices, the team considered the Recruitment Policy, [146, 147] the tutor development programme, [291] and the peer mentoring programme and buddy systems. [257]
- i To establish whether UCEM has made a rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise required to teach all students and the appropriate staff-student ratios, the team considered the self-evaluation [001] and staffing information. [179, 186-188]

How any samples of evidence were constructed

138 The team did not construct any sampling for this criterion as the volume of material available was such that all evidence could be reviewed by the team.

What the evidence shows

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

140 UCEM's approach to scholarship and ensuring the pedagogical effectiveness of staff is articulated in the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2020-25. [035] One of the aims of the Strategy is 'industry excellence', which is to be achieved in part by 'investing in talented and engaging educational staff, with a clear focus on staff development and embedding teaching excellence into staff performance and development reviews, reward and recognition' and by 'developing staff to ensure that their practice is informed by developments in research, scholarship and industry, and ensuring that their own research

into online learning and the built environment is disseminated back into the relevant sector through engagement with professional networks'. [035 Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy]

141 The staffing structure of UCEM reflects the nature of its provision and its needs as a small specialist institution providing distance learning for a dispersed student population. There is a core school of 31 staff who manage the development and delivery of all UCEM modules. [179 core staff information] In addition to the core school, there are 74 staff engaged as module leaders, deputy module leaders, subject leads for the work-based learning project module, and module tutors. [186 module leaders and deputy module leaders, 187 module tutors] UCEM also has a pool of associate tutors (82 staff) [188 module markers and project supervisors] who are contracted to perform set tasks such as marking and project supervision and allow UCEM flexibility in resourcing to cope with fluctuations in student numbers. UCEM has an Academic Resource Management team that has responsibility for ensuring that all modules are effectively resourced in line with UCEM's agreed staff-student ratios. [001 self-evaluation] The full teaching staff complement is 187 persons. [179, 186, 187, 188 staffing information] Even though many are fractional, in the team's view there is sufficiency to adequately fulfil the teaching requirements since by far the majority of students study in part-time mode. To support teaching and learning on its distance learning programmes UCEM also has an academic support structure comprising a digital education team of 10 staff [184 digital staff team] and a learning and teaching enhancement team of nine staff. [185 learning and teaching enhancement team]

142 The detailed information provided by UCEM for staff roles and qualifications [179, 184-188] confirms that teaching and support staff are appropriately qualified. Of the core school and non-core staff that are module leaders and deputy module leaders, all are graduates, 84% have a postgraduate qualification and 25% hold a PhD. Of core school staff and non-core staff that are module leaders and deputy module leaders 87% hold membership of relevant professional bodies such as the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB). The associate tutors involved in marking and project supervision are similarly appropriately qualified. All are graduates and 76% hold postgraduate qualifications with 55% members of relevant professional bodies.

143 The team noted that although the self-evaluation document states that all tutors are required to hold a qualification that is 'the same or higher than the level of the award they will deliver', [001 self-evaluation] a small number (5 members of staff) teach and/or assess on master's awards but do not themselves hold master's awards. The team sought clarification from UCEM regarding this issue and in response received further information on the professional and teaching experience of the staff concerned. [288 module tutors and module markers] This information confirmed and assured the team that staff have the required expertise gained through extensive professional experience in industry and in teaching in higher education to support students at master's level.

144 Members of the digital education team and the learning and teaching enhancement team are also appropriately qualified. [184 digital team, 185 learning and teaching enhancement team] All staff in the digital education team are graduates, 70% hold postgraduate qualifications, including two members of staff with PhDs, and three are members of the Association for Learning Technology (ALT). Of the teaching enhancement team 90% have postgraduate qualifications and over 90% have a postgraduate teaching qualification.

145 The information on staff teaching qualifications and experience in education [179, 185-188] indicates that 34% of core staff, module leaders and module tutors hold a recognised teaching qualification and 35% are fellows of Advance HE, including three senior

fellows. Most staff in all job roles have over five years' experience of working in education, some over 30 years. The information on staff experience provided by UCEM [179, 184-188] also confirms that the majority of staff have considerable professional experience in working in industries relevant to UCEM's discipline areas and many have ongoing contact with the discipline and the profession. External examiner reports confirm the currency of programmes, alignment with industry needs and appropriate assessment practices. [093, 125] The team formed the view that everyone involved in teaching and supporting learning have academic and professional expertise appropriate to UCEM's discipline areas.

146 UCEM recognises the pedagogical implications of distance learning and the need to ensure that all staff involved in teaching and support have the necessary skills to support on-line teaching and learning. [035 Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy] In order to achieve this UCEM has devised its own training and development programmes for staff. UCEM requires all new subject leads, module markers, module leaders and module tutors to complete in-house mandatory training on marking and tutoring and supporting students online [143,181,182 staff role descriptions; 291 tutor development]. The team examined the course materials of the mandatory training courses for academic staff [252-255] and found these to cover in a structured and logical manner a broad range of relevant activities in teaching, assessing and project supervision linked to the requirements of UCEM's procedures. All courses are set within the context of supporting students learning online.

147 In addition to mandatory training provided for module leaders, tutors and project supervisors, UCEM also provides an annual ongoing Educational Development Programme intended to update staff, disseminate good practice and enhance academic skills development. The programme details for 2020-21 shows over 70 events which included training on specific topics such as academic misconduct, accessibility awareness and assessment, as well as drop-in sessions on learning and teaching, and module development. [031 educational development programme] UCEM's analysis of participation rates in the educational development programme [292 EDP participation 2019-20 and 2020-21] shows high participation among core staff, with almost all attending multiple events across 2019-20 and 2020-21, but with lower staff attendance from other groups.

148 The Educational Development Programme for staff is overseen by the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee and the Academic Board which receives annual reports [132 EDP annual report 2020-21] on staff development activity. The minutes of the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee [209] and Academic Board [207] confirm receipt of the annual report, which was reflective, drawing on information from peer observation (see paragraph 152 below) and annual staff appraisal to make recommendations and plans to further enhance the performance and competence of staff. Support for staff pedagogical development is also provided by the Online Research Centre, and the outputs from the work of the research centre are the basis of a range of workshops and development sessions provided to staff (see paragraph 152 below). The team concluded that UCEM was providing opportunities for staff to actively engage with the pedagogic development of their discipline, and enhance their practice, through the mandatory training arrangements and the annual Educational Development Programme.

149 UCEM's approach to ensuring the active engagement of staff in research and scholarly activity to support their discipline area and teaching practice is guided by its Code of Practice on Research and Advanced Scholarship, [133] which articulates its belief that 'an active research community is vital in enhancing its academic offer and the student experience' and sets out the mechanisms UCEM uses to achieve this. To support research and advanced scholarship, UCEM has developed two Research Centres: the Property and Construction Research Centre [135 Property and Construction Research Centre update report 2019] which focuses on subject and discipline research; and the Online Learning Research Centre [136, Online Learning Research Centre update report, 2019] which aims to

support developments in online learning.

150 The work of the research centres is overseen by the Research Committee which has been in existence since 2011 and receives annual reports and regular updates on research activity. [045 Research Committee Terms of Reference] The team read the annual overview reports on research activity for the last three years [134 2018-19 report, 249 2019-20 report, 251 2020-21 report] which describe an extensive range of activity, including collaborative research projects, publications (books, chapters, journal articles in refereed professional journals), conference and workshop presentations, corporate and CPD events delivered for external organisations, blogs and podcasts, as well as workshops and seminars for UCEM staff. Outputs from the research centres are promulgated to staff via online meetings, blogs, seminars and a staff bulletin. [001 self-evaluation, 137 Knowledge Foundations monthly newsletter]

151 In its self-evaluation document [001] UCEM cited examples of where engagement in research and scholarly activity by staff had led to enhancements in teaching and learning. In addition to developing and updating modules of study, examples highlighted by UCEM included the use of brainstorming sessions at the start of module development, the use of checklists within the VLE on the postgraduate project module to ensure that students complete tasks in the correct order, and changes in UCEM's approach to the provision of transcripts based on the research undertaken on how students use written transcripts. [001 self-evaluation] The team formed the view that there is an extensive amount of research and scholarly activity taking place across the institution, which ensures that staff discipline, knowledge and teaching practice are informed by research and scholarly activity.

152 UCEM provides opportunities for academic staff to engage in reflection and evaluation of their practice through its peer review programme [138 guide to peer review] as well as through the Educational Development Programme and the work of the research centres discussed above. Peer observations are planned around a particular topic identified each year as part of internal review processes. The peer review scheme results in an annual report [195] received by the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee and Academic Board. The 2020-21 peer review activity report [195] read by the team focused on webinars and ensuring engaging and effective teaching and shows that 32 members of the academic team, including associate tutors and academic support tutors, participated. The report identifies strengths and areas for development and was discussed at the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee in 2021 [209 LTEC minutes] where it was agreed to consider expanding the scheme to encompass a broader spectrum of academic activity including module development.

153 Staff reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice is also demonstrated in the completion of module evaluation reports, [220] which require module leaders to reflect on student performance data and student feedback. UCEM staff also participate in the performance and development review (PDR) process with meetings held between staff member and line manager at two points in the year to reflect on and review progress against objectives and development needs. [001 self-evaluation; 258 PDR participation rates] The team concluded that staff have a range of opportunities to engage in reflection and evaluation of their practice.

154 UCEM is active in reviewing and updating its degree portfolio, and teaching staff gain direct experience of curriculum and assessment design through leading and participating in module and programme design and development and participating in approval processes. Since gaining taught degree awarding powers, UCEM has extensively developed its curriculum to make the programmes fully online and also developed a number of new programmes. This has enabled many UCEM staff to be involved in drafting or reviewing module descriptors, acting as panellists for internal scrutiny or as part of the formal

periodic review and revalidation or apprenticeship approval panel. [105, 106, 218 approval reports] Module leaders and module tutors have also had opportunities to gain experience in curriculum design and development through the Transform Project aimed at improving the student experience through the redesign of programmes and modules [032 Transform project specification] and UCEM has created a learning design centre repository [140] which contains information and resources to support staff to design modules.

155 Staff engage with the activities of other higher education providers as external examiners, and many are involved with the work of professional bodies and other organisations as panel members. The staff profile shows that 18 staff are currently engaged as external examiners at other higher education institutions. [174 list of external positions held] External roles undertaken by UCEM tutors in professional bodies include RICS assessment of professional competency (APC) examiner or APC counsellor, professional reviewer for CIOB chartered membership, external quality assurer for the awarding body for the Built Environment and professional interview assessor for the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technology. [134, 135, 136, 249-251 Research Committee annual reports; 001 self-evaluation report] The team formed the view that staff have opportunities to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design and engage with the activities of other higher education providers as external examiners and reviewers.

156 UCEM ensures that staff have expertise in providing feedback on assessment through mandatory staff training and the provision of guidance and resources for markers [098 assessment handbook, 121 assessment feedback template, 118 assessment marking guidance] (see also paragraph 110 in section B3 above). External examiner reports [125] confirm that assessment feedback is considered constructive and developmental, and the reports note the positive effects of the use of standardised assignment feedback templates assuring the quality and consistency of feedback to students. The team concluded that staff have expertise in providing feedback on assessment which is constructive and developmental.

157 UCEM has appropriate staff recruitment practices. This is because UCEM's staff recruitment practices are guided by the Recruitment Policy [146; 147] which clearly describes arrangements for job applications, equality of opportunity, record keeping, employment checks, the preparation of job specifications linked to clearly articulated role descriptions, and recruitment procedures appropriately designed to test the suitability of candidates. The HR department is responsible for administration and advice. If appointed, all staff are expected to complete mandatory training in data protection, safeguarding and prevent and to complete the relevant in-house training for the role that they will be undertaking such as module marker, module tutor, module leader or project supervisor training. [291 tutor development programme] New module leaders are also offered an opportunity to engage in the peer mentoring and buddy system. [257 peer mentoring programme and buddy system]

Conclusions

158 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers, in particular Annex 4.

159 UCEM assures itself that everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning and in the assessment of student work is appropriately qualified, supported and provided with opportunities for development appropriate to the levels and subjects of the qualifications being offered. The Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee and the Research Committee are active in ensuring that learning, teaching and assessment practices are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship. This is supported by recruitment policies and practices that

seek to ensure staff have the appropriate academic and professional expertise. The evidence confirms that academic and professional support staff are appropriately qualified for their roles.

160 External examiner reports confirm that staff knowledge and understanding directly informs the currency of programmes and assessment practices. Staff are able to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design through involvement in programme and module development processes and engage in activities with other higher education providers and professional bodies as external examiners and review panel members.

161 There is evidence to demonstrate that staff are engaged in reflection and evaluation of their learning, teaching and assessment practice. UCEM operates a peer observation of teaching process providing an opportunity for staff to reflect in and on practice, and there is a system of annual performance development review in place to facilitate reflection and identify development needs.

162 The evidence confirms that UCEM provides opportunities for staff to actively engage with the pedagogic development of their discipline and enhance their practice through the provision of an annual educational development programme and the work of UCEM's Online Research Centre. UCEM also maintains the Property and Construction Research Centre to develop research and scholarship in subject-specific disciplines and there is evidence from the activities of the research centres and the records of individual members of staff, that staff are actively engaged with research and scholarly activity commensurate with the level and subjects being offered. The assessment team concludes, therefore, that the criterion is met.

Criterion D: Environment for supporting students

Criterion D1 - Enabling student development and achievement

163 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.

164 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers (December 2019)*.

The evidence considered, and why and how the team considered this evidence

165 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 provider's submission.

166 Specifically, the review team considered or assessed the following:

- a To establish whether UCEM takes a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to determine and evaluate how it enables student development and achievement for its diverse body of students, the team examined the self-evaluation, [001] the organisational chart, [051] the Vision and Strategy to 2025, [027] the Learning and Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2020-25, [035] the Access and Participation Plan 2020-25, [028] the institutional scorecard 2021-22, [044] the quarterly business review - student outcomes 2019-20, [156] the Disability and Wellbeing Annual Report 2018-19, [092] and minutes of the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee. [208]
- b To assess whether students are advised about, and inducted into, their study programmes and that account is taken of different students' choices and needs, the review team scrutinised the self-evaluation, [001] welcome programme schedules, [154, 189] the VLE of study skills activities, [114, 312] the student experience survey and action plan, [170] the student handbook, [065] the readiness for learning questionnaire [153] together with a range of study skills self-help guidance for students, [173, 176, 177, 115] and the induction module evaluation outcomes 2020-21.[222]
- c To determine how the effectiveness of student and staff advisory, support and counselling services is monitored, and any resource needs arising are considered, the team reviewed the self-evaluation, [001] the monitoring the effectiveness of advice services document, [298] the Professional Services Matrix Review Report 2021, [150] the organisational chart, [051] Student Central pages on the VLE, [312] the student handbook, [065] the Disability and Wellbeing Annual Reports 2018-19 [092] and 2019-20, [165] the quarterly business reviews: Student Central response times, [155] student outcomes [156, 256] safeguarding and wellbeing, [300] the minutes of Academic Board [207] and the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee, [208] the annual reports on safeguarding and prevent, [076] disability and wellbeing [165, 307] and careers, [299] the student engagement team's action plan [301] and the admissions post-intake action plan, [294] surveys results from the UCEM student experience survey [259] and the admissions end of intake survey, [221] the student experience survey action plan, [170] NSS results 2020

[096a] and 2021, [096b] annual programme review reports [261-263] and the quarterly business review - employee experience. [303]

- d To determine whether UCEM's administrative support systems enable it to monitor student progression and performance accurately and provide timely, secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs, the team reviewed the statement on the administrative support systems and the monitoring of student performance, [287] the quarterly business reviews - student outcomes, [156, 256] programme annual review plans, [261-264] module, progression and award board minutes, [228-235] module evaluation reports, [220] Academic Board papers, [266, 274, 275, 277] Academic Review Committee papers, [281, 283] the student retention and success annual report, [273] the institutional scorecard [044] and the Level 4 action plan. [139]
- e To determine that UCEM provides opportunities for all students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression, for example academic, employment and future career management skills, the team considered the self-evaluation, [001] examples of programme specifications, [077, 079 219] the Code of Practice chapter Careers Education, Information and Guidance, [160] the Careers Annual Report 2020-21, [299] the student handbook, [065] extracts from the VLE of study skills activities [114, 312] together with a range of study skills self-help guides for students, [115, 176, 177] and the welcome programme. [154, 189]
- f To determine whether UCEM provides opportunities for all students to develop skills to make effective use of the online learning resources and the VLE provided, the team evaluated information and training materials on the VLE on the use of the online study and learning resources, [132] the student handbook [065] and the online protocol on using the VLE. [112]
- g To assess whether UCEM's approach is guided by a commitment to equity, the team reviewed the self-evaluation, [001] the Access and Participation Plan 2020-25, [028] the Student Charter, [064] the Code of Practice chapters on Equality and Diversity, [038] Neurodiversity, Disability and Wellbeing [037] and Admissions, [036] module learning materials and lecture capture on the VLE, [312] the student handbook [065] and the equality impact assessment student appeals and complaints. [067]

How any samples of evidence were constructed

167 The team did not construct any sampling for this criterion as the volume of material available was such that all evidence could be reviewed by the team.

What the evidence shows

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

169 Since the award of taught degree awarding powers in 2013, UCEM made significant changes to its student support structures to reflect developing priorities, such as the move to fully online delivery and the development of the apprenticeship provision. These changes included the growth of the Development and Digital Education team and to support online delivery UCEM has introduced the Learning Technology team. The introduction of the apprenticeship provision in 2015 led to the creation of the Apprenticeships team to support both apprentices and employers. This was followed by the introduction of the Retention, Achievement and Success team (later renamed the Learning and Teaching Enhancement team) in 2016 to provide student support through the development of study skills materials

and guidance on the use of online learning resources. [051 organisation chart, 001 self-evaluation]

170 The assessment team's analysis shows that UCEM's strategic approach to student development and achievement is well articulated and coherently outlined in its Vision and Strategy to 2025 [027] and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2020-25. [035] Both documents focus on creating greater impact regarding student inclusion, retention, engagement, academic development and successful outcomes. The team ascertained that targets are set for access and participation [028 Access and Participation Plan] and student retention, outcomes, engagement, and diversity [044 institutional scorecard] in accordance with its strategic intent. Data related to these targets are subject to significant analysis and are regularly reported and monitored at Quarterly Business Reviews. [156 Quarterly Business Review - Data on Student Outcomes] Reports on inclusivity [092 Disability and Wellbeing Annual Report] have been compiled each year since 2019 for consideration at the Quality and Standards Executive Committee [208 QSEQ minutes] with further actions noted and reviewed at subsequent meetings. The team formed the view that UCEM takes a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to determine and evaluate how it enables student development and achievement.

171 The self-evaluation [001] describes a range of student induction activities and their delivery was confirmed by the team through examination of study skills activities [114, 312 VLE study skills activities accessed 8 Dec 2021] and the student handbook, [065] which explains the study skills induction module on the VLE. During the 2020-21 academic year UCEM also introduced a programme of welcome events for new students, made up of sessions on online learning, student support, an induction into programmes of study and sessions around key areas such as building diversity and sustainability. [154, 189 welcome programme schedules] These welcome activities are orientated by programme and location (in the case of students in Hong Kong, for example). The student experience survey [170] conducted by UCEM supports the conclusion that these activities were helpful and well-received by students.

172 All students are advised to complete an induction module when they commence their studies, and which is available to students to refer back to throughout their studies. It is intended to help them understand the requirements of online learning, develop their study skills and to receive information on what help and support is available. [065 student handbook, 312 VLE study skills activities accessed 8 Dec 2021] As part of the induction module students are recommended to complete a readiness for learning questionnaire, [153] which is a self-reflective tool used to identify any students that may experience difficulties with academic writing, use of IT and software and personal organisation. Based on the information provided, students are then referred to additional self-help resources available on the VLE [173,176,177, 115 study skills self-help guidance] (also see paragraph 189 below). Alternatively, they may self-refer to the student support team or contact their academic support tutor for advice.

173 The team found the induction materials to be comprehensive in covering academic and support needs. The information given to students is clear and available to all students via links on the VLE [312 VLE study skills activities accessed 8 Dec 2021] and the nature of the self-help guides [115, 173, 176-177] shows that UCEM takes different student needs into account when supporting students. UCEM regularly evaluates the induction module and the induction module evaluation outcomes 2020-21 [222] show that there is a high level of student satisfaction with the content and an expressed conviction that the content will have a positive impact with their studies but also indicated difficulties accessing information resources which have been addressed. The team concluded students are advised about and inducted into their programmes of study in an effective way.

174 UCEM states that different teams work together to provide joined-up student support. For example, academic support is provided by module leaders, module tutors and academic support tutors and these members of staff can refer students to professional support services. [001 self-evaluation] Apprenticeship Outcomes Officers provide advice and guidance to apprentices. [298 monitoring the effectiveness of student and staff advisory services] UCEM has a range of professional services teams such as the student engagement team, careers, disability and welfare and safeguarding, which have been recognised by the Matrix standard for the quality of information, advice and guidance provided. [150 Matrix review report] Additional capacity has recently been created through the appointment of a Disability and Welfare Adviser. [051 organisational chart, 001 self-evaluation] Students seeking pastoral or other types of support outside the module teaching are directed to contact the student engagement team via phone or via Student Central. [312 VLE Student Central page] Student Central is an online portal that offers students one point of contact for all their queries relating to all aspects of student services. [001 self-evaluation, 312 VLE Student Central page]

175 Pastoral care or access to additional needs support, including mental health and neurodiversity needs, are signposted during induction on the VLE [312] and in the student handbook [065] which also contains information on academic support. Students can self-refer to support services at any time during their studies, and additional support plans are developed and implemented by a dedicated team of study and learning support. While the support teams can be contacted directly by students, most enquiries are made by the student engagement team which can be reached via the dedicated Student Central portal on the VLE, by email or telephone experts. [001 self-evaluation] The team notes that the ability for students to access information and advice at various points in their studies and via various contact points was identified as a strength in recent Matrix review reports. [150] The latest Disability and Wellbeing Annual Reports [092, 165] contain an analysis of student outcomes for those with an additional support plan, showing a marked improvement in assessment grades for those students that have a verified disability or additional needs compared to those that have none. Students that accessed support from the disability and welfare team were surveyed by UCEM in the 2018-19 academic year and 100% of those that responded rated the service received as good or very good. [092 disability and wellbeing report 2018-19] The team, therefore, formed the view that UCEM provides appropriate student support services that are responsive to students' needs.

176 Accessibility of support services is monitored at quarterly business reviews [155, 156, 300] where any issues, including progress towards planned academic outcomes, are discussed. Data and information from the quarterly business reviews seen by the team evidence that student rates across all programmes are regularly monitored, including engagement with first assessments and success rates. [156, 256] Similarly, the effectiveness of student support systems is evaluated by examining the response time of Student Central. [155 QRB Student Central response times] The student engagement team uses its own expertise and student feedback to identify improvements and the latest action plan [301] identifies a number of items and provides solutions.

177 UCEM has in place robust processes to regularly monitor the effectiveness of its professional services at both institutional and team level that take into account the views of student representatives and ambassadors. For example, at institutional level this includes seeking external recognition of the professional services provided through Matrix accreditation. [298 monitoring the effectiveness of student and staff advisory services] UCEM produces annual quality reports to review the effectiveness of the provision over the academic year which are considered by Academic Board. [207 AB minutes] The reports are comprehensive and include recommendations and action plans [165, 307 disability and wellbeing, 076 safeguarding and prevent, 299 careers] and action points are monitored by the Academic Board [207 AB minutes] and the Quality Standards and Enhancement

Committee. [208 QSEC minutes] The Senior Leadership Team receives regular updates on the effectiveness of provision as part of its weekly meetings, as well as through the formal quantitative metrics provided as part of Quarterly Business Reviews. [155 Student Central response times, 156, 256 QBR student outcomes, 300 QBR safeguarding and wellbeing]

178 Professional service teams are encouraged to hold semesterly wash-up meetings to review the effectiveness of their service with input from students. Enhancements from these sessions are recorded in the form of team action plans, [301 student engagement team action plan, 294 admissions post-intake action plan] or within annual reports. [165, 307 disability and wellbeing, 076 safeguarding and prevent, 299 careers] Recent examples of enhancements that have been made to student advisory services as a result of reviewing data and information on the effectiveness of the service include improvements to the assessment tracking page on the VLE to ensure that the information relating to assessment and final module results is clear and informative to all students, streamlining of the mitigating circumstances process and improvements to the clarity of outcome letters.

179 UCEM also monitors the effectiveness of support services and identifies enhancements required through the review of qualitative data such as the comments from the NSS and the internal survey such as the student experience survey [259] and the admissions end of intake survey, [221] feedback from individual students and student focus groups which result in comprehensive action plans. [170 student experience survey action plan] An example of a significant enhancement made as a result of the 2020 student experience survey was the introduction of a 'welcome week' consisting of a range of online events for new students. This was further extended in autumn 2021 with the introduction of a 'welcome back week' for returning students. [170 student experience survey action plan, 298 monitoring the effectiveness of student and staff advisory services] NSS results [096a; 096b] indicate a good level of satisfaction among students regarding advice and support. The survey results are discussed at programme and Academic Board level [207 AB minutes] and progress towards identified concerns are appropriately addressed at annual programme reviews as evidenced through programme review reports. [261, 262, 263 annual programme review reports] The effectiveness of the support for apprentices is monitored using monthly KPIs such as learner intervention, progress review and student VLE engagement. [298 monitoring the effectiveness of student and staff advisory services]

180 The majority of staff advisory services are provided by the human resources team. The human resources team can refer staff to the Employee Assistance Programme which is an external service that provides confidential advice and support to staff. [298 monitoring the effectiveness of student and staff advisory services] The effectiveness of staff support and advisory services is reviewed by surveying staff twice a year via the employee engagement survey and results are reviewed by line managers. [298 monitoring the effectiveness of student and staff advisory services] and the high-level results are considered as part of quarterly business review [303 QBR employee experience]

181 The team formed the view that UCEM has a strong and thorough system in place to monitor the effectiveness of its student and staff advisory and support arrangements and that there is sufficient institutional oversight through deliberative committees and senior leadership. Actions are clearly identified and assigned, and where resource needs had been previously identified, remedial action has taken place. The team was therefore satisfied that student and staff advice and support services are adequately monitored and any resource issues identified are considered and resolved.

182 UCEM has two main systems for reporting and monitoring student progression and performance; the SITS student record system and the VLE, which holds data on student progression and success through their modules. For apprenticeship programmes UCEM also uses a learner management system (PICS), which contains data relating to the non-

academic portion of the apprenticeship and is predominantly used to produce individualised learner records returns and for tracking completion of apprentice end-point assessments. [287 student performance information and systems] Various types of data can be extracted from these systems to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs. These include engagement and achievement rates of all modules and whether they meet their KPIs; the number of admissions enquiries, applications and enrolments and the different characteristics of these students by location, gender, ethnicity, age and disability; the number of students with a declared disability and the number of students who identify as BAME and how these figures compare with targets set out in UCEM's Access and Participation Plan. [287 student performance information and systems]

183 Data requests that can be made from the student record system include one off data for individuals and teams and UCEM uses them, for example to inform a range of internal reports, such as quarterly business reviews [156, 256 student outcomes] and annual programme review reports. [261-264] Data server reports, using live data from the student record are also available and include reports on students' engagement with the first assessment, assessment submission and module pass rate reports produced quarterly for quarterly business reviews, [156, 256] board of examiner reports [228-235 module and progression board minutes] and mitigating circumstances reports. Module pass rate reports [220 module evaluation report] show the pass rate for each module against the module KPIs and the previous year's pass rate and are used to help identify enhancements for module assessment. [287 monitoring student performance] Regular scheduled reports are run to prompt teams to check for anomalies and correct data and teams can use dashboard reports to access and manage data on the student record system. Data is input in a 'bottom up' process driven by support team members and department administrators in real time. [287 monitoring student performance]

184 Student engagement with a module can be extracted, thus enabling timely interventions by academic and support staff. From the autumn of 2021 a new analytics dashboard is available to teaching and academic support staff providing a high-level real time overview of student engagement with learning on a module. The dashboard also allows an individual to be compared against the average for that module. To track those not engaging or being inactive for a while a suite of scheduled, automatically generated reports is raised including module engagement and inactivity reports and assessment access reports. [287 student performance information and systems]

185 Data from both systems also informs periodic and ad hoc papers [266 AB paper on enhancement plan, 274 AB paper student success, 275, 277 AB paper module success rates, 281 ARC paper on student retention and completion, 283 ARC paper delivering successful student outcomes] and reports to the Academic Board and other academic deliberative committees. [273 student retention and success annual report] UCEM has developed an institutional scorecard [044] from data extracted from these systems which monitors student progression and performance, along with key financial information and employee satisfaction. It is updated on a monthly basis and discussed at the quarterly business reviews, [156, 256 QBR student outcomes] which take action where issues are highlighted. For example, the action plan for Level 4 undergraduate provision [139] focusing on learning design, assessment design, student engagement, tutor management, learning support and sharing good practice was developed following a quarterly business review to address challenges with engagement and success associated with students studying online for the first time.

186 Specifications for new scheduled and dashboard reports are agreed with report owners prior to development and new reports are tested before they are published to ensure the information contained within them is accurate and understood by the report owner and users. Ad hoc reports are requested using a standard capture form to ensure that the

student record system and data team understand why the data is required and how it will be used. This ensures compliance with the UCEM Data Protection Policy and privacy notices. Ad hoc reports are shared either via a secure link or are password protected and sent via email. They are also given an expiry date after which they should not be used as the data will no longer be current. [287 student performance information and systems] The review team, therefore, has confidence that timely and accurate reports are enabled by a system of checks and controls. The team concludes that UCEM's administrative support systems allow effective and timely monitoring of student progression and performance through the use of live data. The systems enable UCEM to provide secure and accurate information to satisfy academic and non-academic management information needs.

187 Programme curricula are designed to enable students to develop their employability and transferable skills and are identified in individual programme specifications in addition to skills which relate to the professional application of the subject being studied. [077, 079 219 programme specifications] To support the development of skills that support students' professional progression, all current students have access to the careers information, advice and guidance provided by an independent professional careers and employability advisor, industry-relevant careers resources on the VLE, and the job shop and its range of industry vacancies including jobs, placements and internships. [001 self-evaluation] UCEM's approach is that a diverse student body requires careers advice provision that is responsive to the different needs of individuals and groups and needs to reflect each student's current career position. Therefore, students have access to a range of targeted provision, for example, apprenticeship support or the mentoring programme. The offering also includes labour market information, advice and guidance on entry into the industry, career planning and development, job search strategies, a CV clinic and job application and interview tools, and on achieving professional accreditation as well as support with finding work experience. [160 Code of Practice – careers education, information and guidance]

188 The provision of careers information, advice and guidance is subject to UCEM's quality assurance procedures and UCEM evaluates the effectiveness of its provision and uses a range of source data such as internal student feedback and national student surveys such as the NSS and the graduate outcome survey, employer feedback and service usage statistics. The Careers Annual Report 2020-21 [299] shows a healthy uptake by students with many students looking for guidance on how to adapt their career plans in response to changes in the labour market due to the pandemic. The team, therefore, has confidence that UCEM provides opportunities for all students to access information and develop skills to enable their professional development and progression.

189 To support the development of skills that enable students to progress academically, UCEM students have access to an academic support services and resource area on the VLE (the Student Hub), [056 student handbook, 114, 312 study skills on the VLE] which contains information and resources on assessment, study skills topics such as referencing and avoiding plagiarism, along with a broad range of self-help guidance. [176 breaking down and assignment ,177 writing in your own words, 115 referencing and citation] They expand on the induction programme [154, 189] where academic support is first signposted. The team found the range of resources available to students to be helpful in the development of academic skills because they comprehensively cover relevant topics and are written clearly. Topics include assignment writing and referencing, avoiding plagiarism, academic reading and effective note taking, academic thinking and writing, drawing and design. The team concludes that UCEM provides opportunities for all students to develop skills that further their academic success.

190 To enable students to make effective use of the online learning resources the induction module on the VLE [132 induction module on VLE, accessed 18 November and 8 December 2021] provides video, webinar and text information and advice on 'what you need

to get started', covering topics such as a technology check and learning on the VLE. A section within the study skills area of the VLE covers digital learning and use of IT. There are clear links to pages with guidance on how to use the e-library and digital resources, including contact details for library support staff, if students require assistance. There are also links to the Student Hub and Student Central where support can be sought on a self-referral basis. The team found the materials on the VLE useful and easy to follow.

191 The student handbook [065] also provides useful information on how to make effective use of the online learning resources. There is a link to the online protocol on using the VLE [112] which sets out expectations and a video tour so students can familiarise themselves with how to navigate it. In addition, there are links to and information on key areas such as where to find important information on the VLE, online safeguards and tips for using the e-library and other digital information. Overall, the evidence reviewed reassured the team that UCEM provides sufficient opportunities for all students to develop skills to make effective use of the learning resources provided and of the VLE.

192 The Access and Participation Plan, [028] the Code of Practice chapters on Equality and Diversity, [038] Neurodiversity, Disability and Wellbeing, [037] and Admissions [036] together with the Student Charter [064] set out UCEM's approach to ensuring all students have equal opportunities to develop their full potential. For example, the Access and Participation Plan [028] evidences a strong commitment to fairness and the removal of barriers to learning by delivering courses that are accessible to all regardless of age, gender, location and protected characteristics. The plan commits UCEM to further increase diversity and widening participation through the implementation of its flexible learning pedagogy and there are clear targets for access rates in relation to lower socio-economic groups, BAME and disabled students, the reduction in the non-continuation and progression gaps between certain student groups.

193 The Code of Practice chapter on Admissions [036] states that no potential student will be excluded on the basis of age, disability or protected characteristics. Similarly, the Code of Practice chapter on Equality and Diversity [038] sets out a strong commitment to the provision of comprehensive and professional support services for all students, including guidance and formal support plans for learning needs and disabilities, dyslexia screening and support for those with long term health issues with a focus on respect for all at UCEM. This is reflected in the Student Charter [064] which outlines the expectations that all are treated with respect, courtesy and professionalism.

194 In practice, UCEM enables just and fair inclusion of students in learning through the creation of conditions that allow all students to reach their full potential. For example, all students receive access to the same facilities and resources via the VLE regardless of their location, whether they are in the UK or based internationally. The self-evaluation [001] states that new learning resources are designed to meet public sector body accessibility standards to enable all students to access them without need to request any adaptations. In addition, the majority of module materials are delivered in such a way that allows students the flexibility to plan their time [312 VLE module materials] and allows all students to access these resources regardless of whether they are studying full-time or part-time alongside working. UCEM plans the schedule of live webinars with consideration of where students are based and international time zones to ensure that as many students as possible will be able to access the webinars. It also records all webinars and makes the recordings available in the event that students are unable to attend. [001 self-evaluation, 312 VLE] E-books from UCEM's online library have the benefit of additional functionality and accessibility, such as text-to-speech options, ability to add notes and highlights as well as supporting videos and other online material. They can be downloaded onto several platforms such as mobile phones, tablets and laptops [001 self-evaluation] enabling offline reading and access anywhere which is beneficial for the student population profile of mostly working

professionals.

195 Its online student handbook [065] can be provided in alternative formats, thus enabling full access for visually impaired students. UCEM assesses its quality policies and procedures through equality impact assessments, and these include an evaluation of whether relevant resources are available in an accessible format to enable all students to navigate them without unnecessary barriers. For example, the impact assessment on the student appeals and complaints processes [067] discussed accessibility in terms of the jargon used as well as the text directing students to and within the process. This resulted in several action points being raised, such as testing text to speech, reviewing colour usage, updating and including hyperlinks rather than directions to location of document in order to make the text more accessible [067 impact assessment appeals and complaints] and the review team formed the opinion that UCEM is taking action to identify and rectify issues of inequality that might exclude certain groups of students. Overall, the team considered that UCEM has strong commitment to equity in theory and practice, which is evident in its strategies and embedded operationally.

Conclusions

196 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers, in particular Annex 4.

197 UCEM has a strategic approach to the provision of a learning environment to support all students, which is set out in its Vision and Strategy to 2025 and the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. The approach is underpinned and supported by policies which take into consideration the needs of students with varied backgrounds and in different study locations. Effective monitoring and evaluation of the online support arrangements is undertaken at both institutional level through deliberative committees and quarterly business reviews, and support team level, taking into account the views of students. UCEM has effective administrative support systems that allow timely monitoring of student progression and performance through the use of live data and the production of accurate reports through a robust system of data checks and controls. UCEM has strong commitment to equity in theory and practice that is evident in its strategies and embedded operationally.

198 Students are effectively inducted into their study programmes online through a comprehensive induction programme that includes information and guidance relating to their programmes, online learning, support services and resources. UCEM provides opportunities for all students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional achievement through a strong focus on transferable skills related to employability, and opportunities to develop professional and career management skills. Students' academic and personal skills development is well supported through a range of online guidance, activities and access to support staff. UCEM provides opportunities for all students to make effective use of the online learning resources provided to ensure a safe, accessible and reliable environment.

199 The review team concludes, therefore, that UCEM has in place, monitors and evaluates arrangements and resources that enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential and that this criterion is met.

Criterion E: Evaluation of performance

Criterion E1 - Evaluation of performance

200 This criterion states that:

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

201 The QAA assessment team conducted an assessment of this criterion according to the process set out in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment for Variation and Revocation of Degree Awarding Powers (December 2019)*.

The evidence considered, and why and how the team considered this evidence

202 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 provider's submission.

203 Specifically, the review team considered or assessed the following:

- a To determine whether critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of UCEM's higher education provision, the team examined the self-evaluation, [001] quarterly business review reports, [129, 155, 156, 256, 300] the institutional scorecard, [044] the Code of Practice chapter on programme planning, monitoring and evaluation [084] and the associated programme monitoring and review procedure, [085] the institutional enhancement plan, [052] extracts of minutes from the Academic Board and the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee, [267] annual reports on quality and standards, [016] external examiners, [125] academic misconduct [075] and complaints and appeals, [074] the terms of reference of the Academic Review Committee, [061] committee papers [281-283] and minutes, [061, 130, 210] module evaluation reports 2019-20, [220] examples of annual programme review reports, [261-263] the Level 4 action plan, [139] Programme Committee minutes, [268] periodic programme review reports for undergraduate [105] and postgraduate provision, [106] and the review rationales. [102, 103]
- b To determine whether action is taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review, the team considered Programme Committee minutes, [269] the responses to external examiner reports [125] and the annual overview of external examiner reports, [093] examples of annual programme review reports, [261-263] and the action plan on meeting validation conditions and recommendations. [296]
- c To determine whether clear mechanisms exist for the assignment and discharging of actions in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of the academic provision, the team considered the enhancement plan, [052] extracts [267] and full minutes from Academic Board, [207] the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee [208] and the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee, [209] annual programme review reports, [261-263] examples of annual reports on quality and standards, [016] appeals and complaints [074] and academic misconduct, [075] examples of annual programme review reports, [261-263] the action plan on meeting validation conditions and recommendations, [296] the Level 4 action plan, [139] the student experience survey action plan, [170] the Learning Teaching and Assessment

Strategy implementation action plan, [239] and the action plan on meeting validation conditions and recommendations. [296]

- d To ascertain whether ideas and expertise from within and outside UCEM are drawn into its arrangements for programme design, approval, delivery and review, the team reviewed the rationales for periodic programme reviews, [102, 103] initial validation reports for undergraduate and postgraduate provision, [218] revalidation/review reports of undergraduate [105] and postgraduate provision. [106]

How any samples of evidence were constructed

204 The team did not construct any sampling for this criterion as the volume of material available was such that all evidence could be reviewed by the team.

What the evidence shows

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

206 UCEM evaluates performance at institutional [129, 155, 156, 256, 300 quarterly business review reports, 044 institutional scorecard] and at programme level. [084 Code of Practice chapter on programme planning, monitoring and evaluation, 085 programme monitoring and review procedure]

207 Clear mechanisms exist for the monitoring of academic provision at institutional level because, through its governance structure, UCEM evaluates performance against the institutional scorecard [044] for the year. This includes student outcomes at both module and programme levels and student experience and satisfaction. UCEM also routinely identifies actions for enhancement from all internal and external reviews captured in the institutional enhancement plan, [052] which is monitored twice yearly by Academic Board and the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee. [267 AB and QSEC extracts committee minutes] The self-evaluation [001] states that progress with the full enhancement plan is also reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) on a quarterly basis. The examples of quarterly business reviews [129, 155, 156, 256, 300] seen by the review team confirm the involvement of the SLT in monitoring critical areas of the academic provision and spotlight student issues to be addressed which correlate to issues identified during regular data gathering and analysis activities.

208 The process of monitoring the academic provision is robust because deliberative committees such as Academic Board and the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee consider annual reports for key areas of delivery, such as quality and standards, [016] external examiners, [125] academic misconduct [075] and complaints and appeals. [074] The reports examined by the team are detailed and analyse trends in the data over the year and from previous reporting periods and make recommendations for further enhancement. [016, 074-075, 125 annual reports] The Academic Review Committee, [019 ToR ARC] an independent subcommittee of UCEM's Board of Trustees (see paragraph 10, section A1), acts as the final auditor of the academic review processes and performance and considers matters of strategic importance such as access and participation and compliance with external regulations, student outcomes [281-283 ARC papers] and NSS results. [210 ARC minutes] The team found the level of detail and data analysis presented to the committee to be thorough and the ensuing discussions, as noted in the minutes, [061, 130 ARC minutes] robust and challenging. Comprehensive monitoring of the performance and effectiveness of student and staff support and advisory services takes place on a regular basis (see paragraph 177 in section D above).

209 Self-reflection also takes place at module level through module evaluation reporting

[220] and at programme level through annual programme reviews. [261-263 annual programme review reports] The overall strategy for the scrutiny and monitoring of academic provision at programme and module level is clearly articulated in the Code of Practice - Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation [084] and the associated programme monitoring and review procedure. [085] The format of both module and programme review reports follows an institutional template.

210 Module and programme review processes are robust because the module reports [220] seen by the team are informative and discuss student academic performance data, student feedback and review resources. They also report on enhancements made since the last module run. Reports, student feedback and progress with programme actions in the institutional enhancement plan are regularly considered by Programme Committees. [268 programme committee minutes] Examination of the annual programme review reports [261-263] revealed that data and feedback from a range of sources such as student and programme performance, retention and progression data, and feedback from student module evaluations and external examiner reports are analysed in detail, as a result of which several action points are raised to be monitored, and progress is noted in the next report. Where there is evidence that certain programmes or modules are underperforming, UCEM takes appropriate intervention, for example, a Level 4 action plan [139] was introduced to address challenges with engagement and success associated with students studying online for the first time. The action plan focuses on learning and assessment design, student engagement, tutor management, learning support and sharing good practice. UCEM has subsequently introduced a Level 7 action plan and changed its programme monitoring and review procedure to include a process for monitoring across academic levels. [139]

211 UCEM also undertakes full periodic review of programmes after the programme has been delivered for a period of five years. [105 UG review report, 106 PG review report] The accompanying rationale for the latest reviews of the undergraduate and postgraduate portfolio [102 UG, 103 PG] shows extensive critical reflection based on the analysis of admissions data, feedback from students and external examiners and consultation with internal and external stakeholders. Based on all of the above, the team concludes that self-critical assessment is integral to the operation of UCEM's higher education provision.

212 Reviews by external agencies, such as Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) and external examiners' reports are routinely considered at Programme Committees [269 committee minutes] and the detailed and considered responses to recommendations made by external examiners [125] show that UCEM takes action in response to matters raised through external monitoring and review. This was confirmed through the examination of the annual overview of external examiner reports [093] which revealed details of the institutional level actions taken in response to overarching themes identified from the external examiner reports.

213 Similarly, the action plan on meeting validation conditions and recommendations [296] examined by the team showed that all conditions and recommendations had been considered carefully and appropriate actions raised with clear deadlines for their completion. Finally, examples of annual programme review reports [261-263] examined by the team revealed the actions programme teams have completed and those that are still in progress in response to student feedback and external examiner comments, thus supporting the team's view that UCEM takes action in response to issues raised through internal and external monitoring and review mechanisms.

214 The institutional enhancement plan [052] is the result of actions identified from various internal and external reports and processes such as annual departmental enhancement reports, student surveys and Matrix accreditation reports in relation to the strategic aims of UCEM. There is clear ownership of actions as each action is assigned to an

SLT sponsor, and where needed an action owner who has accountability for the completion of the action. All actions have clearly specified completion dates. [052 enhancement plan] Minutes of the Academic Board, the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee and the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee [267 extract from AB minutes, 207 AB minutes, 208 QSEC minutes, 209 LTEC minutes] confirm that progress with plan actions is regularly reviewed. Programme quality enhancement plans contained in the annual programme review reports [261-263] also had clearly identified action owners and completion dates as well as a progress update on the completion of previous actions. Similarly, on reviewing examples of annual reports [016, 074-075] and institutional level action plans [139, 170, 239, 296] the team found that the action plans had clearly identified action owners and completion dates, and minutes from the Academic Board, the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee and the Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee [207 AB, 208 QSEQ, 209 LTEC minutes] showed that progress with actions was monitored appropriately. In addition, Programme Committee, Academic Board and Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee minutes [268 Programme Committee, 207 AB, 209 LTEC minutes] identify actions and action owners for responding to student feedback from student representatives or in response to the internal student experience survey [170 survey action plan] and track their progress. Therefore, the team was satisfied that clear mechanisms exist for assigning responsibility and discharging actions in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its academic provision and that progress is monitored through to completion.

215 Consultations with internal and external experts reveal that ideas from them have been drawn into programme design and delivery arrangements as evidenced in the rationales for the latest programme revalidations. [102-103] Validation and revalidation/review reports at undergraduate and postgraduate level [105-106, 218] confirm that feedback is sought from them on programme and module content and delivery. In one case a module was raised from a Level 5 to a Level 6 following suggested content changes to better reflect current legislative and regulatory requirements, [218 UG validation report] and in another report, the programme team was asked by the panel to revisit the assessment structure for five programmes to ensure that there is a pattern for the weighting of the assessment. [218 PG validation report] Thus, the team concludes that ideas and expertise from within and outside the organisation are drawn into UCEM's arrangements for programme design, approval, delivery and review.

Conclusions

216 The assessment team formulated its judgement against this criterion according to the process set out in the Guidance for Providers, in particular Annex 4.

217 UCEM takes a strategic approach to the evaluation of performance and critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of its higher education provision. Clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging any identified action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its provision. Appropriate action is taken in response to matters raised through internal monitoring and progress monitored through to completion. Ideas and expertise from within and outside the institution on programme design and development, on teaching, and on student learning and assessment are drawn into its arrangements for programme design, approval, delivery and review. The review team, therefore, concludes that UCEM takes effective action to assess its own performance, responds to identified weakness and develops further its strengths and that therefore this criterion is met.

Full Degree Awarding Powers overarching criterion

218 The Full DAPs overarching criterion is that 'the provider is a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective quality systems'.

Conclusions

219 UCEM has in place effective means of critically reviewing its own performance. It evaluates performance at institutional and programme level. The process of monitoring the academic provision is robust with deliberative committees considering annual reports for key areas of delivery. The provider has a comprehensive process for gathering student feedback using a range of surveys and questionnaires and through direct input into deliberative committees and academic groups via student representatives. These clear pathways for issues of concern to be discussed and actioned demonstrate that student feedback is taken seriously and an integral part of UCEM's self-critical evaluation process. Self-reflection also takes place at module level through module evaluation reporting and at programme level through annual programme reviews. Annual programme review reports consider data and feedback from a range of sources and appropriate actions are raised. Clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging any identified actions. Appropriate action is taken in response to matters raised through internal monitoring and progress monitored through to completion.

220 There is a cohesive academic community, enabled through UCEM's Vision and Strategy to 2025, which articulates a clear vision and purpose for the provision of higher education at UCEM. There are clearly defined deliberative structures that facilitate debate and the sharing of ideas. Staff are brought together as members of deliberative committees such as Academic Board, the Teaching Learning and Enhancement Committee, the Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee and the Research Committee and are actively involved in the development of institutional strategy and policy. Leadership and management roles are well defined, with clear allocation of responsibilities and reporting lines. Staff also come together in the design and development of modules and programmes with development teams including academic and learning support staff, and teaching and support staff contribute to the approval and review of provision as approval panel members. There is a clear requirement for teaching staff to engage in developmental activities and UCEM develops its academic community through mandatory training that is specific to role holders and through its Educational Development Programme which covers module development, general teaching and learning, and research seminars. UCEM actively promotes the development of curricula and pedagogy informed by research. There is considerable research and scholarly activity taking place across the institution, sufficient to ensure that academic activities are informed by research and scholarly activity. To support research and advanced scholarship, UCEM has developed two Research Centres. Support for staff pedagogical development is provided by the Online Research Centre and the outputs from its work are the basis of a range of workshops and development sessions provided to staff. A supportive peer-review system and an effective appraisal system enables the sharing of good practice among staff and the identification of professional development needs.

221 UCEM has clear and effective quality systems in place for the setting and maintenance of academic standards. The academic governance systems make strong reference to the assurance of standards and the maintenance of effective quality systems, and through the Board of Trustees and Academic Board a strong watching brief is kept, with powers of intervention where necessary. Principles that underpin academic standards and quality are transparent, and reporting lines are clear. The regulatory frameworks provide for adequate safeguards to ensure academic standards, are periodically reviewed, and are effectively operationalised. Deliberative bodies have a mandate to maintain and enhance

quality and do so. Programme approval and review arrangements are robust and demonstrate the use of external and independent expertise and take account of external reference points to ensure that standards are set at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the FHEQ and meet PSRB requirements. Qualifications are well defined and there are sound mechanisms for maintaining their currency. Credit and qualifications are awarded only where the achievement of learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment or via the recognition of prior learning. Full use is made of external examiners and advisers during the validation process and ongoing running of programmes to ensure that standards are fully maintained. High-level strategies have been developed with regard to learning, teaching and assessment and these have translated into policies and practice guidance to ensure that the strategic goals are delivered at programme level. All of the above points to a commitment to the assurance of standards and student learning opportunities.

222 The observations in the above paragraphs in this section, along with the conclusions for each of the DAPs criteria A-E in this report, demonstrate that UCEM meets the overarching criterion and has a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to the assurance of standards, supported by effective quality systems.

Annex 1

Evidence

- 001 Self-evaluation
- 006 UCEM's Royal Charter and Bye Laws
- 007 Board of Trustees Terms of Reference
- 008 Executive Team Terms of Reference
- 009 Senior Leadership Team Terms of Reference
- 010 Academic Governance Structure
- 011 Academic Regulations and Specifications Subcommittee Terms of Reference
- 012 External Examiner Appointments Subcommittee Terms of Reference
- 013 Apprenticeship Quality Monitoring Committee Terms of Reference
- 014 Academic Board Terms of Reference
- 015 UCEM Regulations
- 016 Academic Quality and Standards Annual Report 2019-20
- 017 UCEM Risk Register
- 018 Audit Committee Terms of Reference
- 019 Academic Review Committee Terms of Reference
- 020 Prevent Risk Register
- 021 Academic Review Committee Annual Report 2019-2020
- 022 Committee Agendas highlighting OfS Condition of Registration
- 023 Nominations and Governance Committee Terms of Reference
- 024 Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference
- 025 Finance Committee Terms of Reference
- 026 UCEM Degree Outcomes Statement
- 027 UCEM Vision and Strategy to 2025
- 028 Access and Participation Plan 2020 to 2025
- 030 Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee Terms of Reference
- 031 Educational Development Programme 2020-21
- 032 Transform Project Specification
- 033 Institutional Strategy and Vision 2014-2019
- 034 Academic and Programme Regulations Levels 4-7 2021-22
- 035 Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2020-2025
- 036 Code of Practice - Admissions and Recognition of Prior Learning Chapter
- 037 Code of Practice - Neurodiversity, Disability and Wellbeing Chapter
- 038 Code of Practice - Equality and Diversity Chapter
- 039 Standing Orders for the Conduct of Meetings
- 040 Deliberative Committee Members Guidance Notes
- 041 Conflicts of Interest Policy
- 042 Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee Terms of Reference
- 043 Board of Trustees Profiles
- 044 Institutional Score Card 2021-22
- 045 Deliberative Committee Student Representatives - extract of agenda and minutes on student items
- 046 Research Committee Terms of Reference
- 047 Academic Governance Review and Action Plan
- 048 Office for Students Conditions of registration matrix
- 049 Deliberative Committee Chairs Refresher Training
- 050 Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee Induction Folder October 2020
- 051 Overall UCEM Organisational Chart
- 052 UCEM Enhancement Plan
- 053 Code of Practice - Student Engagement Chapter
- 054 Lead Student Representative Job Specification
- 055 Programme Student Representative Job Specification

056 Student Submission for UCEM's Internal Institutional Review
057 Board of Trustees Student Representative update June 2020
058 Board of Trustees Student Representative update September 2020
059 Response to Student Representative feedback - QSEC in August 2020
060 Response to Student Representative feedback - Academic Board June 2020
061 Academic Review Committee minutes October 2020
062 Student Representative Framework and Action Plan - Academic Board update
063 Briefing Document for Validation Periodic Review and Revalidation Panel Members
064 Student Charter
065 Student Handbook
066a Examples of Student Complaints
066b Examples of Student Appeals
067 Example of Equality Impact Assessment - Student Appeals and Complaints
068 Code of Practice - Partnerships Chapter Partnerships
069 Code of Practice - Learning, Teaching and Assessment Chapter
070 Code of Practice - External Examining Chapter
071 Code of Practice - Student Appeals and Complaints Chapter
072 Code of Practice - Board of Examiners Chapter
073 Code of Practice Development Programme
074 Appeals and Complaints Annual Report 2019-20
075 Academic Misconduct Annual Report 2019-20
076 Safeguarding and Prevent Annual Report 2019-20
077 Examples of Programme Specifications
078 Examples of Module Descriptors
079 Example of Programme Specification with Mapping
080 Code of Practice - Programme Development and Validation
081 Programme Development and Validation Procedure
082 Programme Specification Template
083 Module Descriptor Template
084 Code of Practice - Programme Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation Chapter
085 Programme Monitoring and Review Procedure
086 Programme Amendment and Discontinuation Procedure
087a UCEM Student Protection Plan
087b UCEM Student Protection
088 Diploma Supplement Template
089 Graduation Certificate
090 Internal Scrutiny Checklist Undergraduate Revalidation Dec 2019
091 Internal Scrutiny Checklist Postgraduate Revalidation Feb 2020
092 Disability and Wellbeing Report 2018-19
093 Annual Review of UCEM External Examiners' Reports 2019-2020
094 Higher Education Apprenticeship External Adviser Role Specification
095a BSc Hons Quantity Surveying Annual Programme Review Report 2019-2020
095b MSc Construction Management Annual Programme Review Report 2019-2020
096a National Student Survey (NSS) Results 2020
096b National Student Survey (NSS) Results 2021
097a Assessment Scrutiny Timelines
097b Autumn 2021 Scrutiny Board Minutes
098 Assessment Handbook Student Guide Levels 4-7
099 Recognition of Prior Learning Panel Terms of Reference
100 Product Board Terms of Reference
101 Business and Academic Case Approval Template
102 UCEM Undergraduate Provision Periodic Review and Rationale
103 UCEM Postgraduate Provision Periodic Review and Rationale
104 Validation Report Template
105 UG Periodic Review, Revalidation & Apprenticeship Approval Report

106 PG Periodic Review, Revalidation & Apprenticeship Approval Report
107 Extract Academic Board Minutes 4th March 2020
108 Tutor Support Guide: Transform Module Development
109 Design Jam - Resource Workshop - Quality and Process
110 Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2016-2020
111 UCEM Accessibility Statement
112 Online Protocol - A Student's Guide for the VLE
113 Designing Learning at UCEM
114 Study Skills - Extracts from the VLE
115 UCEM Guide to Referencing and Citation
116 Academic Misconduct Procedure
117 Terms of Reference and Protocol for Academic Misconduct Panel Hearings
118 Assessment Marking Guide - Template Autumn 2021
119 Assignment - Template Autumn 2021
120 Educational Development Programme 2018-19
121 Assignment Feedback Templates Levels 4 and 7
122 Moderation Guide – Assessment
123 Board of Examiners - Module Boards Terms of Reference
124 Board of Examiners - Progression and Award Boards Terms of Reference
125 Examples of External Examiners Annual Reports and Responses 2019-20
126 Student Complaints Procedure
127 Student Appeals Procedure
128 Complaints Policy and Procedure for Employers of Apprentices
129 Quarterly Business Review - Complaints and Appeals 2020-21 Q1 - Q3
130 Academic Review Committee minutes April 2020
131 UCEM External Examiners
132 Educational Development Programme Annual Report 2020-21
133 Code of Practice - Research and Advanced Scholarship
134 Research Committee Annual Report 2019-20
135 Property and Construction Research Centre - Report for February 2019
136 Online Learning Research Centre - Updates Report for July 2019
137 Knowledge Foundations Monthly Newsletter - November 2020
138 Guide to formal peer review 2019 2020
139 Level 4 Action Plan
140 Example of Learning Design Centre Repository
141 Board of Trustee Board Decisions 2020-2021
142 Educational Development Programme 2019-20
143 Module Tutor Role Descriptor
144 Module Leader Role Descriptor
145 Academic Delivery Manager Job Specification
146 UCEM Recruitment Policy Part 1
147 UCEM Recruitment Policy Part 2
148 Tutor Handbook - Extract from VLE
149 Academic Board Executive Summary Report
150 University College of Estate Management Professional Services - Matrix Review Report 2021
151 Audit of Public Information Procedure
152 Admissions Annual Report 2019-20
153 Readiness for Learning Questionnaire
154 UCEM Welcome Programme Schedule Autumn 2020
155 Quarterly Business Review - Student Central Response Times 2019-2020
156 Quarterly Business Review - Data on Student Outcomes 2019-2020
157 Academic Facilitator Job Specification
158 Academic Programme Support Tutor Job Specification
159 Programme Committee Terms of Reference

160 Code of Practice - Careers Education, Information and Guidance Chapter
161 Code of Practice - Safeguarding and Prevent Chapter
162 Safeguarding Procedure
163 Board of Trustee minutes March 2021 and September 2020
164 Mitigating Circumstances Procedure
165 Disability and Wellbeing Annual Report 2019-20
166 Interim Review Report 2015
167 QAA Annual Monitoring Report 2017
168 QAA Higher Education Review Action Plan
169 Example of Code of Practice Audit Report - Student Appeals and Complaints
170 Student Experience Survey Action Plan June/July 2020
171 Educational Development Programme – Show Me sessions 2019-21
172 Professional Engagement and Advisory Forum Terms of Reference
173 Online Safety Guidance
174 UCEM External Positions Held
175 Observation and Quality Assurance of Apprenticeship Provision
176 Breaking down an assignment
177 'Writing in your own words' induction resource
178 Audit Committee minutes April and February 2020
179 Core School - Staff Information
180 Deputy Module Leader Job Description
181 Work-based Project Lead Subject Supervisor Role Descriptor
182 Module Marker Job Description
183 Project Supervisor Job Description
184 Digital Education Team - Staff Information
185 Learning & Teaching Enhancement Team - Staff Information
186 Module Leaders, Deputy Module Leaders and Subject Leads
187 Module Tutors
188 Module Markers and Project Supervisors
189 UCEM Welcome Programme Schedule Autumn 2021
190 Advanced Scholarship Forms Example 1
191 Advanced Scholarship Forms Example 2
192 Apprenticeship Outcomes Officer Job Specification
193 Apprenticeship Outcomes Manager Job Specification
194 Apprenticeship Support Tutor Job Specification
195 Peer Annual Review Report 2020-2021
196 Academic Board Meeting Pack (8 Sept 2021)
197 Academic Board Meeting Pack (28 June 2021)
198 Academic Board Meeting Pack (9 March 2021)
199 Extraordinary Academic Board Meeting Pack (4 Feb 2021)
200 Academic Board Meeting Pack (24 Nov 2020)
201 Academic Board Meeting Pack (8 Sept 2020)
202 Academic Board Meeting Pack (2 June 2020)
203 Academic Board Meeting Pack (4 March 2020)
204 Academic Board Meeting Pack (28 Nov 2019)
205 Academic Board Meeting Pack (4 Nov 2019)
206 Academic Board Meeting Pack (12 Sept 2019)
207 Combined Academic Board Minutes
208 Quality Standards and Enhancement Committee Minutes
209 Learning Teaching and Enhancement Committee Minutes
210 Combined Academic Review Committee Minutes
211 Student Rep and Ambassador Meeting Minutes
212 Diploma Supplement BSc (Hons) Building Surveying
213 Diploma Supplement MSc Construction Management
214 Certificates BSc (Hons) Building Surveying and MSc Construction Management

215 Programme Closure and Suspension of Recruitment Form RICS 900 Hours
 216 Programme Closure Student Support Plan form RICS 900 Hours
 217 Extracts from QSEQ - RICS 900 Hours
 218 Initial validation reports: BSc (Hons) Building Control; MSc Building Control; MSc Building Surveying; MSc Construction Management; MSc Quantity Surveying; MSc Real Estate; MBA Construction and Real Estate
 219 Programme Specifications: BSc (Hons) Building Control; BSc (Hons) Construction Management; MSc Quantity Surveying; MSc Real Estate
 220 Module Evaluation Reports 2019-20
 221 End of Intake Survey and Analysis of the Results
 222 Induction Module Evaluation Outcomes 2020-21
 223 Visit Reports from PSRBs: Chartered Association of Building Engineers (May 2020); Chartered Institute of Building (Dec 2020); Chartered Management Institute (March 2021); Hong Kong Institute of Construction Managers (Nov 2020); Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (July 2020)
 224 Senior Leadership Team CVs
 225 List of Apprenticeship External Advisors
 226 Training for External Examiners
 227 Communication of Regulations to Staff
 228 Undergraduate Module Board Minutes 2020-21 (Autumn Semester)
 229 Undergraduate Progression and Board Minutes 2020-21 (Autumn Semester)
 230 Undergraduate Module Board Minutes 2020-21 (Spring Semester)
 231 Undergraduate Progression and Board Minutes 2020-21 (Spring Semester)
 232 Postgraduate Module Board Minutes 2020-21 (Autumn Semester)
 233 Postgraduate Progression and Board Minutes 2020-21 (Autumn Semester)
 234 Postgraduate Module Board Minutes 2020-21 (Spring Semester)
 235 Postgraduate Progression and Board Minutes 2020-21 (Spring Semester)
 236 BSc Access Module Business and Academic Case for Programme Approval
 237 Building Control Programmes Business and Academic Case for Programme Approval
 238 Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2016-2020
 239 Learning Teaching and Assessment Strategy Implementation Framework and Action Plan
 240 NSS 2021 Written Comments
 241 Assignment Brief Examples Levels 4-7
 242 Clarifying Statement on Institutional Scorecard
 243 Board of Examiners: Scrutiny Boards Terms of Reference
 244 Scrutiny Board Minutes
 245 Academic Misconduct Example 1
 246 Academic Misconduct Example 2
 247 Apprenticeship Quality Monitoring Committee Meeting Minutes (July 2021)
 248 Apprenticeship Quality Monitoring Committee Meeting Minutes (Oct 2021)
 249 Research Committee Annual Report 2018-19
 250 Research Committee Annual Report 2019-20
 251 Research Committee Annual Report 2020-21
 252 Compulsory Training on Module Marking
 253 Compulsory Training on Module Tutoring
 254 Compulsory Training on Project Supervising
 255 Compulsory Training on Work-based Project Supervising
 256 Quarterly Business Review Report - Student Outcomes
 257 Peer Mentoring and Buddy Systems
 258 Participation Rates in Performance and Development Review Process
 259 Student Experience Survey Template and Results Analysis
 260 Examples of Module Leader Reports for External Examiners
 261 Annual programme Review Report 2019-20 BSc (Hons) Building Surveying
 262 Annual programme Review Report 2019-20 MSc Building Surveying

263 Annual programme Review Report 2019-20 BSc MSc Real Estate
 264 Academic Facilitators and Academic and Programme Apprenticeship Support Tutors
 265 Academic Review Committee Paper on UCEM Enhancement Plan
 266 Academic Board Paper on UCEM Enhancement Plan
 267 UCEM Enhancement Plan Deliberative Committee Extracts
 268 Programme Committee Meeting Minutes
 269 Recognition of Prior Learning Panel Meeting Minutes
 270 Examples of Approval of Major Changes to Programmes
 271 Academic Misconduct Data by Programme 2021-22
 272 Context on Review of Institutional Level Data on Student Retention and Success
 273 Student Retention and Success Annual Report 2019-20
 274 Academic Board Paper: Student Success (Nov 2019)
 275 Academic Board Paper: Module Success Rates Autumn 2019
 276 Academic Board Paper: Transform Project Update
 277 Academic Board and LTEC Paper Module Success Data Autumn 2020
 278 Academic Board Paper: Protecting the Student Experience
 279 Extracts from Academic Review Committee and Deliberative Committee Meetings on Student Retention and Success
 280 Principal's Update to the Board Sept 2021
 281 Academic Review Committee Paper: Student Retention and Completion Rates
 282 Academic Review Committee Paper: Protecting the Student Experience
 283 Academic Review Committee Paper: Delivering Successful Student Outcomes
 284 Academic Review Committee Paper: Resubmission Results Autumn 2020
 285 Resubmission Engagement and Outcomes Analysis Autumn 2020, part 1
 286 Resubmission Engagement and Outcomes Analysis Autumn 2020, part 2
 287 Monitoring Student Performance and Progression on the Administrative Support Systems
 288 List of Module Tutors and Markers for UG and PG provision
 289 List of Module Markers and Supervisors
 290 List of Module Tutors
 291 Context on Tutor Development and the Educational Development Programme
 292 Tutor Participation in the Educational Development Programme 2019-20 and 2020-21
 293 Educational Development Programme 2020-21
 294 Latest Post-intake Action Plan
 295 Programme Leader Meeting Notes
 296 Action Plan and Follow-up on Meeting Validation Conditions and Recommendations (UG and PG)
 297 Annotated Additional Evidence List
 298 Monitoring of the Effectiveness of Staff and Student Advice Services
 299 Careers Annual Report 2020-21
 300 Quarterly Business Review: Safeguarding and Wellbeing
 301 Student Engagement Team Action Plan
 302 Staff and Student Focus Group Minutes (June 2021)
 303 Quarterly Business Review: Statistics on Employee Experience
 304 All Staff Meeting - Wellbeing
 305 Mental Health Strategy Working Group Agenda (July 2021)
 306 Advice for Mental health First Aiders on Supporting Anxious Students
 307 Disability and Welfare Annual Report 2020-21
 308 Terms of Reference for Audit of How UCEM Programmes Are Advertised to Students
 309 Preventing and Addressing Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Action Plan
 310 All Staff Meeting - You Said, We Did
 311 All Staff Briefing on Mental Health Strategy
 312 VLE Screenshots (Induction, Study Skills, Student Policies)
 313 Alternative Assessment Policy

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