



Designated Quality Body  
in England

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

## Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance



Review Report

December 2021

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## Summary of findings and reasons

Ref	Core practice	Outcome	Confidence	Summary of reasons
S1	The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications' frameworks.	Met	High	<p>From the evidence seen, the team considers that the standards set for the School's programmes are in line with the sector-recognised standards defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS's regulatory framework. The team also considers that standards described in the approved programme documentation are set at levels that are consistent with these sector-recognised standards and the academic regulations and policies that apply to the School's programmes should ensure that standards are maintained appropriately.</p> <p>The team considers that, based on the evidence scrutinised, the standards that will be achieved by the School's students are expected to be line with the sector-recognised standards defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS's regulatory framework. The team also considers that the academic regulations and policies that apply to the School's programmes will ensure that these standards are maintained. The team considers that staff fully understand the School's approach to maintaining these standards and that the evidence seen demonstrates they are committed to implementing this approach. Therefore, based on its scrutiny of the evidence provided, the team concludes that this Core practice is met.</p> <p>The School applies the clear and comprehensive academic and framework regulations of its validating university. In addition, the School makes effective use of the CDD assessment matrix, grade and level descriptors which assist in contextualising assessment feedback for</p>

				<p>students. Approved course documentation demonstrates that specified threshold standards are consistent with relevant national qualifications' frameworks, ensuring that credit and qualifications are awarded only where the relevant threshold standards have been met.</p> <p>The School's comprehensive and robust annual monitoring process demonstrates that staff understand their responsibilities for maintaining standards leading to qualifications of the University of Kent. The annual monitoring process enables staff to consider external examiner feedback and recommendations, and informs actions taken to ensure the maintenance of academic standards. External examiner reports confirm that the level of student work and associated assessment outcomes are consistent with the threshold standards of the qualifications awarded.</p> <p>The team's observations and analysis of documentation, the assessment sample and discussions with senior staff, Rambert 2 representatives, students and teaching staff confirm that the threshold standards for the School's qualifications are consistent with relevant national qualifications' frameworks and therefore the team concludes that the Core practice is met.</p> <p>Based on the evidence presented, scrutiny of documentation and sampling activity undertaken, the team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.</p>
S2	The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably	Met	High	The team, based on the evidence presented to it, determined that the standards set for students to achieve beyond the threshold on the School's programmes are reasonably comparable with those set by other UK providers. The team considered that the

	<p>comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.</p>		<p>standards described in the approved programme documentation and in the academic regulations and policies that apply to the School's programmes should ensure that such standards are maintained appropriately.</p> <p>Therefore, the team concludes, based on the evidence described above, that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers and this Core practice is met.</p> <p>The School has robust systems and processes in place to ensure the academic regulations and frameworks are consistently applied and that qualifications awarded to students meet or surpass threshold standards. To ensure this is understood by all staff, these regulations have been contextualised into the University's Credit Framework for Taught Courses of Study to ensure the consistency of application. The processes for assessment design and marking are clear and understood by both staff and students. The School has adopted the CDD assessment matrix, grade and level descriptors to supplement those of the University of Kent, providing a common vocabulary for staff and students engaged in the assessment of creative practical work. This approach ensures that the standards defined in the definitive programme documentation meet or go beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers. External examiners confirm that the standards beyond the threshold level are reasonably comparable with those in other UK providers and</p>
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				<p>qualifications are awarded only where those standards have been met.</p> <p>Lesson observations and the team's consideration of assessed student work demonstrate that students receive helpful formative and summative feedback throughout their programme of study. The School uses highly skilled physical technique teachers and a pool of specialist lecturers from national and international universities to mark and moderate students' written work. This ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers. In addition, the opportunities afforded to them by the School serve to expand their knowledge and expertise in their exposure to extra coaching, guest lecturers, choreographers and the Rambert 2 Company placement opportunity all add to ensure they are able to achieve beyond the threshold level expected.</p> <p>Based on the evidence presented, scrutiny of documentation and the assessed student work considered, the team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.</p>
S3	Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.	Met	High	<p>The School has effective arrangements in place to ensure standards of awards are credible and secure, irrespective of where or how courses are delivered, or who delivers them. Partnership agreements are clear and detailed and staff understand their responsibilities in maintaining academic standards within the overall framework and regulatory requirement of the University. The School has a good track record of partnership working with the University and complies with the</p>

				<p>University's regulatory and quality assurance requirements to maintain high academic standards. This is confirmed by external examiner reports and the team's consideration of the random sample of assessed student work, and the operation of assessment and marking in accordance with University Codes of Practice and Regulations to ensure standards are credible and secure.</p> <p>The School has a detailed policy for working with collaborative partners and it adopts a highly structured approach to partnership working. The School retains full control over all aspects of assessment and grading and the team has confidence in the robustness and credibility of these arrangements given the annual monitoring and review activity undertaken, the positive tenor of external examiners' reports and the assessed student work seen by the team. Meetings with School and the Rambert 2 staff members demonstrated clear understanding of their responsibilities for ensuring that the standards of its awards are credible and secure, irrespective of where or how programmes are delivered or who delivers them. The team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.</p>
S4	The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.	Met	High	The School uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent. There is clarity in relation to staff and student responsibilities and a shared understanding of the standards to be achieved, underpinned by formal Memoranda of Agreement between the parties involved and supported by regulations, policies and procedures that apply to partnership working, ensure that the standards of the awards made are credible and secure. The classification and regulations governing

				<p>assessment are determined by the University and provide a clear framework that is effectively implemented in practice. Programme documentation, including information on learning outcomes students are expected to achieve and the assessment criteria to be applied, provides clear, transparent and comprehensive information for staff and students involved in collaborative provision.</p> <p>Records of periodic review and approval and review demonstrate that the role of external experts reflects the requirements of the University and the policies, originating with CDD, that have been adopted by the School. External examiner reports confirm that the assessment process and moderation processes are reliable, fair and transparent and implemented as required by the University. External examiners are utilised effectively in the maintenance and oversight of academic standards. Their comments regarding the partnership provision have been largely positive and the School has responded constructively to developmental feedback provided to inform future improvements. Students confirmed that they found the assessment and classification processes to be reliable, fair and transparent. The team concludes, therefore, that the Core practice is met.</p>
Q1	The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system.	Met	High	The team concludes that the School has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system. This is because it manages the admissions process in accordance with its published admissions policies and all decisions are made in accordance with published criteria and processes that are easily accessible to applicants. While the School has overall responsibility for the admissions process, it is subject to and follows the relevant



				<p>University regulations, including English language requirements for international applicants and applicants admitted by direct entry.</p> <p>The detailed admissions process is reflected in the School's operational procedures encapsulated in its detailed admissions procedures and information available to applicants on its website rather than in separate formalised documentary plans.</p> <p>Staff spoke knowledgeably about the admissions process and how the selection process including audition worked in practice. Students confirmed they had access to all the information, advice, support and guidance they required during the admissions process. Admissions records demonstrate that the admissions process, as set out in its Admissions Policies and the University's regulatory requirements, is followed rigorously. The audition criteria are clearly set out and published to applicants with second stage auditions assessed by a panel, with panellists making individual assessments which inform a collective, panel-based decision for each applicant. The team concludes that the School has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system and that the Core practice is met.</p>
Q2	The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses.	Met	High	The School complies with the requirements of the approval and periodic review process by designing programmes that reflect external frameworks, including relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, as demonstrated by the outcome from the periodic review process that confirms the programmes are well designed and enable high standards of student achievement. Programmes are of high quality and have a distinct educational and dance philosophy and ethos

			<p>based on professional practice and conservatoire training, maintaining a balance between ballet and contemporary dance and experimental forms. The School makes effective use of its close links with professional dance companies and the wider industry to inform programme development, both in terms of new programmes such as the MA Professional Dance Performance and the regular updating of programmes. Staff were able to talk knowledgeably about their close engagement with industry that enabled them to design and adapt programmes to reflect current practice, emerging techniques and the needs of the dance profession. The team concluded that this enabled the School to deliver high-quality programmes that are relevant to the needs of the profession and therefore directly contribute to student employability.</p> <p>The University's Codes of Practice provide an appropriate framework to facilitate the design and delivery of high-quality courses. This framework is further supplemented and contextualised by the use of the CDD Quality Handbook which has been adopted by the School and provides further guidance to support programme development, including grade and level descriptors. There was clear evidence of adherence to procedural frameworks and guidance to ensure the design and delivery of high-quality courses in practice. Programme approval and periodic review processes incorporate external peer review and a student perspective.</p> <p>The School has appropriately qualified staff, many of whom have previous professional experience or remain in practice and deliver a high-quality academic experience and professional practice standard. Students</p>
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				<p>also have extensive access to professional dancers and choreographers through in-School performances, master classes and guest professionals with such experience fully integrated across their programme. The recently validated MA Professional Dance Performance is recognised by students, prospective applicants and the profession as being innovative with students working permanently alongside the professional dance company. Teaching and learning facilities are of industry standard and, in conjunction with extensive student support, ensure that students receive a high quality student experience. Observation of teaching and learning demonstrated effective and structured planning in terms of programme delivery and content clearly aligned to the learning outcomes with the participative engagement of students throughout.</p> <p>The high quality of the School's programmes is endorsed by its external examiners who comment on the high standards achieved both academically and in relation to practice, reflected in the positive outcome of the conjoint periodic review process undertaken by the University of Kent and CDD, and in the views of the students, alumni and not least the wider dance profession. The graduate destinations are further testimony to the quality and relevance of the School's programmes and the professional performance standards achieved by its students. The team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.</p>
Q3	The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.	Met	High	The recruitment and induction process of staff is robust, credible, and is operated effectively within the School's regulations and policies which support staff to successfully integrate into the School and ensure the delivery of a high-quality experience for students.

				<p>The School has an informal, but effective approach to assessing the quality of teaching and learning. Peer observation, continuous staff and student feedback, the School's programme of continuing professional development and staff appraisal system all impact positively on outcomes. Similarly, the Principal's own direct involvement in observing all examples of teaching and learning combine to ensure continuous oversight and development and enhancement of teaching and learning at the School.</p> <p>The team's observations of teaching and learning confirm that staff are appropriately skilled and qualified to deliver their subjects and that the students value the professionalism of staff and the preparation the teaching they receive gives them in succeeding in the industry. The team concludes, therefore, that academic staff deliver a high-quality learning experience for their students and the Core practice is therefore met.</p>
Q4	The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.	Met	High	<p>The School has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality student academic experience. The team's tour of the facilities and teaching observations confirmed that the School's facilities are state-of-the-art. The School has considered the integration of student support measures into the main facilities, with the STRU onsite and osteopath available to assess and respond to student injury rapidly and appropriately. Students have access to both Athens and SCONUL, thereby expanding the resources available in the School library and the School plans to continue to provide access to these external library services following the end of its relationship with CDD. It has also employed a part-time librarian to develop the learning resources available to</p>

				<p>students.</p> <p>The School is responsive to student support needs identified and there is a clear understanding about the respective roles and responsibilities of staff in supporting students. While there is a dedicated student support service, students may approach any member of staff within the School with any issues that they would wish to discuss. Staff are well placed to use their knowledge and experience of the dance profession to advise on the appropriateness of the School's facilities and resources, to ensure students receive a high-quality relevant academic experience. Students are actively engaged in discussions about the facilities, learning resources and support provided by the School. The School is responsive to students' views, as demonstrated by the School's establishment of an outdoor gym from previously unused space, supplementing indoor facilities available to students. Alumni described the facilities at Rambert as industry-standard and helped them to prepare for the transition into professional employment within the industry. Students are positive about the facilities, learning resources and support services available to them.</p>
Q5	The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.	Met	High	The School actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience. The School has a clear and consistent approach to engaging students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience. The School actively engages students individually through module evaluations and surveys, and collectively through its governance structures, including the staff and student meetings and Academic Board. The training provided to student representatives

				<p>develops relevant skills enabling student representatives to be effective in gathering feedback and representing the views of their peers to individual staff members and at committee meetings.</p> <p>Staff and students were able to provide examples of how student feedback produced positive improvements to programme delivery, with both groups stressing the importance of engaging with the other regularly and constructively. Student representatives stated that they felt able to participate in governance-level discussions and were actively encouraged by the School to do so. The School uses digital technology to share draft policies with the wider student body to enable individual students to provide feedback and engage in improving the quality of their educational experience. The team concludes, therefore, that the Core practice is met. The multiple avenues supported by the School to enable students to readily provide feedback ensures that the School actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their learning experience.</p>
Q6	The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.	Met	High	The complaints log demonstrated that complaints had been dealt with according to the School's procedures. Policies and procedures governing complaints and appeals are fair, transparent and accessible to all students. The stages for complaints and appeals are specified with clear timeframes to deliver timely outcomes, and it is made explicit how students can appeal a decision. Students have access to the policies through multiple channels, including the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Student Handbooks [038, 015] and through the VLE. Staff support is available to ensure

				<p>that students understand the procedures involved, timescales and possible outcomes.</p> <p>The School confirmed its plans to adopt the CDD's Complaints Policy, with some adaptation of language to better fit the School's circumstances. Its plans to develop fair, transparent and accessible complaints and appeals procedures are robust and credible and are reflected in the appointment of a new member of staff with both CDD experience and expertise in the area of complaints and appeals to further develop the policy documentation and procedures for handling complaints and appeals.</p> <p>Students consider the complaints and appeals procedures to be fair, transparent, and accessible. They also confirmed the commitment of staff to support student understanding and to act impartially. The team's review of the complaints log confirmed that the outcomes in each case were evidence-based and in line with the expectations of the School's policy. The team concludes, therefore, that the Core practice is met.</p>
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Q8	Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.	Met	High	<p>Up-to-date partnership agreements are in place between the School, the University of Kent and the Rambert Company (Rambert2). The agreements are managed in accordance with the School's regulations and those of the University to ensure that the academic and practical experience for students on placement is of high quality regarding all aspects of the provision delivered in the partnership.</p> <p>There is effective communication between the School and Rambert2 about the provision of placement opportunities to students. Both parties understand their roles in the support of students on placement and the assessment of placement learning. Students previously engaged in, or those considering engagement with Rambert2, praised the learning experience afforded to them, considering it a high-quality professional learning opportunity. External examiners' reports relating to assessment and student outcomes for the Rambert2 placement confirm that the academic experience is also of high quality. The team therefore concludes that the Core practice is met.</p>
Q9	The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.	Met	High	The School supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes. It has credible, evidence-based plans to support students through the duration of their studies and a robust approach to identifying and monitoring student support needs. Staff involved in supporting students' academic and professional achievement are clear about their responsibilities, are appropriately trained, are well qualified for their roles and are clearly committed to ensuring the best possible outcomes for their students. The provision of an industry placement for MA Professional Dance Performance students alongside



				<p>their studies through the Rambert2 ensemble supports students in securing successful professional outcomes while fine-tuning their technical and performance skills.</p> <p>Students view the support mechanisms as accessible and effective in enabling successful academic and professional outcomes across all levels of study. Approaches to feedback are well reasoned, with strong links to assessment criteria to ensure that feedback is comprehensive, timely and helpful. While the team identified two instances of feedback on assessed written work not being provided in a timely manner in the random sample of students' assessed work undertaken, the team noted that students had not raised issues about the timeliness of feedback in their meeting with the team and the student submission had similarly not raised any such issue. The team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.</p>
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## About this report

This is a report detailing the outcomes of the Quality and Standards Review for providers applying to register with the Office for Students (OfS), conducted by QAA in December 2021, for the Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance.

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

The team for this assessment was:

Name: Mark Cooper  
Institution: University of Portsmouth  
Role in assessment team: Institutional and Subject (Performing Arts) assessor

Name: Amy Gallacher (from November 2021)  
Institution: University of St. Andrews  
Role in assessment team: Student assessor

Name: Emma Beenham (to November 2021)  
Institution: The University of Law Student Association  
Role in assessment team: Student assessor

Name: Diane Rainsbury  
Institution: Istituto Marangoni  
Role in assessment team: Institutional assessor

The QAA officer for the review was: Dr Irene Ainsworth.

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

## About Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance

Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance (the School) was established in London in 1920. Based in Twickenham, the School specialises in training and education in ballet and contemporary dance. The School's mission is to provide world-leading training and education in ballet and contemporary dance.

The School has been a member school of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama (CDD), a federal collaboration of specialist schools delivering education and training in the performing

arts, since 2005. CDD is registered with the Office for Students (OfS) and has developed an academic framework (and produced guidance relating to this in a CDD Quality Handbook) to maintain academic standards and manage the quality of learning and teaching across its member schools. The framework is overseen by the CDD Academic Board and the Board's reporting committees and working groups, which include representation from member schools. Ownership of academic standards and quality is shared through CDD's committees, policies and procedures, and its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy has been designed to develop a high-quality student learning and assessment experience across its member schools. CDD has also provided networking opportunities and other activities for its member schools to support staff development to deliver high-quality education, training and scholarship.

CDD is now winding up and the School plans to end its membership of the CDD and seek independent registration as an independent higher education provider with the OfS, by 1 August 2022. To that end, the School is working closely with CDD to ensure the School's smooth transition to independence and registration.

The School's population is culturally diverse and students from over 23 different countries are studying on the following professionally oriented programmes:

<b>Programme</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Mode of study</b>	<b>Current student numbers</b>
Foundation Degree Ballet and Contemporary Dance	5	Full-time	100
BA (Hons) Ballet and Contemporary Dance (top-up)	6	Full-time	49
MA Professional Dance Performance	7	Full-time	8
MA Dance Research for Professional Practitioners	7	Part-time	7

The School's programmes are validated by the University of Kent. The Foundation Degree and BA (Hons) degrees were validated in 2005. The full-time MA Professional Dance Performance and the part-time MA Dance Research for Professional Practitioners were validated in 2017. The latter programme is offered in partnership with the Rambert2 ensemble, the Rambert Ballet Company's 'Junior Company', with the Rambert Company providing an intensive professional placement for the School's MA Professional Dance Performance students. The School and, ultimately, the University are responsible for the standards of the awards for programmes delivered at the School and the programme delivered in partnership with Rambert2.

The School's Executive Team comprises the Principal and Artistic Director; Deputy Principal; Head of Studies; Head of Human Resources; and the Chief Operating Officer. These postholders are members of the Senior Management Team which also includes the Head of Participation, Outreach and Widening Participation; the Head of Development and the School's incoming Academic Registrar and Head of Compliance (a CDD employee before joining the School). The School has a Board of Trustees; an Academic Board; Learning and Teaching Committee; and a Staff-Student Liaison Committee.

## How the assessment was conducted

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

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

To form its judgements about the provider's ability to meet the Core practices, the team considered a range of evidence that was submitted before the review visit and evidence gathered at the visit itself [Annex 1]. To ensure that the team focused on the principles embedded in the Core practices, and that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other assessments, the team utilised Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers to construct this report and detail the key pieces of evidence seen. Annex 4 expects that review teams will sample certain types of key evidence using a combination of representative sampling, risk-based sampling and randomised sampling. In this review, the team sampled the following areas for evidence for the reasons given below:

- The team considered a random sample of 124 pieces of assessed student work from a total of 948 which were completed in the last three years (academic sessions 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21) to test:
  - that students' assessed work reflects relevant threshold standards
  - that marks and awards given to students are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers
  - that, where the School works in partnerships with other organisations, the standards of awards are credible and secure
  - whether students are given comprehensive, helpful and timely feedback.
- The team considered a random sample of 87 admissions records from a total of 188 records for the last three years (academic sessions 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21) to assess whether reliable, fair and inclusive decisions were made for those applicants sampled.

Further details of all the evidence the team considered are provided in Annex 1 of this report.

## Explanation of findings

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

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

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

3 The QAA team completed an assessment of this Core practice in line with the principles and outcomes that are detailed in the [Quality and Standards Review for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students: Guidance for Providers](#) (March 2019). This guidance identifies key pieces of evidence that a provider may present and which the team should consider when making a judgement against each Core practice to ensure that the relevant outcomes are being delivered.

#### The evidence the team considered

4 The team assessed the evidence submitted by the School before and during the visit to establish whether the School meets this Core practice at a threshold level. The Guidance (paragraph 3) includes a matrix (Annex 4) which the team used to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other assessments and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a University of Kent Credit Framework for Taught Courses of Study Annex 2: Qualification Level Descriptors [002]
- b University of Kent Credit Framework - marking conventions for taught courses of study [003]
- c University of Kent General Regulations for Taught Courses of Study [004]
- d University of Kent Regulations for Students [005]
- e University of Kent Code of Practice for Quality Assurance of Taught Courses Annex K: External Examiners and External Advisers for Taught Courses [006]
- f Rambert School Assessment Matrix, [007a] Grade and Level Descriptors [007b]
- g Annual Programme Monitoring reports for 2018, [008a] 2019, [008b] 2020 [008c]
- h Post-Graduate Student Handbook 2020-21 [015]
- i Programme specifications for the Ballet and Contemporary Dance Foundation Degree [022a] and BA (Hons) Degree, [022b] and for the MA Professional Dance Performance [022c]
- j External examiner reports for the Foundation Degree and BA (Hons) Ballet and Contemporary Dance Degree for academic sessions 2018-19, [054] 2019-20 [056] and 2020-21; [058] and for the MA Professional Dance Performance academic session 2018-19 [060]

k the School's external examiner report analysis and responses made to external examiners' reports for the programmes cited above [055; 057; 059; 061]  
l Random sample of assessed student work [ASSESS]  
m Meeting with senior staff [M1]  
n Meeting with Rambert2 representatives [M2] and with teaching and professional support staff [M4]  
o Meeting with undergraduate and postgraduate students and alumni [M3]  
p Clarification meeting with senior staff. [M5]

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

- No third-party endorsements from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies or Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical end-point assessments were available as the School does not run programmes requiring such endorsements.

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

6 The team considered a random sample of 124 pieces of assessed student work from a total of 948 which were completed in the last three years (academic sessions 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21) to test that students' assessed work reflects the relevant threshold standards. [ASSESS] The assessed work was representative of all the programmes delivered by the School.

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

7 As indicated in the section on how the assessment was conducted, all of the evidence submitted by the School [Annex 1] was considered by the team either before or during the visit. As such, several sources of evidence will have been considered to allow the team to make its judgement regarding the School's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions are outcomes-focused, the team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. This evidence and the reasons for scrutinising the evidence are outlined below:

8 To identify and understand how the School ensures that threshold standards for its programmes are consistent with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ), the team examined the University of Kent's qualification level descriptors [002] and their associated marking conventions for taught courses of study. [003] The team explored how these align with the University's General Regulations [004] and Regulations for Taught Courses of Study, [005] which include how Boards of Examiners make recommendations for progression and the award of degrees. The team also reviewed the content of programme specifications [022 a-c] to see how threshold standards are translated into the formal course record and to test that specified threshold standards are consistent with national qualifications' frameworks. To understand how the School translates this into practice, the team scrutinised a random sample of student assessed work [ASSESS] and assessment feedback, and met staff involved in assessment to test staff understanding of the School's approach to setting and maintaining threshold standards and how this manifests itself in assessment practice. [M1, M2, M4, M5]

9 The team scrutinised the University of Kent Code of Practice for Quality Assurance of Taught Courses [006] to further understand the external examiner function. To establish that the Code of Practice is effective and implemented as intended, and to help the team to understand how the School reviews data relating to external examiner reports, the team

examined external examiner reports for the last three years [054; 056; 058; 060] and the School's associated analysis and response to these. [055; 057; 059; 061]

10 The team reviewed external examiner reports to test that specified threshold standards are consistent with relevant national qualifications' frameworks. [054; 056; 058; 060]

11 To examine how the School ensures that its qualifications are consistent with those of other providers in the sector in which the School operates, the team considered the assessment matrix, grade and level descriptors, which set out agreed common terminology for the different types of assessment used within the member schools of the Conservatoire for Dance and Drama (CDD). [007a, 007b] The team looked in detail at a random sample of assessed student work and associated feedback provided to students [ASSESS] to ascertain that the level descriptors were being appropriately applied in the assessment process.

12 To better understand the context in which the School operates and to test that the validated programmes are consistent with sector-recognised standards, the team reviewed the Rambert School Assessment Matrix, [007a] Grade and Level Descriptors [007b] and the Post-Graduate Student Handbook 2020-21. [015]

13 The team also reviewed annual programme monitoring documentation [008 a-c] which the School carries out in conjunction with the CDD and the University of Kent to test that specified threshold standards are consistent with relevant national qualifications' frameworks.

### **What the evidence shows**

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

15 The University of Kent Academic Regulations for Taught Courses of Study [005] apply to the School programmes validated by the University. Similarly, the University's General Regulations for Students [004] detail the regulations governing the registration of students; registration of study and examinations; and a range of other expectations relating to the award of degrees, diplomas and certificates; and matters associated with student discipline. The University of Kent has adopted the qualification level descriptors as set out in the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ), published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) for all its programmes and associated regulations. These regulations have been contextualised into the University's Credit Framework for Taught Courses of Study Information for Students, Teachers and Examiners document [002] to ensure the consistency of application for the relevant stakeholders.

16 The University's qualification-level descriptors [002] and associated marking conventions for taught courses of study, [003] the definitions of which cover level descriptors 4 to 8 as set out in the FHEQ, exemplify the nature and characteristics of the main qualification at each level and provide clear points of reference at each level which describe outcomes of existing qualifications. As a member of the CDD, the School uses an assessment matrix, grade and level descriptors which set out agreed common terminology for the different types of assessment used within CDD's member schools to articulate outcomes in language that is consistent with the University's regulations and pedagogically useful for creative and performance disciplines. [007a-b]

17 The University's Academic Regulations for Taught Courses of Study [005] include detail regarding how the Boards of Examiners will make recommendations for progression and the award of degrees. The contents of programme specifications [022 a-c] confirm that

threshold standards are set at an appropriate level, consistent with sector-recognised standards for different levels of study. The specifications ensure that staff and students have a shared understanding of the threshold standards that apply for each level of study at the School, as confirmed through discussions with senior staff, [M1] Rambert 2 representatives, [M2] students [M3] and teaching staff [M4] who were clear about outcomes students were required to demonstrate to attain threshold standards. Students also commented on the helpful nature of the formative and summative feedback provided, observing that the feedback they received enabled them to understand the threshold standards that apply for each level of their studies. The team's consideration of the random sample of assessed student work [ASSESS] demonstrates that assessed student work is set at the appropriate FHEQ level and enables students to achieve the intended learning outcomes at the appropriate level.

18 The University's Code of Practice for Quality Assurance of Taught Courses [006] is a comprehensive document that details, among other things, how external examiner engagement enables the identification of good practice in learning, teaching and assessment, highlighting areas for enhancement and informing the improvement of courses. The team's review of external examiner reports for the last three academic years and the School's responses to them [054-061] showed that external examiners have been generally positive about the standards achieved and that the School provided considered responses to examiners' reports. The University and the School monitor and review external examiners' feedback, consistent with the University's Code of Practice for Quality Assurance of Taught Courses, [006] and examiners' comments and recommendations are used to drive improvement. For example, an external examiner had suggested that feedback should be further aligned with the language used in expressing the assessment criteria, and that there should be more parity between feedback reports in terms of length and structure. The School responded by refining the language used and created a rubric on its plagiarism-detection and assessment-submission software to specifically facilitate more coherent feedback, particularly on dissertations. [055]

19 The Post-Graduate Student Handbook 2020-21 [015] details the range of assessment methodologies and practice employed on programmes. To support this, and in conjunction with the CDD, grade and level descriptors were collectively devised for member institutions and are set out clearly with an agreed common terminology for the different types of assessment used within member schools. [007a-b] The common approach applied across the CDD's member institutions ensures that standards offered are consistent in the sector in which they operate. The team's scrutiny of assessed work [ASSESS] confirms this to be the case.

20 The School has effective Annual Programme Monitoring Report (APMR) processes and procedures in place which lead to the production of well detailed reports with clear identification of good practice, areas for development and actions for improvement. [008 a-c] For example, the School was keen to ensure that clear links are forged between undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. In the associated action plan the School noted that curriculum cross-fertilisation has occurred, particularly in relation to reflective practice and there has been an enhancement of both the undergraduate and postgraduate provision through research. [008a] Outcomes are cross-referenced to the University's requirements and to CDD standards and expectations, thus ensuring that the threshold standards for the qualifications awarded by the University are consistent with relevant national qualifications' frameworks.

## **Conclusions**

21 As described above, the team considered all of the evidence submitted [Annex 1] to form a judgement as to whether the School meets this Core practice. In making this



judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other assessments and remained outcomes-focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

22 From the evidence seen, the team considers that the standards set for the School's programmes are in line with the sector-recognised standards defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS's regulatory framework. The team also considers that standards described in the approved programme documentation are set at levels that are consistent with these sector-recognised standards and the academic regulations and policies that apply to the School's programmes should ensure that standards are maintained appropriately.

23 The team considers that, based on the evidence scrutinised, the standards that will be achieved by the School's students are expected to be line with the sector-recognised standards defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS's regulatory framework. The team also considers that the academic regulations and policies that apply to the School's programmes will ensure that these standards are maintained. The team considers that staff fully understand the School's approach to maintaining these standards and that the evidence seen demonstrates they are committed to implementing this approach.

24 The School applies the clear and comprehensive academic and framework regulations of its validating university. In addition, the School makes effective use of the CDD assessment matrix, grade and level descriptors which assist in contextualising assessment feedback for students. Approved course documentation demonstrates that specified threshold standards are consistent with relevant national qualifications' frameworks, ensuring that credit and qualifications are awarded only where the relevant threshold standards have been met.

25 The School's comprehensive and robust annual monitoring process demonstrates that staff understand their responsibilities for maintaining standards leading to qualifications of the University of Kent. The annual monitoring process enables staff to consider external examiner feedback and recommendations, and informs actions taken to ensure the maintenance of academic standards. External examiner reports confirm that the level of student work and associated assessment outcomes are consistent with the threshold standards of the qualifications awarded.

26 The team's observations and analysis of documentation, the assessment sample and discussions with senior staff, Rambert 2 representatives, students and teaching staff confirm that the threshold standards for the School's qualifications are consistent with relevant national qualifications' frameworks and therefore the team concludes that the Core practice is met.

27 Based on the evidence presented, scrutiny of documentation and sampling activity undertaken, the team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

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

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

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

### **The evidence the team considered**

30 The team assessed the evidence presented, both before and during the visit, to determine if the School meets this Core practice at a threshold level. The Guidance (paragraph 3) includes a matrix (Annex 4) which the team used to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other assessments and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a University of Kent Credit Framework - marking conventions for taught courses of study [003]
- b University of Kent Regulations for Taught Courses of Study [005]
- c Rambert School Assessment Matrix, [007a] Grade and Level Descriptors [007b]
- d Annual Programme Monitoring reports for 2018, [008a] 2019, [008b] 2020 [008c]
- e University of Kent Classification Conventions [009]
- f CDD Quality Handbook [021]
- g Staff-student meetings [031]
- h Minutes of the Academic Board, November 2019-June 2021 [032 a-f]
- i External examiner reports for the Foundation Degree and BA (Hons) Ballet and Contemporary Dance Degree for academic sessions 2018-19, [054] 2019-20 [056] and 2020-21; [058] for the MA Professional Dance Performance academic session 2018-19 [060] and the School's responses to these reports [055, 057, 059, 061]
- j Master Marksheets [2018-19, 062; 2019-20, 063; 2020-21, 064; MA Professional Dance Performance 2019-20 and 2020-21, 074, 075]
- k National Student Survey (NSS) results and comments [2018-19, 080-081; 2019-20 082-083; 2020-21, 084; 085]
- l Random sample of students' assessed work [ASSESS]
- m Observations of teaching and learning [TEACH]
- n Meeting with senior staff [M1]
- o Meeting with Rambert2 representatives [M2] and with teaching and professional support staff [M4]
- p Meeting with undergraduate and postgraduate students and alumni [M3]
- q The student submission. [137]

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

- No third-party endorsements from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies or Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical end-point assessments were available as the School does not run programmes requiring such endorsements.

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

32 The team considered a random sample of 124 pieces of assessed student work from a total of 948 which were completed in the last three years (academic sessions 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21) to test that students' assessed work reflects the relevant threshold standards. [ASSESS] The assessed work was representative of all the programmes delivered by the School.

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

33 As indicated in the section on how the assessment was conducted, all of the evidence submitted by the School [Annex 1] was considered by the team either before or during the visit. As such, several sources of evidence will have been considered to allow the team to make its judgement regarding the School's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions are outcomes-focused, the team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. This evidence and the reasons for scrutinising the evidence are outlined below:

34 To identify the School's approach to assessment design, marking and moderation, requirements for awards and approaches to classification as the underlying basis for the standards of awards, the team considered the academic regulations that apply to the School's programmes [005] and the associated marking conventions for taught courses of study. [003] The team also reviewed specific guidance and information on degree classifications provided by the University of Kent [009] and the School's assessment matrix, grade and level descriptors. [007a-b]

35 To assist the team in confirming how marking is recorded and to test that marks and awards given to students are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers, the team reviewed Master Marksheets, [062; 063; 064; 074; 075] sampled assessment outcomes for students' written work [ASSESS] and conducted lesson observations. [TEACH]

36 To better understand the process of marking and moderation for practical work, the team met senior staff, [M1] Rambert2 representatives, [M2] students and alumni [M3] and teaching and professional support staff. [M4]

37 To interrogate the robustness of the School's plans for setting and maintaining comparable standards, the team scrutinised in detail the content of the CDD Quality Handbook, [021] annual course monitoring documents, [008 a-c] minutes of the Academic Board [032 a-f] and staff-student meetings. [031]

38 To help the team to understand how the School sets and maintains standards, the team scrutinised external examiner reports [054; 056; 058; 060] and the associated School responses [055; 057; 059; 061] and NSS results and comments for the academic years 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21. [080; 081; 082; 083; 084; 085]

39 To check that external examiners confirm that standards beyond the threshold are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers, the team explored external examiner summary reports of the annual course monitoring documents [008 a-c] and comments relating to external examiner references throughout each report.

40 To help the team to understand how the School confirms that standards beyond the threshold are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK institutions, the team reviewed in detail external examiner reports for the last three years [054; 056; 058; 060] and

the associated institutional responses. [055; 057; 059; 061] The team met senior staff, [M1] students and alumni [M3] and teaching and professional support staff [M4] to understand their involvement in following up external examiner reports within the School.

41 The team also met students to test their understanding of what they need to do to reach standards beyond the threshold. [M3]

### **What the evidence shows**

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

43 The School's approach to assessment design, marking and moderation is clear and robust. In practice, assessment design and marking procedures are determined by the University of Kent as the School's degree-awarding body. As such, the School is required to follow the University's tested Academic Regulations for Taught Courses of Study [005] and associated marking conventions for taught courses of study. [003] In addition, the School's relationship with the CDD [021] has afforded it the opportunity to devise and use the CDD assessment matrix, grade and level descriptors. [007a-b] The grade and level descriptors [007a] provide clear criteria for grading outcomes and the assessment matrix [007b] allows assessors and students to track and determine assessment outcomes.

44 The School is conscious of potential grade inflation concerns, [M1; M4] and to ensure this does not occur it pays particular attention to the University's framework for assessment and classification. [002-006] This includes the use of external examiners and their reports [054; 056; 058; 060] and the School's own Annual Programme Monitoring Report (APMR) process to identify any potential issues in this respect. [008 a-c] External examiner reports [054; 056; 058; 060] provide comprehensive detail on a range of data points and observations, with clearly presented opportunities for development and the identification of good practice, which the School reflects upon in its formal response to each report. [055; 057; 059; 061] This then informs each APMR [008 a-c] which is used to drive through improvement and enable the sharing of good practice. [M1; M3; M4] External examiners confirm that standards beyond the threshold level are reasonably comparable with those in other UK providers and that qualifications are awarded only where those standards have been met.

45 APMRs contain summary detail of the external examiner reports and are used to inform senior management, teaching and support staff, and students of the key outcomes of external examiner activities and visits. [008 a -c; M1; M2; M3; M4] The Academic Board monitors areas for development and actions for improvement. [032 a-f] A range of useful data is evaluated as part of the APMR process. This data includes, but is not limited to, sector-wide comparable data from other CDD institutions; Academic Board; [032 a-f] staff-student meetings; [031] external examiner reports [054; 056; 058; 060] and associated School responses; [055; 057; 059; 061] and NSS results and students' comments. [080; 081; 082; 083; 084; 085] The team's scrutiny of this documentation confirms that the School has a mature and robust approach to the collection and analysis of external views and data relating to standards achieved by students which it plans to continue to use to inform improvements in setting and maintaining standards beyond the threshold.

46 The team's review of the Master Marksheets [062; 063; 064; 074; 075] and sampled assessment outcomes for written work during the visit [Assessment Sample] confirms that marks are appropriately arrived at and logged. Creative practical work is assessed through ongoing assessment to allow sufficient time for student skills development with practical teaching staff providing constant formative verbal feedback on student progress in class. [M3; TEACH] Students confirm that their constant interaction with staff regarding their practical skills development and the expertise that staff contribute to such development

enables them to meet the practical learning outcomes of their programmes. [M3] Formal assessment of practical work is agreed by panel moderation of the teachers of practical modules, [M4] whereas written work is marked and moderated by a wider pool of assessors, including four markers from within the School and nine individuals from external organisations, national and international universities and higher education institutions. [External Markers Sheet; M1; M4] The School encourages students to reach standards beyond the threshold supported by a range of extra coaching, guest lecturers, choreographers, the Rambert2 Company opportunity and regular verbal progress reports from their teachers. Students confirmed and welcomed the opportunities they have to achieve beyond the threshold and the School's commitment to invite experts, suggested by students, into the School to lead sessions. [M3] In addition, the student submission [137] strongly expressed how students are empowered to take initiative over their training.

## Conclusions

47 As described above, the team considered all of the evidence submitted [Annex 1] to form a judgement as to whether the School meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in the Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other assessments and remained outcomes-focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

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

49 The School has robust systems and processes in place to ensure the academic regulations and frameworks are consistently applied and that qualifications awarded to students meet or surpass threshold standards. To ensure this is understood by all staff these regulations have been contextualised into the University's Credit Framework for Taught Courses of Study to ensure the consistency of application. The processes for assessment design and marking are clear and understood by both staff and students. The School has adopted the CDD assessment matrix, grade and level descriptors to supplement those of the University of Kent, providing a common vocabulary for staff and students engaged in the assessment of creative practical work. This approach ensures that the standards defined in the definitive programme documentation meet or go beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers. External examiners confirm that the standards beyond the threshold level are reasonably comparable with those in other UK providers and qualifications are awarded only where those standards have been met.

50 Lesson observations and the team's consideration of assessed student work demonstrate that students receive helpful formative and summative feedback throughout their programme of study. The School uses highly skilled physical technique teachers and a pool of specialist lecturers from national and international universities to mark and moderate students' written work. This ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers. In addition, the opportunities afforded to them by the School serve to expand their knowledge and expertise in their exposure to extra coaching, guest lecturers, choreographers and the Rambert2 Company placement opportunity all add to ensure they are able to achieve beyond the threshold level expected.

51 Based on the evidence presented, scrutiny of documentation and the assessed student work considered, the team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

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

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

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

#### **The evidence the team considered**

54 The team reviewed the evidence presented, both before and during the visit, to determine if the School meets this Core practice at a threshold level. The Guidance (paragraph 3) includes a matrix (Annex 4) which the team used to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other assessments and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a University of Kent Level Descriptors [002]
- b University of Kent General Regulations [004]
- c University of Kent Regulations for Taught Course of Study [005]
- d University of Kent Code of Practice for Quality Assurance of Taught Courses Annex K: External Examiners and External Advisers for Taught Courses [006]
- e Annual programme monitoring reports, November 2018, November 2019, November 2020 [008 a-c]
- f University of Kent Code of practice for Quality Assurance of Taught Courses of Study, Annex O [010]
- g University of Kent Code of Practice for Quality Assurance of Taught Courses of Study, Annex P [011]
- h Conjoint Periodic review report, June 2018 relating to the Foundation Degree and BA (Hons) Degree in Ballet and Contemporary Dance [012]
- i Rambert School 'Working with Others' Handbook [013]
- j Rambert School Assessment Handbook [014]
- k Post-Graduate Handbook 2020-21 [015]
- l Critical Studies Marking Guidelines [016]
- m UG Admissions Policy 2022 entry, [017] MA Dance Research Admissions Policy, [018] MA Rambert 2 Admissions Policy [019]
- n CDD Quality Handbook [021]
- o Memorandum of Agreement between the University of Kent and the School, August 2019 [035]
- p Memorandum of Agreement between the University of Kent, the School and the Rambert Company, June 2018 [036]
- q External examiner reports [054,056,058,060]
- r Student submission [137]
- s Random sample of assessed student work [ASSESS]
- t Meetings with senior staff, [M1] those involved in the Rambert2 partnership, [M2] students and alumni [M3] and staff involved in teaching and providing non-academic support. [M4]

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

- No third-party endorsements from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies or Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical end-point assessments were available as the School does not run programmes requiring such endorsements.
- The team did not make a specific request to meet representatives from the University of the Kent on the basis that it had sufficient primary evidence to inform the team's assessment.

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

56 The team scrutinised a random sample of 124 pieces of assessed student work across programmes and years from a total of 948 which were completed in the last three years (academic sessions 2018-19, 2019-20 and 2020-21) to test that the standards of awards are credible and secure. [ASSESS]

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

57 As indicated in the section on how the assessment was conducted, all of the evidence submitted by the School [Annex 1] was considered by the team either before or during the visit. As such, several sources of evidence will have been considered to allow the team to make its judgement regarding the School's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions are outcomes-focused, the team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. This evidence and the reasons for scrutinising the evidence are outlined below:

58 To identify how the School ensures that award standards are credible, secure and maintained in accordance with University requirements, irrespective of where or how programmes are delivered, the team reviewed relevant University academic regulations and codes of practice, [005-006, 010-011] the CDD Quality Handbook, [021] the School's Matrix, Grade and Level Descriptors [007] and Annual Programme Monitoring reports. [08a-c]

59 To test whether the arrangements complied with the regulatory and policy framework governing the partnerships established, the team read the Memoranda of Agreement between the University and the School [035] and between the University, the School and the Rambert Company. [036]

60 To test the effectiveness of the partnership arrangements with Rambert2 and to assess whether the School's plans for securing standards in partnership work are credible, robust and evidence-based, the team reviewed the School's 'Working with Others' Handbook [013] and the CDD Quality Handbook, [021] and met staff involved in the Rambert2 partnership. [M2]

61 The team reviewed external examiner reports [054, 056, 058, 060] to determine whether examiners judged standards to be credible, thus confirming the effectiveness of the arrangements in practice.

62 The team reviewed a random sample of assessed student work to test that the standards of awards are credible and secure. [ASSESS]

63 The team met students and alumni to assess their views about the quality of



programmes delivered in partnership. [M3]

64 The team met members of staff involved in delivering programmes leading to awards of the University to test their understanding of their responsibilities to the University as the awarding body, and how these responsibilities are discharged and monitored in accordance with the respective Memoranda of Agreement. [M1, M4, 005, 035-036]

### **What the evidence shows**

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

66 The School has had a validation relationship with the University since 2005. It is also a member of the CDD, comprising several specialist, world-leading conservatoires in performance disciplines. The CDD is in the process of winding down as part of a managed phased out agreement and the School is working closely with the CDD to ensure a smooth transition to full independence by 2022 with minimal disruption for students.

67 The team found there is clarity in the responsibilities and working arrangements. In addition to being a member of the CDD, the School works in partnership with the University of Kent and with the Rambert Company to deliver programmes validated by the University. [035, 036] The relationship with the University is governed by detailed QA Codes of Practice and regulatory and academic credit frameworks. [002, 004-006, 010-011] These processes and frameworks are in line with sector practice and provide the necessary management and oversight of academic standards, including the arrangements for programme approval, management, delivery and assessment. [002, 004-006, 010, 011] Under these arrangements, the School is responsible for curriculum development, admissions and assessment with the University retaining ultimate responsibility for academic standards and exercising operational responsibility for the conduct of assessment boards, initial approval and periodic review.

68 As a validated partner, the University undertakes direct responsibility for administering the programme approval and periodic review processes and for providing oversight of assessment boards and the classification of awards. The School has direct responsibility for curriculum development, programme management and delivery, and the design and operation of assessment including marking and moderation. [008a-c, 010-012] The team found that the detailed and thorough annual monitoring and periodic review processes provide sound evidence of the School working effectively in accordance with the requirements of the University to ensure that high academic standards continue to be maintained. [008 a-c, 012]

69 In working towards independence from CDD, the School has adopted, with some adaptation and contextualisation, CDD's policies and procedures [CDD Quality Handbook 021] and has worked with CDD staff to ensure that its systems remain fit for purpose and comply with sector requirements. As part of its future plans to ensure currency and its continued alignment with the University's requirements, the School has adapted and developed additional guidance, including its 'Working with Others' Handbook, [013], Assessment Handbook [014] Critical Studies Marking Guidelines [016] and Admissions Policy [017-019] to reflect its particular context of operation as well as the role of the School and relevant delivery partner. The arrangements and role of the University, School and delivery partner are clearly set out and provide sufficient detail to ensure the standards of awards are credible and secure, irrespective of the method of delivery or who delivers them. [013]

70 The 15-month full-time MA Professional Dance Performance is delivered in conjunction with Rambert2 ballet company which provides students with placement combined with academic study opportunities. [Post-Graduate Student Handbook 015] A

Memorandum of Agreement sets out the respective responsibilities of the University, the School and the Rambert Company as the placement provider. [036] The Memorandum clearly sets out the University's ultimate responsibility for academic standards with the School retaining control over programme design, marking and assessment being the responsibility of the Head of Studies as the School's academic lead. [036, M1, M2]

71 Staff involved in the Rambert2 partnership [M2] were able to talk knowledgeably about their close and effective working relationships and their particular roles in working collaboratively. Both parties were clear about the School's role in retaining ownership of student assessment, the design of the curriculum and associated learning outcomes while Rambert2 provided the extended placement and training opportunity to work and perform alongside elite dancers, choreographers and other practising professionals. [M2]

72 While students work alongside other dance professionals in the Company with well established collaboration between the School and Rambert2, the School's retention of the ownership of student assessment enables it to exercise and demonstrate compliance with its own policies and the regulatory and quality assurance frameworks of the University. This includes Rambert2 staff undertaking continuous assessment, with the Programme Manager (who is a member of School academic staff) observing these assessments and having overall responsibility for moderation of assessment. Positive external examiner reports and the sample of assessed student work scrutinised by the team demonstrated that marking and moderation of assessment was followed in accordance with the University's requirements. [010, 011, 054, 056, 058, 060, ASSESS] The team considered that these arrangements are effective and secure because staff responsible for assessing students' work are familiar with the University's and School's requirements and understand their role in maintaining academic standards in working in partnership with others. [013]

73 Staff [M1, M4] demonstrated their understanding of their responsibilities for maintaining standards in accordance with the University's requirements. This is enabled by the collegial and inclusive culture evident within the School and the commitment to enabling student achievement, underpinned by effective monitoring of programmes and feedback received, [008 a-c] the external examiners' affirmation of the effectiveness of the assessment processes, and the outcomes of the June 2018 periodic review.

## **Conclusions**

74 As described above, the team considered all of the evidence submitted [Annex 1] to form a judgement as to whether the School meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in the Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other assessments and remained outcomes-focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

75 The School has effective arrangements in place to ensure standards of awards are credible and secure, irrespective of where or how courses are delivered, or who delivers them. Partnership agreements are clear and detailed and staff understand their responsibilities in maintaining academic standards within the overall framework and regulatory requirement of the University. The School has a good track record of partnership working with the University and complies with the University's regulatory and quality assurance requirements to maintain high academic standards. This is confirmed by external examiner reports and the team's consideration of the random sample of assessed student work, and the operation of assessment and marking in accordance with University Codes of Practice and Regulations to ensure standards are credible and secure.

76 The School has a detailed policy for working with collaborative partners and it

adopts a highly structured approach to partnership working. The School retains full control over all aspects of assessment and grading and the team had confidence in the robustness and credibility of these arrangements given the annual monitoring and review activity undertaken, the positive tenor of external examiners' reports and the assessed student work seen by the team. Meetings with School and the Rambert 2 staff members demonstrated clear understanding of their responsibilities for ensuring that the standards of its awards are credible and secure, irrespective of where or how programmes are delivered or who delivers them. The team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.

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

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

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

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

### **The evidence the team considered**

80 The team assessed the evidence submitted by the School before and during the visit to establish whether the School meets this Core practice at a threshold level. The Guidance (paragraph 3) includes a matrix (Annex 4) which the team used to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other assessments and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a University of Kent Level Descriptors [002]
- b University of Kent Credit Framework for Taught Course of Study Information for Students, Teachers and Examiners Annex 6: Marking [003]
- c University of Kent Academic Regulations for Taught Courses of Study [005]
- d University of Kent Code of Practice for Quality Assurance of Taught Courses Annex K: External Examiners and External Advisers for Taught Courses [006]
- e Grade and Level Descriptors [007a] and Assessment Matrix [007b]
- f Annual monitoring reports November 2018-20 [008a-c]
- g University of Kent Conventions for Classifications of Awards Guidance for Examiners 2020-21 [009]
- h Records of approval and Periodic Review Programme Review Report [012]
- i Rambert Assessment Handbook [014]
- j Rambert Post-Graduate Handbook [015]
- k Critical Studies (Foundation Degree) Essay Template [016]
- l CDD Quality Handbook [021]
- m Approved Course documentation including programme and module specifications [022a-c,109-113]
- n Academic Board minutes, November 2019 to June 2021 [032 a-f]
- o Memoranda of Agreement with the University of Kent [035] and between the University of Kent, the School and the Rambert Company [036]
- p MA Professional Dance Performance Validation Conditions and Recommendations 2017 [052]
- q External examiner reports [054, 056, 058, 060 and responses to these reports 055, 057, 059, 061]
- r Course summary documents [101]
- s Random sample of assessed work from both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes [ASSESS, 106 and 108]
- t Meetings with staff, [M1, M4] staff involved in the Rambert2 partnership [M2] and students and alumni. [M3]

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

- No third-party endorsements from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies or Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical end-point assessments were available

- as the School does not run programmes requiring such endorsements.
- Meetings with external experts were not required as no concerns emerged from the team's analysis of the written evidence presented.

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

82 See 'How the assessment was conducted'.

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

83 As indicated in the section on how the assessment was conducted, all of the evidence submitted by the School [Annex 1] was considered by the team either before or during the visit. As such, several sources of evidence will have been considered to allow the team to make its judgement regarding the School's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions are outcomes-focused, the team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. This evidence and the reasons for scrutinising the evidence are outlined below:

84 To establish how the University's assessment and classification procedures operate and how the School uses and plans to continue to use external expertise in setting and maintaining academic standards, the team scrutinised the University's regulations and policy frameworks governing assessment and classification including the University of Kent Level Descriptors [002] and Credit Framework for Taught Course of Study Information for Students, Teachers and Examiners Annex 6: Marking, [003] the University's Regulations for taught courses, [005] the University's Code of Practice for the Quality Assurance of Taught courses Annex K: External Examiners and Advisers, [006] and the University's Conventions for Classifications of Awards Guidance for Examiners 2020-21. [009]

85 To establish how the School uses external expertise to maintain academic standards to ensure that assessment and classification processes are reliable, fair and transparent, and to identify the University's views on the partnership with the School, the team reviewed the Memorandum of Agreement 2019 between the University and the School [035] and the periodic review report 2018. [012]

86 To test that external experts are used in accordance with the School regulations, policies and procedures that apply, the team reviewed the School's internal procedural and regulatory frameworks, including the School Assessment Matrix, Grade and Level Descriptors, [007a-b] the School Assessment Handbook [014] and the CDD Quality Handbook. [021] The team also reviewed course approval and periodic review records. [012, 052]

87 To test whether assessment and classification processes are clear and transparent for the programmes sampled, the team scrutinised approved programme documentation including programme specifications, [022a-c] module specifications, [109,110,113] course summaries, [101] student handbooks, [018, 038] the School Assessment Handbook [014] and the School's Post-Graduate Handbook 2020-21.[015]

88 To gain an understanding of external examiners' views about the reliability, fairness and transparency of the assessment and classification processes used by the School, the team reviewed external examiners' reports for the programmes sampled. [054, 056, 058, 060]

89 To establish how such reports are considered as part of the School's quality assurance processes, the team checked Academic Board minutes [032 a-f] and records of

annual monitoring. [008a-c] The team also scrutinised the responses made to external examiner reports [055, 057, 059, 061] to establish whether the School responds appropriately to external examiners' reports regarding standards.

90 To test that staff understand the role of external expertise in the University's assessment and classification processes and to clarify the arrangements governing marking and moderation, including arrangements governing the assessment of performance, the team met members of staff (including staff from Rambert2). [M1, M2, M4]

91 To establish how students regard the reliability, fairness and transparency of assessment and classification processes, the team met students. [M3]

92 To test that standards of work are credible and secure, the team reviewed a random sample of assessed student work. [ASSESS 106 and 108]

### **What the evidence shows**

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

94 Ultimate responsibility for the oversight of academic standards and the organisation and conduct of Assessment Boards is clearly set out in the Memorandum of Agreement and is supported by the University's regulatory framework [005] and detailed codes of practice, [002] University of Kent marking conventions [003] and University of Kent Conventions for Classifications of Awards Guidance for Examiners. [009] The University retains responsibility for the organisation and conduct of Assessment Boards with full representation from those with marking responsibilities.

95 Approved programme documentation, comprising programme specifications, module specifications, [109,110, 113] course summaries [101] and student handbooks, [014, 015] provides clear and detailed information on the range of assessment methods and learning outcomes and demonstrate appropriate alignment with FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements. [022a-c] The Rambert School Assessment Handbook [014] and the Post-Graduate Student Handbook [015] have been developed to inform student understanding of the classification and marking criteria and in response to earlier 2017 NSS results. [032b, 008 and M4]

96 Both the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Assessment Handbooks [014, 015] provide detailed and comprehensive information setting out the different components of assessment (including continuous assessment, performance assessment and academic assessment), their weightings and associated marking criteria. Full details of the University's Classification and Grading Criteria and marking and grade bands are included in the handbooks. [014, 015] This information serves as a helpful reference point for staff and students involved in the assessment process, ensuring that the assessment and classification processes are transparent and reliable as there is a shared understanding between the parties involved, and fair because the processes include a combination of peer assessment, staff assessment and external examiners to enable grades and final classifications to be awarded to reflect individual student achievement.

97 The team found that a positive longer term impact of the School's response to the Covid-19 pandemic has been that all learning resources and materials including policies and procedures are now also readily available through its Teams Portal, thereby providing a comprehensive repository for a wide range of information including University regulations, assessment and teaching and learning policies, [M4] providing further assurances regarding the accessibility of information available on assessment and grading criteria to students.

98 The team noted that the School had not received any academic appeals during the last three years and followed this up in the team's meeting with students and alumni who indicated that they believed the assessment and classification processes to be reliable, fair and transparent. [M3] Students and alumni who met the team were highly complimentary about the support they received, commenting on their continuous developmental feedback and indicating that they received very detailed information on the assessment, marking and classification processes with the Assessment Handbooks providing all relevant information. [M3]

99 The School has detailed articulated operational protocols governing the operationalisation of assessment, marking and moderation practice that is consistent with the University's requirements, which are well understood by staff [M1, M2, M4] and communicated to students. [014, 015] At foundation and undergraduate level, summative assessment is conducted by two examiners with final marks agreed by consensus, whereas live performance is conducted with internal assessors with the expectation that external examiners attend (or where necessary observe recordings) to aid any discussion and negotiations with external examiners, and only used as a last resort in terms where consensus cannot be reached. The team's scrutiny of external examiners' reports corroborates their role in attendance/observation at performance assessment.

100 There is evidence of the effectiveness of the School's implementation of processes in practice, including the thorough and effective annual course monitoring reports, [008 a-c] the external examiners' affirmation of the effectiveness of the assessment processes, and the outcomes of the June 2018 periodic review. [012] The sampling of assessed student work [ASSESS 106, 108] confirms that assessment, classification and awarding are conducted in accordance with the University's regulations and processes [003, 009] and the School's Matrix, Grade and Level Descriptors. [007, 108] More specifically, the team was able to confirm that the assessment criteria, marking schemes and level descriptors were clear, comprehensive [003, 007] and consistently applied. [ASSESS 106, 108] External examiners were particularly impressed by the meticulous approach to assessment but also the demonstrable high standards achieved, including both performance and academic theory based work. [054, 056, 058, 060] The randomly selected assessments further corroborated the high academic and professional standards achieved, [assess 106,108] which were in line with and sometimes surpassed those in the sector while maintaining the rigour of the University's assessment, marking and grading requirements in accordance with its regulatory frameworks. [002,003, 009]

101 External examiners have previously reported on issues relating to the consistency of feedback, prompting the introduction of a formalised template [016] that sets out feedback against grading and classification bands and is used for both marking and feedback. The robustness of the assessment of student work is consistently cited in conjunction with the high standards achieved in external examiners' reports. [058, 060] It was evident and corroborated by external examiner reports that the School had implemented improvements suggested in relation to the consistency of feedback to students, although some further scope for improvement remained. [058]The team was satisfied that the School responds appropriately, both to external examiner and student feedback, and is continuing to refine its approach, taking account of comments received.

102 External examiners' reports provided affirmative evidence and positive feedback on the consistent application of University processes for marking, moderation and classification and that academic standards and achievement were comparable to, and represented the highest standards of, other UK providers. [054, 056, 058, 060] At undergraduate level standards were consistently more heavily weighted towards the upper classification levels [008a-6] and represented a fair reflection of the standard of student work and performance. This was further corroborated by the scrutiny of randomly selected assessed work [ASSESS

106, 108] and compliance with the University's Credit Framework for Taught Course of Study. [003]

103 The team's consideration of the most recent periodic review of the BA and FdA programmes and course approval records demonstrates the effective use of external experts in compliance with the University's and School's regulations and policies/Codes of Practice Report of 2018 Periodic Programme Review and University's Code of Practice for Quality Assurance of Taught Courses Annex O, Approval and Quality Assurance Procedures for Collaborative Partnerships - Part 1 Development of new Partnerships. [012] The management and oversight of the entire validation process is undertaken directly by the University's Code of Practice for Quality Assurance of Taught Courses Annex O, Approval and Quality Assurance Procedures, [012] with external peer review being integral to the panel process and deliberations.

104 To date, the role of independent peer review has been extensive with the inclusion of University academic panellists and their appointed external academics in addition to panellists from CDD member institutions [012] and CDD Quality Handbook. [021]The School's primary reference is the University's own Code of Practice that it follows closely and is further evidenced from the CDD Quality Handbook [021] which it has adopted and, among other things, outlines the overall approach to programme development and validation. With regard to programme and curriculum development, the School consults its external examiners and wider stakeholders. The team considered that the School makes effective use of its links with the profession to inform programme monitoring, curriculum development and review with a specific emphasis on continuous updating and ongoing dialogue to reflect currency and evolving industry needs and to ensure that the standards of the awards made in partnership with others are fair and reliable. [M4]

105 Teaching staff demonstrated detailed understanding of the various operational processes relating to the marking of student work and provided a more detailed explanation of the process of panel-based marking used to assess performance. [M4] The School uses a combination of in-house and external 'faculty' staff for assessment and marking, with externals drawn from a range of national and internationally recognised HEIs. In relation to marking and moderation, the School has incorporated the use of both members of the School's academic staff, including those teaching and assessing professional dance techniques, and the wider pool of external assessors from other national and international universities with expertise in assessment, with specific responsibility for marking written and theory-based assignments. Senior staff indicated that the inclusion of external academic peers as part of the assessment team for theory-based student work provided externality while also serving to complement the School's own in-house expertise. [M1]

106 Teaching staff were knowledgeable on the School's assessment, moderation and classification processes, including any relevant operational differentiation between practice, written and performance components. They demonstrated their understanding of the role of external expertise in assessment and classification, both in relation to external faculty and specifically the role of external examiners as prescribed by the University and valued their feedback. [M4]

107 In discussion, staff confirmed that they continue to monitor the issue of assessment feedback and grading criteria recognising that assessment vocabulary and grading criteria are not straightforward concepts, particularly for students and particularly international students, recognising they need to continue to monitor this area as well as respond to feedback and ongoing dialogue with students [M4] and was further evidenced through the review of annual monitoring reports and academic committees APMR, [008] Academic Board [032] and Teaching and Learning Committee minutes [023] with significant levels of deliberation and consultation with the student body.



108 Students demonstrated awareness of the role of external examiners in the oversight of assessment and classification including their broader and at times developmental role, including during their visits. [M3] Students also confirmed they had access to their reports and responses and knew where to access them including through the Teams Portal. [M3] The review of annual monitoring reports [008] in conjunction with student representation on various committees and student meetings demonstrated the active participation and contribution of students to responses to issues arising from external examiners' reports and survey and module evaluation outcomes. [032a-e] [008] On the basis of the evidence, the team considers that the assessment and classification processes are reliable, fair and transparent and consistently applied in accordance with the University's degree classification conventions. [009]

## **Conclusions**

109 As described above, the team considered all of the evidence submitted [Annex 1] to form a judgement as to whether the School meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in the Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other assessments and remained outcomes-focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

110 The School uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent. There is clarity in relation to staff and student responsibilities and a shared understanding of the standards to be achieved, underpinned by formal Memoranda of Agreement between the parties involved and supported by regulations, policies and procedures that apply to partnership working thus ensuring that the standards of the awards made are credible and secure. The classification and regulations governing assessment are determined by the University and provide a clear framework that is effectively implemented in practice. Programme documentation, including information on learning outcomes students are expected to achieve and the assessment criteria to be applied provide clear, transparent and comprehensive information for staff and students involved in collaborative provision.

111 Records of periodic review and approval and review demonstrate that the role of external experts reflects the requirements of the University and the policies, originating with CDD, that have been adopted by the School. External examiner reports confirm that the assessment process and moderation processes are reliable, fair and transparent and implemented as required by the University. External examiners are used effectively in the maintenance and oversight of academic standards. Their comments regarding the partnership provision have been largely positive and the School has responded constructively to developmental feedback provided to inform future improvements. Students confirmed that they found the assessment and classification processes to be reliable, fair and transparent. The team concludes, therefore, that the Core practice is met.

112 Based on the evidence presented, scrutiny of documentation and consideration of the School's use of external expertise in setting and maintaining standards and how it seeks to ensure that its assessment and classification processes are reliable, fair and transparent, the team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

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

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

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

### **The evidence the team considered**

115 The team assessed the evidence submitted by the School before and during the visit to establish whether the School meets this Core practice at a threshold level. The Guidance (paragraph 3) includes a matrix (Annex 4) which the team used to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other assessments and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Rambert Undergraduate Admissions Policy [017]
- b MA Dance Research for Professional Practitioners Admissions Policy [018]
- c MA Professional Dance Performance Admissions Policy [019] and draft Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy [no number assigned]
- d CDD Admissions appeals and complaints Policy [020]
- e CDD Quality Handbook [022]
- f Memorandum of Agreement between the School and the University of Kent [035]
- g Approved course documentation including programme specifications and course summaries [065-071,101]
- h School Admissions Process [104] and information available to applicants [www.rambertschool.org.uk/courses/how-to-apply-for-all-courses](http://www.rambertschool.org.uk/courses/how-to-apply-for-all-courses)
- i Admission records/folder [ADMISS 107] and handwritten admission interview notes shared with the team at the visit
- j Meetings with senior staff, [M1] staff involved in the Rambert2 partnership [M2] and with teaching and professional support staff [M4]
- k Meeting with students and alumni [M3]
- l Module specifications at [www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/collaborative/validation/profiles/rambert.html](http://www.kent.ac.uk/teaching/qa/collaborative/validation/profiles/rambert.html)

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

117 The School does not employ recruitment agents and hence there was no evidence to request in relation to this aspect of Annex 4.

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

118 The team reviewed a random sample of 88 individual admission records comprising redacted applications and information incorporating personal statements and digital submission to test whether decisions on applicants were made fairly and consistently in accordance with the entry and admission requirements and specified admissions criteria.

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

119 As indicated in the section on how the assessment was conducted, all of the

evidence submitted by the School [Annex 1] was considered by the team either before or during the visit. As such, several sources of evidence will have been considered to allow the team to make its judgement regarding the School's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions are outcomes-focused, the team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. This evidence and the reasons for scrutinising the evidence are outlined below:

120 To understand the School's approach to, and management of, admissions and establish whether the admissions policy facilitates a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system, the team assessed the policies and relevant regulations governing admissions - Rambert School Undergraduate Admissions Policy, [017] MA Dance Research for Professional Practitioners, [018] MA Professional Dance Performance Admissions Policy, [019] and the School's admissions process. [104]

121 To establish how the School deals with admissions appeals and complaints, and the School's plans and proposed process for handling such appeals and complaints following its independence from CDD, the team reviewed the CDD Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy [020] and the draft Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy. [unnumbered]

122 To test whether programme admission requirements reflect the School's overall policies, and that information available to applicants (including programme entry and admission requirements) is consistent and transparent, the team reviewed the information available to applicants published on the School website.

123 To assess whether reliable, fair and inclusive admissions decisions were made for the applicants sampled, the team scrutinised a random selection of admissions records, [ADMISS] including some primary evidence by way of individual interview notes.

124 The team met senior staff [M1] and teaching and professional support staff [M4] to test that staff are appropriately skilled and supported and understand their responsibilities for ensuring that the admissions process is inclusive.

125 The team met students and alumni [M3] to test their experience of the admissions process.

### **What the evidence shows**

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

127 Comprehensive information about the programmes, entry requirements and application process, including audition arrangements and criteria, are readily available and accessible to all applicants and are published on the School's website [www.rambertschool.org.uk/courses/how-to-apply-for-all-courses](http://www.rambertschool.org.uk/courses/how-to-apply-for-all-courses). Programme specifications, [065,069, 071] module specifications [109-115] and course summaries [066, 068,070, 101] were detailed and consistent in terms of the formal entry requirements and accurately reflected the admissions criteria and were consistent with programme and university regulations. These documents also provided clear information about the role of the audition and/or other selection criteria within the admissions process. The team was therefore satisfied that information available to applicants is transparent, accessible and fit for purpose.

128 The School organises its admissions through direct application to the School coordinated by the Head of Registry who is also the first point of enquiry for applicants and

prospective applicants. The School has many years of experience in operating its admissions process, having had direct responsibility for the operationalisation of admissions from the University. [035] Programme entry requirements and selection methods, with student entry profiles, are continually monitored and updated in light of operational practice as part of the annual monitoring process with any relevant issues also being routed through Learning and Teaching Committee and Academic Board as appropriate. [008a, b and c] The School will also have direct responsibility for the ongoing development and monitoring of its own Access and Participation Plan following independence from CDD subject to approval of such plans by the OfS. [000, 017]

129 The School operates a contextualised admissions process with demonstrable commitment to inclusivity from the point of enquiry through to completion. [017- 019] Contextual data including POLAR and IMD data is maintained at the point of application, used and taken into account during the admission and selection process in relation to borderline applicants, and informs management information and monitoring. Equality and diversity data is consistently collected at admission through the requisite application form, [ADMISS 107] with such information also used throughout the admissions process. Careful attention is given to using disclosure of any disability or pre-existing mental or physical condition to ensure the admissions process (including auditions and interviews) are accessible. At the audition and interview stage careful attention is also given to identifying ongoing support needs, including those relating to managing any previous injury, throughout study so that students are adequately supported.

130 The admission records demonstrated consistent application of the contextualised admissions process and implementation of equality and diversity data to ensure the admissions process was fair and inclusive.

131 Separate admissions policies apply for the undergraduate provision, (incorporating the Foundation programme) [017] and for each of the MA courses - Undergraduate Admissions Policy, MA Dance Research for Professional Practitioners Admissions Policy [018] and MA Professional Dance Performance Admissions Policy, [019] thus providing a clear framework for the admissions process. Each of these policies provides information on the entry requirements and criteria and process on which applicants are assessed.

132 At undergraduate level, admission is based on audition and interview involving a two-stage process in which all applicants who fulfil the initial entry criteria and who pay an application fee are invited to the first stage, which comprises digital submission against a specified criteria incorporating a film of specified dance phrases and a dance improvisation creative task [104] that is assessed by the Principal and Deputy Principal. All applicants are also required to submit detailed information on their application form, including a detailed personal statement setting out their motivation to study at the School and to dance more generally as well as an essay or reflective report. [017] The second stage comprises an audition and interview. The overall outcome of the decision on each application is noted and recorded, although the team found that the retention of records of the individual and aggregated assessment against the audition criteria are less formalised with individual panel members noting, for example, consideration of applicant disclosures relating to disability or physical injury to assess support and access needs, demonstrating the consideration given to accessibility within the admissions process and concern to ensure that decisions made were fair and inclusive.

133 The separate Admissions Policies for each of the two MA programmes incorporate admissions criteria tailored to the distinctive nature of each programme and their associated learning outcomes. [018, 019] Both policies have been designed to ensure that the selection methods and their associated criteria are explicit, accessible and applied consistently to identify applicants with the relevant potential aptitude. For example, admission to the MA in

Professional Dance Performance is determined by audition and interview assessed by expert members of School staff and the placement provider, Rambert2. [019] By contrast, the MA Dance Research for Professional Practitioners is based on the written application (incorporating a personal statement and interview). [018]

134 The team's meetings with staff [M1, M4] and scrutiny of the random sample of admissions records, [ADMISS 105, 107] including audition and interview notes, demonstrated that this process was consistently followed for each applicant. Members of staff also spoke knowledgeably about their responsibilities including about the School's approach and their role in inclusivity. [M1, M4]

135 Students and alumni who met the team and the student submission confirmed that they were fully satisfied with their experience of the admissions process. [M3 and 137] This was because students found the admissions process accessible and straightforward to follow with members of staff readily available to answer queries and support applicants from initial enquiry through to audition and subsequent enrolment [137, M3]

136 Applicants have access to the CDD Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy, including a formal independent review stage, [020] which the School has adopted and plans to continue to use, with adaptations as required, following its independence from CDD. [137, M1, M4, M5] The team was confident that staff understood the requirements of the CDD Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy and were able to apply and implement these processes as required. No admissions appeals or complaints had been received but staff were familiar with the process that would apply in such cases.

137 In recognition of the inherent challenges associated with assuring independence in such a close and tight-knit community, an important feature of the CDD Policy is the facility to draw on independent externals currently used through a reciprocal arrangement with two other Conservatoire member institutions. Staff affirmed the importance of having retained this feature in the School's own policy that it had developed but which was subject to further review. [draft Admissions Appeals and Complaints Policy (currently not numbered) and M4 and M5] The team considered that provision of future access to Conservatoire members as well as the involvement of the recently appointed Registrar provided additional safeguards to support independence and to ensure admissions decisions and the consideration of appeals and complaints were fair and inclusive.

138 The main difference in procedure between the existing CDD policy and the School's policy post CDD was that applicants would lodge appeals or complaints directly to the School, although in practice this was not so significant given that all Stage One appeals and complaints were referred to the School for consideration with the nominated case handler assigned by the School Principal. [020, M4] The planned draft Stage Two process would have the additional benefit of expertise of the incoming Registrar and Head of Compliance who would either act as the Stage Two Reviewer or nominate an alternative reviewer, either from a member of the School or, where appropriate or relevant, an external from one of the two participating Conservatoire members not involved at the earlier Stage One.

139 Given that the policy originated with CDD, the team explored further the scope of the School's future plans to ensure the continuing currency and relevance of the policy. [M1, M4] The team learned that the School would be establishing a Policy Register covering all the School's policies with assigned dates for regular review. [M4] The incoming Registrar brings with them experience of working for CDD and has expertise in managing complaints and appeals. The team heard that a review of appeals and complaints, including those relating to admissions, was a priority area for further development. [M4] The team considered that the appointee's CDD experience and expertise should contribute to supporting a seamless transition to the School's new independent status.

140 All programmes are highly selective in terms of the ratio of applicants to places. For example, each year the School received between 400-500 applicants for some 40-50 undergraduate places while the MA Professional Dance Performance was extremely competitive attracting some 600-800 applicants for just 12 places. [M1 and APMR 2019-20 and 2018-19, 8b and c] Despite such competition, the School demonstrates a deep commitment to ensuring all applicants are considered on their merit taking full account of their potential, individual needs and commitment. [ADMISS 107] The overriding criteria at foundation and undergraduate level is based on performance and potential.

141 Staff who met the team spoke knowledgeably about the staged admissions process and how applicants are assessed and selected. They confirmed their involvement as admissions panel members in the second stage of the admissions process. As such, they assess student auditions and contribute to final selections, following panel discussions to reach consensus on each applicant. [104, M4] Staff indicated that specific emphasis is given, not only to ensuring that inclusivity is embedded throughout the process with appropriate adjustments being made as needed, but that the interview and screening of candidates explores how students can be supported throughout their studies. [M4] This is assisted by the School's encouragement to disclose anything that should be taken into consideration as early as possible in the recruitment cycle and at the point of application [017, 018 and 019] and admission. The team noted, for example, the School's use of a Physical Assessment Form and subsequent exploration with applicants to ascertain previous injury or mental health issues with consistent use of this process. [107, ADMISS 105, 107, hand-written notes shown to the team at the visit]

142 The team's scrutiny of the random sample of admissions records found that effective arrangements are in place to enable applicants to disclose as early as possible in the admissions cycle and subsequently, [107] thus ensuring that all applicants have the opportunity to demonstrate their ability and are not disadvantaged at any stage in the process and that appropriate support is put in place. It was evident to the team that the School is meticulous in following its procedure for screening applicants and exploring their needs in a supportive manner. [107]

143 Minimum English language requirements for international applicants are prescribed by the University [005] and admission records demonstrated these were consistently implemented in practice [107] thereby ensuring decisions were fair and reliable. Such requirements were also clearly set out in the promotional material to applicants and therefore clear and accessible. [www.rambertschool.org.uk/courses/how-to-apply-for-all-courses](http://www.rambertschool.org.uk/courses/how-to-apply-for-all-courses), 065, 069, 071, 104]

144 Students were highly satisfied with the admissions process and indicated that they received all relevant information at the right time and had access to advice and support throughout the process. [M3] They appreciated the availability of staff who supported and provided information and guidance and were readily accessible when needed.

## **Conclusions**

145 As described above, the team considered all of the evidence submitted [Annex 1] to form a judgement as to whether the School meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in the Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other assessments and remained outcomes-focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

146 The team concludes that the School has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system. This is because it manages the admissions process in accordance with its published

admissions policies and all decisions are made in accordance with published criteria and processes that are easily accessible to applicants. While the School has overall responsibility for the admissions process, it is subject to and follows the relevant University regulations including English language requirements for international applicants and applicants admitted by direct entry.

147 The detailed admissions process is reflected in the School's operational procedures encapsulated in its detailed admissions procedures and information available to applicants on its website rather than in separate formalised documentary plans.

148 Staff spoke knowledgeably about the admissions process and how the selection process including audition worked in practice. Students confirmed they had access to all the information, advice, support and guidance they required during the admissions process. Admissions records demonstrate that the admissions process, as set out in its Admissions Policies and the University's regulatory requirements, is followed rigorously. The audition criteria are clearly set out and published to applicants with second-stage auditions assessed by a panel, with panellists making individual assessments that inform a collective, panel-based decision for each applicant. The team concludes that the School has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system and that the Core practice is met.

149 Based on the evidence presented, scrutiny of documentation and the team's assessment of the sample of admissions records, the team considered that the School has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system and the team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

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

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

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

### The evidence the team considered

152 The team assessed the evidence submitted by the School before and during the visit to establish whether the School meets this Core practice at a threshold level. The Guidance (paragraph 3) includes a matrix (Annex 4) which the team used to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other assessments and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Annual programme monitoring reports [008 a-c]
- b University of Kent's Code of Practice for Quality Assurance of Taught Courses: Annex O, Approval of and Quality assurance Procedures for Collaborative Partnerships [010] and Annex P - Approval and Quality Assurance Procedures for Collaborative Partnerships - Part 2 Quality Assurance and Operational Management of Collaborative Partnerships [011]
- c PPR Report 2018 [012]
- d Rambert School Assessment Handbook [014]
- e Rambert Post-Graduate Handbook 2020-21 [015]
- f Student feedback template [016]
- g CDD Quality Handbook [021]
- h Course documentation including programme and module specifications [022,114-133] and course summaries [066,068,071,101]
- i Learning and Teaching Committee; staff-student meeting; and Academic Board minutes [023, 031, 032]
- j Memoranda of Agreement with the University of Kent [035] and between the University, the School and Rambert2 [036]
- k Critical Evaluation document Rambert School PPR [049]
- l External examiner reports [054, 056, 058, 060]
- m Student submission [137]
- n Meeting with students and alumni [M3]
- o Observations of teaching and learning. [TEACH]

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

- No third-party endorsements from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies or Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical end-point assessments were available as the School does not run programmes requiring such endorsements.

### How any samples of evidence were constructed

154 The team examined all approved course documentation for the validated programmes to test that all elements (curriculum design, content and organisation, and learning teaching and assessment approaches) of the programmes are high quality and that the teaching, learning and assessment design will enable students to demonstrate the



intended learning outcomes.

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

155 As indicated in the section on how the assessment was conducted, all of the evidence submitted by the School [Annex 1] was considered by the team either before or during the visit. As such, several sources of evidence will have been considered to allow the team to make its judgement regarding the School's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions are outcomes-focused, the team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. This evidence and the reasons for scrutinising the evidence are outlined below:

156 To establish the School's approach to designing and delivering high-quality courses, the team reviewed the University of Kent's Codes of Practice annexes relating to collaboration [010, 011] and the School's complementary policies to establish the School's approach to designing and delivering high-quality courses adopted from the CDD Quality Handbook. [021]

157 To test whether the programmes sampled are high quality and have a well designed curriculum, appropriate teaching and learning strategies and that assessment design enables students to demonstrate the intended learning outcomes, the team reviewed approved course documentation including programme and module specifications, [022] FdA programme specification, [065] BA programme specification, [067] MA Programme specification, [069] MA programme specification for Dance for Professional Practitioners and module specifications. [109-113]

158 To establish external examiners' views about the quality of the provision delivered by the School, the team scrutinised external examiner reports. [054, 056, 058, 060]

159 To identify students' views on the quality of their programmes, the team considered the student submission [137] and outcomes from formal evaluation mechanisms and discursive processes.

160 To test whether the quality of programme delivery is high quality, the team undertook a range of teaching and learning observations, including technique classes and theory sessions. [TEACH]

161 The team met students and alumni [M3] to gain student and alumni feedback about the quality of the programmes and their overall educational experience at the School.

162 The team met staff [M3] to establish how staff ensure that courses are high quality.

### **What the evidence shows**

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

164 The University has clear and detailed frameworks and codes of practice governing the formal approval and periodic review of programmes. [010] These are further supplemented by the CDD Quality Handbook which incorporates level descriptors [021] that provide greater contextualisation and ensure the appropriate alignment of programme learning outcomes to the discipline and academic levels of study. Within this framework and, in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement with the University, [035] the School has full responsibility for the course and curriculum development process while the University manages and coordinates the formal approval and periodic review process. These

processes and procedural guidance facilitate the design of high-quality courses and in developing its programmes the School adheres to the University's regulatory frameworks and codes of practice and its own detailed guidance. [021]

165 The team noted that a conjoint University and CDD panel which conducted a periodic review of the validated undergraduate degree programmes in 2018 confirmed confidence in the quality and standards of the provision. [012]

166 All programmes are subject to periodic review and annual monitoring with student and external feedback integral throughout the formal quality assurance processes and ensures the continued currency and high quality of the programmes. [008a-c] The wide range of student engagement mechanisms and informal sources of feedback also provide an important means of continuous improvement and supporting students throughout their learning [M3, M4, 023, 031 and 032] and contribute to the continued development of programmes including any proposed modifications.

167 The team found that the approved programme documentation including programme and module specifications and handbooks for students [014, 015, 022, 065, 067,069] provide detailed information on programme content and demonstrate mapping against learning outcomes. The level of detail and clarity regarding the teaching and learning strategies and what students are expected to achieve through assessment demonstrate that teaching, learning and assessment design enables students to demonstrate the learning outcomes. [014,015,022, 065, 069] Student retention and progression rates are high. [008b]

168 Academic standards are aligned with sector-recognised standards and external reference point standards and reflect the distinctive ethos of the programmes and the School's approach to teaching and learning. The provision of a conservatoire education is an important and distinctive feature of the programmes, which at undergraduate level also involves a balance between ballet and contemporary dance and is clearly articulated in the programme documentation and course summaries, [066,068, 071, 101] and Assessment Handbook. [114]

169 The School's philosophy is also predicated on the integration of theory and professional practice standards through intensive training and exposure to leading artists and professionals throughout the programmes, indicative of a high-quality learning experience. [014, 015, 038] This distinctive approach is well articulated in the programme documentation and demonstrates the programmes are high quality and enable students to achieve the learning outcomes. [014, 015, 022, 067 and 069]

170 External examiners' reports are highly complimentary about the quality of programmes and have consistently reported that high standards have been achieved in both practical and theory components. [054,056, 058,060] The care and thoroughness of the School in responding to external examiner reports supports continuous improvement and ensures that programmes continue to be well designed and of high quality. [055,057, 059, 061] Throughout the team's meetings staff were able to explain the distinctive ethos of the programmes including the specific emphasis on conservatoire training and how they ensured the currency of the curriculum and its responsiveness to the aspirations and interests of students.

171 Teaching staff explained that they have continually adapted programmes to ensure the currency of the programmes and to reflect developments in practice and technique through their extensive involvement with practising artists and through the research interests of staff and students. For example, staff spoke of their collaboration with Black Artists in Dance (BAiD), [M4] reflecting student feedback received and contributing to a greater sense of equality and diversity awareness within the dance profession. Student feedback gained

through the School's wide range of student engagement and consultative mechanisms [APMR 008a-c] has led to improvements in assessment and feedback, changes to content and broadening inclusivity by ungendered approaches to teaching and learning and greater inclusivity in dance roles and techniques. [016, 031] Students were particularly appreciative of the close-knit nature of the School community which enabled ongoing dialogue between the School and its students and contributed to informing continued improvement. [008,031, M3, M4] It was clear to the team that the encouragement given to students to reflect on the profession they are seeking to enter, their contribution to identifying individuals they would wish to see invited to the School to lead sessions on topics of interest to them, and the School's responsiveness to student opinion demonstrates a shared desire to ensure that the programmes offered by the School continue to be of high quality, retaining their relevance and currency.

172 Students indicated that they benefit from being taught by expert staff, many of whom have had distinguished careers as professional dancers or choreographers in their own right. Additionally, students value the opportunities the School provides to enable them to engage with professional dance companies and guest practitioners through 'Fresh Fridays'. Students also spoke highly of the opportunity for career support through the role of professional practitioners to prepare them for career auditions. [M3] The team considered that these sessions enhance the currency of training provided for students by exposing them to the latest developments in professional practice and providing opportunities to explore innovative styles and techniques. The team formed the view that such opportunities enable students to attain professional performance standards and prepare them for their careers.

173 The team's observations of teaching [TEACH] demonstrated that programme delivery at the School is of high quality. Teaching was well structured, clearly applied to the learning outcomes and incorporated formative in-class feedback both as a group and on an individual basis. Teaching sessions observed facilitated and achieved high levels of student interaction and engagement. For example, in practical observations students were encouraged to reflect on their performance, not only in terms of individual technique, but through critical reflection and observation including consideration of artistry, engagement with the audience and the performance as a whole.

174 Resources and equipment in practical classes observed were of professional performance standard and included the use of professional musicians with effective use of equipment made throughout. Students and alumni who met the team commented that the School resources and facilities surpassed those of some professional dance companies and contributed directly to the overall quality of their course and their own learning. [M3] The majority of students (100% for postgraduate programmes and 95% of undergraduates) were reported to have obtained positions as professional dancers or choreographers in national and internationally acclaimed companies or progress to further study. In the team's view, the overall teaching and learning ethos and environment at the School enables students to demonstrate the intended learning outcomes and attain both academic and professional performance standards.

## **Conclusions**

175 As described above, the team considered all of the evidence submitted [Annex 1] to form a judgement as to whether the School meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in the Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other assessments and remained outcomes-focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

176 The School complies with the requirements of the approval and periodic review

process by designing programmes that reflect external frameworks, including relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, as demonstrated by the outcome from the periodic review process that confirms the programmes are well designed and enable high standards of student achievement. Programmes are of high quality and have a distinct educational and dance philosophy and ethos based on professional practice and conservatoire training, maintaining a balance between ballet and contemporary dance and experimental forms. The School makes effective use of its close links with professional dance companies and the wider industry to inform programme development, both in terms of new programmes such as the MA Professional Dance Performance and the regular updating of programmes. Staff were able to talk knowledgeably about their close engagement with industry that enabled them to design and adapt programmes to reflect current practice, emerging techniques and the needs of the dance profession. The team concluded that this enabled the School to deliver high-quality programmes that are relevant to the needs of the profession and therefore directly contribute to student employability.

177 The University's codes of practice provide an appropriate framework to facilitate the design and delivery of high-quality courses. This framework is further supplemented and contextualised by the use of the CDD Quality Handbook which has been adopted by the School and provides further guidance to support programme development, including grade and level descriptors. There was clear evidence of adherence to procedural frameworks and guidance to ensure the design and delivery of high-quality courses in practice. Programme approval and periodic review processes incorporate external peer review and a student perspective.

178 The School has appropriately qualified staff, many of whom have previous professional experience or remain in practice and deliver a high-quality academic experience and professional practice standard. Students also have extensive access to professional dancers and choreographers through in-School performances, master-classes and guest professionals with such experience fully integrated across their programme. The recently validated MA Professional Dance Performance is recognised by students, prospective applicants and the profession as being innovative with students working permanently alongside the professional dance company. Teaching and learning facilities are of industry standard and, in conjunction with extensive student support, ensure that students receive a high-quality student experience. Observation of teaching and learning demonstrated effective and structured planning in terms of programme delivery and content clearly aligned to the learning outcomes with the participative engagement of students throughout.

179 The high quality of the School's programmes is endorsed by its external examiners who comment on the high standards achieved both academically and in relation to practice, reflected in the positive outcome of the conjoint periodic review process undertaken by the University of Kent and CDD, and in the views of the students, alumni and not least the wider dance profession. The graduate destinations are further testimony to the quality and relevance of the School's programmes and the professional performance standards achieved by its students. The team therefore concludes that this Core practice is met.

180 Based on the evidence presented, scrutiny of documentation and the team's observations of teaching and learning, the team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

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

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

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

#### **The evidence the team considered**

183 The team assessed the evidence submitted by the School before and during the visit to establish whether the School meets this Core practice at a threshold level. The Guidance (paragraph 3) includes a matrix (Annex 4) which the team used to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other assessments and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Staff Handbook [025]
- b Staff Induction Procedure [026] and Policy [079]
- c Undergraduate Student Handbook [038]
- d Learning and Teaching: Peer Observation, feedback and pedagogic knowledge exchange at Rambert School [047]
- e Rambert School Recruitment Policy [078]
- f School website [[www.rambertschool.org.uk/school/staff](http://www.rambertschool.org.uk/school/staff) accessed 16/10/2021]
- g Observations of teaching and learning [TEACH]
- h Meeting with senior staff [M1]
- i Meeting with Rambert2 representatives [M2] and teaching and professional support staff [M4]
- j Meeting with students and alumni [M3]
- k Student submission. [137]

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

- No third-party endorsements from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies or Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical end-point assessments were available as the School does not run programmes requiring such endorsements.

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

185 The team conducted five observations of teaching and learning [TEACH] covering different levels of study to test whether staff deliver a high-quality learning experience.

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

186 As indicated in the section on how the assessment was conducted, all of the evidence submitted by the School [Annex 1] was considered by the team either before or during the visit. As such, several sources of evidence will have been considered to allow the team to make its judgement regarding the School's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions are outcomes-focused, the team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reasons for scrutinising the

evidence are outlined below:

187 To determine the School's approach to recruitment, the team examined the School's Recruitment Policy [078] as identified in the Staff Handbook. [025] The team also met senior staff, [M1] teaching and professional support staff, [M4] and students [M2; M3] to discuss their involvement in the recruitment process.

188 To identify how the School inducts staff into their roles, the team scrutinised the Staff Handbook [025] and studied the School's associated Induction Procedure. [026; 079] The team also heard from senior staff [M1] and teaching and professional support staff [M4] about their involvement in the induction process.

189 To identify the roles the School has to deliver a high-quality learning experience for its students and to assess whether they are sufficient, the team considered the staff structure diagram included in the Staff Handbook. [025] The team also reviewed the School's undergraduate handbook [038] and website [[www.rambertschool.org.uk/school/staff](http://www.rambertschool.org.uk/school/staff) accessed 16/10/2021] to obtain details of the full range of leadership, management, academic and professional support staff team roles and headline responsibilities.

190 To confirm the quality of the teaching resource available to the School's students, the team discussed how the School seeks to ensure a high-quality learning experience in meetings with senior staff, [M1] Rambert2 representatives, [M2] teaching and professional support staff [M4] and with students and alumni [M3] and considered the student submission. [137] The team also observed teaching and learning [TEACH] to confirm the quality of the teaching resources available at the School.

191 To assess whether staff are appropriately qualified and skilled to perform their roles effectively, the team examined each person's detailed professional biographies and links to the associated programmes they teach on or support at the School website. [[www.rambertschool.org.uk/school/staff](http://www.rambertschool.org.uk/school/staff) accessed 16/10/2021] The team also discussed how staff members' professional practice informs teaching and learning with senior staff, [M1] Rambert2 representatives [M2] and with teaching and professional support staff. [M4]

192 To test whether academic staff deliver a high-quality learning experience, the team explored the School's approach to observations of teaching and learning and viewed a range of practical and academic sessions during the visit. [TEACH] The team also followed up reference to peer observation of teaching in the School's submission in meetings with the senior team and with teaching and professional support staff. [M1; M4]

193 To help the team to understand how observation of teaching and learning is used to maintain and improve standards, the School provided a document entitled: Learning and Teaching: Peer Observation, feedback and pedagogic knowledge exchange at Rambert School [047] which explains how observation is used. The team explored this further in meetings with the senior team [M1] and with teaching and professional support staff [M4] and sought students' views on the quality of teaching and learning they receive. [M2]

## **What the evidence shows**

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

195 The School's formal Recruitment Policy is referenced in the Staff Handbook, [025] and the policy itself clearly sets out the process for recruitment. [078] The policy details the process for designing the job description and person specification and includes the associated advertisement channels available. It also details the shortlisting and interview

process indicating that interview panels selected by the Principal involve at least two members of staff/trustees. The process for confirming and making an offer of employment is clear. [025; 078] Senior staff indicated that staff recruitment is based on the identification of gaps in expertise reflecting, for example, new thinking and developments in the profession candidate. [M1]

196 The team tested the effectiveness of the recruitment and selection process for new staff in meetings with the senior team, [M1] teaching and professional support staff [M4] and with students. [M3] The senior team explained that the need for a new post is identified on the basis of student numbers and/or a specified discipline need, for example a teacher of a specific type of contemporary dance technique. The team heard how staff [M1; M4] and students (past and present) [M3] are involved in the assessment process of new staff. For example, any new practical dance teacher will deliver a class with students and the students' thoughts and opinions on the session are reported to those making the appointment. The team considered this approach to be effective in supporting the recruitment and selection of appropriately qualified and skilled staff as final selection decisions are informed by the views of staff who would work alongside the new staff member as well as the views of students who can provide first-hand accounts of, and are well placed to comment on, their experience of the teaching skills demonstrated by potential appointees.

197 The School recruits teaching staff who are expert in their field, as demonstrated in the School's Undergraduate Handbook, [038] on the School's website pages, [www.rambertschool.org.uk/school/staff](http://www.rambertschool.org.uk/school/staff) accessed 16/10/2021] in meetings [M1; M3; M4] and through observations of teaching and learning. [TEACH] The School has a core team of 12 artistic and academic staff, many of whom continue to be practising artists. The team's examination of the professional biographies of staff on the School website found that all are practitioners who are expert in their field with notable professional credits to their name and many have postgraduate academic and professional qualifications.

198 The team heard that the core team is complemented by the use of guest teachers and choreographers (120 or so per year) and the collaboration with Rambert2, contributing to broadening students' experience, providing networking opportunities and preparing students for the profession. [M1-M4] Staff members explained that they use their own networks and industry links to bring in weekly external choreographers or instructors, describing how such sessions increase student exposure to new ways of moving, techniques and supports broader student development as an artist and individual. [M4] They considered that the integration of professionals and links with industry are fundamental to the conservatoire-education approach and ensures that students receive a high-quality learning experience that provides them with a highly effective professional foundation and platform on which to launch their careers. [M1, M2, M4]

199 The School has a staff induction procedure [079] which is also referenced in the Staff Handbook. [025] The induction procedure [026; 079] clearly sets out the induction process and the support mechanisms available to new staff as they familiarise themselves in their roles. For example, it details that line managers will also double as mentors for new staff during their first year of employment and will provide information and guidance on understanding and interpreting the School's policies. [026; 079] Coupled with the close-knit and collegial nature of the School, the team formed the view that the School's approach to induction is likely to support new academic staff. Staff who had recently progressed through the induction process [M4] confirmed that the comprehensive and locally defined programme, based on the level and knowledge of new employees' understanding of higher education and the School's policy and procedures, and those of the University and the CDD, is effective in supporting them in assuming their roles. [M1; M4]

200 In order to support teacher development and to monitor the quality of the students' learning experience, the School Principal and the Deputy Principal observe classes

informally on a regular basis. [047, M1, M4] Teaching staff have opportunities to observe one another delivering classes during assessment weeks when all staff watch a class and give feedback at the end. Teaching staff also observe classes given by guest teachers. This approach, in conjunction with the annual staff appraisal system, works in tandem to develop and improve the quality of teaching and learning to support the development of students' academic and professional skills. [M1; M4] The School's approach to peer observation, feedback and pedagogic knowledge exchange [047] is based on close staff interaction and regular communication between staff and with students enabled by the small size and close-knit nature of the School and facilities which provide opportunities to observe teaching informally and promote informal and formal dialogue with staff individually and collectively, as appropriate.

201 Core academic and artistic staff are encouraged to engage with the Higher Education Academy (HEA). One member of staff is a Senior Fellow of the HEA and two are Fellows. [M1; M4] The School's submission indicated that the School is supporting all teaching staff with the goal that they should all be at least a fellow of the HEA by the end of the 2021-22 academic year. Staff indicated that they welcomed the School's support for them to become at least fellows of the HEA. [M1; M4] Staff confirmed that the School supports staff in completing continuous professional development and provides financial support to enable them to pursue postgraduate study. [M4] The team considers that the School recruits appropriately qualified and skilled staff who understand the dance profession and the need to balance practice and theory in a way that enhances students' professional, academic and transferable skills through the delivery of a high-quality learning experience.

202 Students choose to apply to study at Rambert because of the excellent quality of training provided by the School. [137] The student submission [137] drew attention to the benefits of staff members' industry connections leading to guest instructors being brought in every Friday in students' second and third years of study. Students described how much this enhances their academic and practical experience as they are continuously introduced to new styles of movement and choreography techniques, which in turn expands their own understanding and supports the development of their own style and interests. They praised the quality of teaching and learning they receive and keenly noted teachers' professional backgrounds in preparing them fully for work in the industry. [M3] The team's observations of teaching confirmed that the School's approach to test whether teaching staff deliver a high-quality learning experience is effective and is in keeping with the School's aim to maintain a continuous dialogue with appropriate oversight, incorporating student feedback as well as providing opportunities for reflection, assurance and enhancement. [TEACH]

## **Conclusions**

203 As described above, the team considered all of the evidence submitted [Annex 1] to form a judgement as to whether the School meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in the Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other assessments and remained outcomes-focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

204 The recruitment and induction process of staff is robust and is operated effectively within the School's regulations and policies which support staff to successfully integrate into the School and support the delivery of a high-quality academic experience for students.

205 The School has an informal, but effective approach to assessing the quality of teaching and learning. Peer observation, continuous staff and student feedback, the School's programme of continuing professional development and staff appraisal system all impact positively on outcomes. Similarly, the Principal's own direct involvement in observing



all examples of teaching and learning combine to ensure continuous oversight and development and enhancement of teaching and learning at the School.

206 Staff who teach at the School, including guest teachers and choreographers who complement the expertise and experience within the School's core teaching team, are appropriately qualified and skilled to deliver a high-quality learning experience for the benefit of the School's students given their experience of the dance profession. The integration of professionals and links established with dance companies contribute to providing students with a solid basis from which to develop their subsequent careers. The team's observations of teaching and learning confirm that staff are appropriately skilled and qualified to deliver their subjects and that the students value the professionalism of staff and the preparation the teaching they receive gives them in succeeding in the profession. The team concludes, therefore, that the teaching staff deliver a high-quality academic experience for their students and the Core practice is therefore met.

207 Considering the evidence provided, the testimony of staff and students and the observations of teaching and learning undertaken, the team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

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

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

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

### **The evidence the team considered**

210 The team assessed the evidence submitted by the School before and during the visit to establish whether the School meets this Core practice at a threshold level. The Guidance (paragraph 3) includes a matrix (Annex 4) which the team used to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other assessments and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Periodic Programme Review Report [012]
- b Post-Graduate Student Handbook [015]
- c HR 2021 26 RS Staff Organisation Chart September 2021 [024]
- d Support Through Studies Policy [027]
- e Guide to Student Support [028]
- f CDD's Good Practice Guide to Inclusive Teaching [029]
- g CDD's Guidelines on Inclusive Practice and Alternative Forms of Assessment for Students with Specific Learning Difficulties [030]
- h Undergraduate Student Handbook 2021-22 [038]
- i External examiner reports [054, 056, 058, 060]
- j NSS Data and Comments [080-085]
- k PG Student Staff Meeting minutes [094]
- l Student submission [137]
- m Meeting with senior staff [M1]
- n Meeting with Rambert2 Representatives [M2]
- o Meeting with Students and Alumni [M3]
- p Meeting with Teaching and Professional Support Staff [M4]
- q Observations of teaching [TEACH]
- r Tour of facilities [TOUR]
- s Information on staff biographies and backgrounds.  
[\[www.rambertschool.org.uk/school/staff\]](http://www.rambertschool.org.uk/school/staff)

211 The team considered all of the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4.

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

212 See 'How the assessment was conducted'.

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

213 As indicated in the section on how the assessment was conducted, all of the evidence submitted by the School [Annex 1] was considered by the team either before or during the visit. As such, several sources of evidence will have been considered to allow the team to make its judgement regarding the School's ability to meet this Core practice. To

ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions are outcomes-focused, the team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reasons for scrutinising the evidence are outlined below:

214 To establish the nature of the facilities, learning resources and student support services available to students and to determine how they contribute to delivering a high-quality academic experience, the team considered the School's organisation chart, [024] viewed information on staff biographies and backgrounds on the School website, [[www.rambertschool.org.uk/school/staff](http://www.rambertschool.org.uk/school/staff)] toured the onsite facilities available, [TOUR] and undertook five teaching observations. [TEACH]

215 To assess whether the School has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for ensuring that it has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience, the team reviewed the Support through Studies Policy, [027] Guide to Student Support, [028] CDD's Good Practice Guide to Inclusive Teaching, [029] and CDD's Guidelines on Inclusive Practice and Alternative Forms of Assessment for Students with Specific Learning Difficulties. [030]

216 To identify students' views about facilities, learning resources and support services, the team considered NSS data and comments surveys, [080-085] PG Student-Staff Meeting minutes, [094], the Student submission, [137] and met students and alumni. [M3].

217 To identify other organisations' views about facilities, learning resources and student support services, the team reviewed the June 2018 Periodic Programme Review Report [012] and external examiner reports. [054, 056, 058, 060]

218 To test whether staff employed in student support functions are appropriately qualified and skilled and understand their roles and responsibilities in supporting the delivery of a high-quality learning experience, the team considered the information provided in the Post-Graduate Handbook, [015] Undergraduate Student Handbook, [038] and met senior staff [M1] and teaching and professional support staff. [M4] The team reviewed information about the roles of staff employed in student support functions to determine whether the roles are consistent with the delivery of a high-quality learning experience.

## **What the evidence shows**

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

220 Student support services comprise the Head of Admissions, Registry and Student Support; an admissions administrative assistant; an osteopath who leads the Screening, Treatment and Rehabilitation Unit (STRU), a Pilates and student support staff member, an English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) teacher, a new post of learning resource and academic support co-ordinator, careers and development and mentoring support and a team of external counsellors. Staff biographies and background information are available on the School website ([www.rambertschool.org.uk/school/staff](http://www.rambertschool.org.uk/school/staff)) and demonstrate the contribution they make to supporting the delivery of a high-quality learning experience to students. The Undergraduate and Post-Graduate Student Handbooks [038, 015] clearly detail the specific roles of staff within the School and highlight the special roles the Head of Admissions, Registry and Student Support, the Osteopath, the Pilates Instructor, and the English for speakers of other languages teacher play as part of the dedicated student support offered at the School.

221 Although these staff members are the key first points of contact for student support, all staff share responsibility for student welfare, and the School's open-door policy (physical

and virtual) enables students to approach any member of staff within the School about any issues they experience. [024] The team noted that the most recent conjoint periodic programme review (2018) undertaken by the University and CDD had concluded that 'there is a connected network of staff, who provide an exceptionally high level of support to students'. The report further commended the 'dedication shown to supporting students with language and cultural transition'. This dedication was confirmed by students who met the team who commented on the support provided for students who are non-native English speakers to enable them to engage with their academic studies. [M3] As part of the induction process, all overseas students complete a language assessment which ensures that the School is able to provide appropriate support with weekly English for Speakers of other Languages (ESOL) support classes, led by a member of staff dedicated to supporting ESOL students, to ensure that they consistently develop mastery of the English language alongside their practical and academic studies. [038, 015]

222 CDD's Guide to Student Support, which is designed for anybody seeking guidance on student support across its six member schools, [028] demonstrates a thorough and sensitive approach to student support. Common difficulties characterised by the umbrella term Specific Learning Differences/Difficulties (SpLDs) as well as Autism and Mental Health difficulties are covered in detail by CDD's policy. The Guide provides in-depth, easily digestible information on identifying and discussing learning difficulties, eating disorders and a range of other mental health illnesses. The Support Through Studies Policy [027] complements the Guide to Student Support [028] providing more detailed procedural guidance on supporting students who need additional help, often in relation to the specific learning requirements discussed in the Guide to Student Support. [028] These policies are reviewed at least every three years, enabling regular updates in line with changing sector practice and to support the students' changing needs.

223 The regular contact and high level of trust between the School's staff and students facilitates open dialogue and staff are well placed to identify behaviours which may indicate a possible student welfare issue, drawing upon their own experience and training to respond appropriately. The Head of Admissions, Registry and Student Support is also available to both staff and students as a resource when a possible issue is identified and the individual is unsure how to proceed. Beyond the onsite facilities to support students' physical health, the School offers a free confidential counselling service to students that takes place off-site, which is appropriate given the physical space available in the building and desire to respect the privacy of the student. [038, 015]

224 The team's tour of the School's facilities [TOUR] and its observations of teaching and learning [TEACH] enabled it to see how the facilities were utilised to develop students' academic and technical skills. The School's physical teaching and learning space includes five fully-equipped studio spaces with sprung floors, each with its own sound system, piano, barres and mirrored wall. The library houses 3,500 volumes and six computer spaces for students' use. There is also a Screening, Treatment and Rehabilitation Unit (STRU) and an outdoor gym and the team was told that there is also a Pilates room. [M1] The team found that the studios provided students with sufficient space and were equipped to enable students to evaluate their technique and follow the teaching staff member while the use of live musicians in class added an additional dimension to the learning environment experienced by students. During the tour, the team was told of plans, which had been disrupted by the pandemic, to further expand the workshop facilities available to students.

225 Staff indicated that they actively encourage students to disclose any learning difficulties or language support needs they might have at an early stage to enable appropriate and timely arrangements to be made to support them. The small size and close-knit nature of the School, coupled with the professional experience that staff bring with them, means that staff are well placed to identify those students who may need additional support

to enable them to achieve the academic and professional standards required of them.

226 School staff have first-hand knowledge of the industry and the expectations associated with studying in a conservatoire setting, and effectively utilise this to support student progression and career development. Students are encouraged to consider and reflect upon their end goal throughout their studies. Staff also use their industry-specific experience to provide students with careers advice and tailor careers-related activities for students in their second and third years of study, drawing upon their professional networks to bring in visiting professional dancers and choreographers as well as facilitating careers workshops to support students in developing soft-skills required as a professional dancer. Such activities include how to apply for company placements or secure funding from an arts funding council and supporting student development of resilience to enable them to cope with rejection, for example, as they progress through their subsequent careers in the profession. [M3] In addition, staff are able to assess the appropriateness of facilities and thus contribute to the development of the resources available to the School, to ensure students receive a high-quality learning experience. [M4]

227 Students stated that the resources, including multiple copies of programme material, available within the library, and a wide range of digital resources (available through the Athens login provided by CDD), is of particular use to students in completing research for written assessments. [M3] The team heard that discussions had been taking place between the School and CDD about how best to continue to provide access to appropriate learning resources when it leaves CDD and provision had been included in the budget to include the Athens service. [M1]

228 Students are engaged in discussions about the facilities, resources and support provided by the School, as demonstrated by the School's establishment of an outdoor gym from previously unused space, supplementing indoor facilities available to students. Alumni described the facilities at Rambert as industry-standard and stated that the provision available to them during their studies effectively prepared them to transition into professional employment within the industry. NSS data over the past three years shows that the School receives consistently high scores for questions relating to the appropriateness and accessibility of learning resources offered to students with over 90% agreeing that supporting resources facilitate their studies effectively [080, 082, 084] confirming the team's view that the School has sufficient and appropriate facilities.

229 The student submission [137] detailed how the School makes use of the Teams platform to host information (such as student timetables, assessment handbooks and academic support documents) and increase the accessibility of staff members who were said to be responsive to messages sent by students through the digital platform. Students highlighted that this was particularly helpful throughout the pandemic in enabling them to connect with one another and to maintain engagement with their studies despite the lack of access to the onsite facilities. [M3] Students across all year groups confirmed the accessibility of senior staff through the digital platform and described how they readily communicated with the Principal and Deputy-Principal throughout the pandemic to raise concerns and queries. Students provided comment on the access provided to Athens and stated that this digital resource is helpful in ensuring a high-quality academic experience as it enables them to connect with a wide range of source material as a part of their studies and assessed written work. [M3]

230 The team received a demonstration of the School's virtual learning environment (VLE), which showed how the School uses digital technology to support a high-quality academic experience. Students who met the team commented that they valued the efforts made by the School to support their learning, particularly during the pandemic, enabling them to remain connected to the School and engage in learning even without access to

onsite facilities. [M3] The value of the VLE resource to students was further demonstrated through the PG Student-Staff Meeting minutes which describe how students view the platform as it enhances the accessibility of the support resources offered by the School as well as supplementary course material which tutors used to facilitate an enhanced learning experience through student engagement with a broad range of source materials. [094]

231 The minutes demonstrated the School's commitment to ensuring that students have access to physical library resources and, where this is not possible, to facilitate access to resources offering appropriate alternatives such as digital PDF scans. [094] The team noted the School's support for students in engaging digitally with their studies, for example, by providing 'top-up' sessions on how to use the Teams platform effectively and its flexible use of digital software during the pandemic. The team found that the School has responded appropriately to supporting students to the best of its ability to mitigate the effects of the pandemic on students' access to resources and facilities. This responsiveness is indicative of the School's commitment to ensuring that students have access to facilities, learning resources and student support services which contribute to the delivery of a high-quality academic experience for its students.

232 The School submission indicates that, under the current arrangements with the CDD, students receive access to other institutions' libraries through an Athens log-in provided by the CDD which they use to explore source material for written assignments at all FHEQ levels. In readiness for the School's transition to independence from the CDD, it has recently agreed a new budget, which includes access to the Athens service and the Society of College, National and University Libraries (SCONUL), and the School has employed a part-time librarian to develop the physical and digital resources available to students. [M1]

233 The student submission [137] and the meeting with students [M3] confirmed that students regard the facilities, learning resources and student support services as sufficient and appropriate. Student comments indicated that the facilities available to them are industry-standard and consistent with providing a high-quality academic experience. In particular, students highlighted the studio spaces available and commented on how the School uses the space to support them in developing an understanding of how the breadth of space informs movement. The student submission [137] indicated that STRU is used to support students in recovering from injuries and mitigate the potential disruption to their ability to continue to study.

234 Students [M3] described how helpful staff are in ensuring their physical wellbeing and making sure that students can safely use the full range of facilities provided, including the Pilates room and outdoor gym, which have been specifically designed to supplement dance training. Students also confirmed that workshop spaces are available to book outside of officially timetabled slots, to enable them to make the most of the facilities provided. This was described as being particularly valuable in creating a high-quality academic experience by third-year students who stated that the space is essential for rehearsing their final-year solo and group performances. Alumni also commented that their experience of the facilities and learning resources available to them as students of the School had helped to support their professional development and prepared them to work in the profession. They also spoke of returning to the School to use the facilities available. [M3]

235 A strong theme in the student submission [137] and the meeting with students [M3] was how much students value School staff. Students confirmed that the School's open-door policy and staff accessibility help to ensure their emotional and physical wellbeing. The student submission also indicated that students consider that staff are appropriately qualified and committed to helping them reach their full potential. [137] Students view the student-staff body as part of a larger 'Rambert Family' which they explained is part of a wider community network which continues to support them beyond their time at the School. [M3] Students

supported the School's holistic approach to student support, including pastoral care, and confirmed that staff are appropriately trained to make appropriate adjustments to enable students to continue engaging with the practical and academic components of their programmes. [M3] The School's NSS data over the past three years demonstrates consistently that students consider the staff to be excellent communicators within their respective disciplines, engaging in delivering both taught and practical components of the curriculum and being accessible when they needed support. [080, 082, 084]

## Conclusions

236 As described above, the team considered all of the evidence submitted [Annex 1] to form a judgement as to whether the School meets this Core practice. In making this judgement, the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other assessments and remained outcomes-focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

237 The School has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality student academic experience. The team's tour of the facilities and teaching observations confirmed that the School's facilities are state-of-the-art. The School has considered the integration of student support measures into the main facilities, with the STRU onsite and osteopath available to assess and respond to student injury rapidly and appropriately. Students have access to both Athens and SCONUL, thereby expanding the resources available in the School library and the School plans to continue to provide access to these external library services following the end of its relationship with CDD. It has also employed a part-time librarian to develop the learning resources available to students.

238 The School is responsive to student support needs identified and there is a clear understanding about the respective roles and responsibilities of staff in supporting students. While there is a dedicated student support service, students may approach any member of staff within the School with any issues that they would wish to discuss. Staff are well placed to use their knowledge and experience of the dance profession to advise on the appropriateness of the School's facilities and resources to ensure students receive a high-quality relevant academic experience. Students are actively engaged in discussions about the facilities, learning resources and support provided by the School. The School is responsive to students' views, as demonstrated by the School's establishment of an outdoor gym from previously unused space, supplementing indoor facilities available to students. Alumni described the facilities at Rambert as industry-standard and helped them to prepare for the transition into professional employment within the industry. Students are positive about the facilities, learning resources and support services available to them. The team concludes, therefore, that the Core practice is met.

239 Based on the evidence presented, scrutiny of documentation and the team's direct assessment of facilities, resources and support services, the team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

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

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

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

### **The evidence the team considered**

242 The team assessed the evidence submitted by the School before and during the visit to establish whether the School meets this Core practice at a threshold level. The Guidance (paragraph 3) includes a matrix (Annex 4) which the team used to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other assessments and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Staff-student meeting minutes 2019-20 and 2020-21 [031]
- b Academic Board minutes [032a – 032f]
- c CDD Student Engagement Framework [076]
- d Student Voice Presentation [077]
- e NSS Data and Comments [080-085]
- f Focus Group minutes [086-092]
- g Minutes of the PG Student Staff meeting [094]
- h Student submission [137]
- i Meeting with students and alumni. [M3]

243 The team considered all of the key pieces of evidence as outlined in Annex 4.

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

244 See 'How the assessment was conducted'.

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

245 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider [Annex 1] was considered by the team either before or during the visit. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the assessment team to make its judgement regarding the provider's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

246 To identify and assess whether the School has credible, robust, and evidence-based plans for engaging students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience, and to establish whether the expectations set out in the CDD Framework were well implemented in practice, the team considered the CDD Student Engagement Framework [076] and reviewed staff-student meeting minutes 2019-20 and 2020-21 [031] and Academic Board minutes. [032a – 032f] The team also reviewed the training provided to student representatives through the Student Voice Presentation to establish how the School enables student representatives to be effective in their posts and engaged in enhancing the quality of the collective educational experience. [077]



247 To illustrate the impact of the School's approach and the result of student feedback, evidence was gathered from the Periodic Programme Review Report, [012] staff-student Meeting minutes 2019-20 and 2020-21, [031] Focus Group minutes [086-092] and minutes of the PG Student Staff Meeting. [094]

248 To identify students' views and assess whether students consider they are engaged in the quality of their educational experience, the team scrutinised the student submission [137] and met students and alumni. [M3] The team also considered NSS data and comments [080-085] over the last three academic years to establish whether the School's approach to engaging students is credible and robust.

### **What the evidence shows**

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

250 The CDD Student Engagement Framework [076] sets out in unequivocal language the principles and expectations of student engagement to ensure all member schools understand the importance of student engagement and specific role of student representatives. The framework describes in detail the provision member schools should have to facilitate student engagement. This includes the use of formal and informal feedback channels, transparent election processes and appropriate training for student representatives. It also sets out expectations for supporting student engagement on Staff-Student Liaison Committees and refers to the importance of closing the feedback loop with the wider student body to ensure students know how their feedback is addressed. [076] The framework additionally states the importance of including students in annual monitoring processes and provides member schools with a guide on what to cover when training their student representatives, [076] providing confidence that training materials are appropriately considered and relevant to each provider's context.

251 The School's representation structure is appropriately aligned with the CDD's expectations as set out in the Student Engagement Framework. [076] As part of the induction process, students are made aware of how student representation works at the School and they are encouraged to speak to the Head of Studies if they wish to self-nominate. Each year group elects two student representatives to distribute the workload and ensure that the diverse student body is effectively represented by the elected representatives. As part of nominating themselves students are expected to introduce themselves to their peers, making use of the VLE to inform their peers as to why they would be an effective student representative. Successful candidates are trained and attend Staff-Student Liaison Committee meetings, Academic Board and year-specific focus groups on a termly basis alongside the Racial Justice and Anti-racism Steering Committee which meets twice a term. [077]

252 Returning student representatives commented that the training was sufficient and that, upon completing their first year as a student representative, they did not feel they had anything constructive to add to the training provided. [M3] The team considered that the training provided for student representatives, which included how to communicate effectively with students and staff, process feedback, and develop understanding of the support available to students in their capacity as student representatives. Given the size of the School, student representatives are able to informally liaise with the students they represent and are accessible to discuss concerns with students between classes. Students confirmed the accessibility and effectiveness of their student representatives when raising issues or facilitating collective discussion, explaining that representatives organise student cohort meetings to discuss issues. [M3] Student feedback is also obtained through module evaluations at postgraduate level and through surveys and student focus groups. The School's open-door policy also provides students with opportunities to make their views

known to staff and the VLE provides a helpful means to share information with students and seek their feedback.

253 Training is provided for student representatives and the team found the student representative presentation slides [077] to be appropriate in content, interactive and relevant to the responsibilities of student representatives. The slides provide guidance on how to gather feedback from the students they represent, include examples of standard questions representatives may wish to use when speaking to their peers to ensure they are gathering a comprehensive picture of the student view for their respective year groups, and highlight the importance of closing the feedback loop with other students. As such, they should enable student representatives to fulfil their responsibilities effectively. In addition, the training covers meeting etiquette and instructs student representatives to signpost students wishing to disclose a personal matter to the appropriate staff member.

254 The CDD Student Engagement Framework [076] also details how the annual data gathered as part of the NSS may be used to measure the success of student engagement, drawing attention to particular questions (in NSS 2019-2021 questions numbered 23-26) providers should review when considering the effectiveness of their provision. [076] The NSS data evidenced that students view the opportunities to provide feedback on their course as appropriate, that they feel staff value their opinions about the course and that it is clear how student feedback is acted on as the proportion of students agreeing with each of these statements steadily remained above 95% over the past three academic years. [080, 082, 084] The supporting NSS comments [081, 083, 085] were reviewed to identify any trends or areas for further investigation; however, no areas were identified as additional commentary provided by students in response to NSS free text opportunities was consistently suggestions for further improvement, such as increasing onsite studio space, rather than complaints about existing provision. The only anomaly in the past three years were the comments provided for the last academic year 2020-21 [085] as these largely related to the disruption of the pandemic on the practical components of the course and the extent of the efforts staff at the provider displayed to ensure the student experience was minimally disrupted while they were unable to make full use of the studio space on campus.

255 Students co-chair meetings of the Staff-Student Liaison Committee and the compilation of minutes of these meetings [031] show positive engagement of all student representatives in the meetings, demonstrating that the School is responsive to the student voice. The team found that action points from the meetings are appropriately addressed between meetings, generally being resolved quickly with both staff and students contributing and offering solutions to issues raised. Academic Board minutes show that students attend regularly, enabling students to engage in constructive discussion with staff on academic governance matters having a bearing on the quality of their educational experience. [032] The team noted, for example, students' contributions relating to promoting inclusivity within the curriculum. Students and alumni who met the team provided confirmation that student representatives on the Academic Board are encouraged to participate fully with governance level discussions and that student representatives feel empowered to do so as full members of the Board. [M3] Additionally, staff explained that the VLE site is also used to share draft policy documentation with the wider student body to ensure that individual students are able to review drafts and provide feedback ahead of formal discussion at Academic Board. [M1] The team considered this approach to be particularly inclusive and supports students to engage individually as well as promoting discussion within the collective student body to support student engagement in the quality of their educational experience.

256 The Student Focus Group minutes [086-092] demonstrate, and the students confirmed, [M3] that the School is receptive to student feedback, for example, in making adjustments to the timetable and staff committing to exploring opportunities to allow for more effective use of the studio space. The minutes [086-092] show that there is open, honest

dialogue between students and staff and that, where requests could not be met, justification and appropriate alternative solutions were offered. The minutes also show that students are engaged in improving support resources available to them, requesting additional sessions from support staff on how to utilise the gym more effectively and how to better look after their physical health. Across the academic years there was evidence of collective engagement from students within the focus groups in enhancing the quality of 'Fresh Fridays', an opportunity facilitated by the School to bring guest choreographers in each Friday to deliver bespoke workshops to second and third year students. The School is conscious of the need to meet the changing requirements and expectations of the student body and is responsive to students' suggestions for improvement.

257 The Postgraduate Student-Staff Meeting minutes [093] provided evidence of honest dialogue about how lockdown has impacted the postgraduate student experience. Postgraduate students observed that the School had responded to concerns they had raised about their ability to meet assessment deadlines during lockdown with the School offering extensions to accommodate individual student circumstances. [M3] The minutes show that there is active engagement between students and staff with staff offering perspectives on topical issues or providing clarification regarding sector-wide challenges. The team found that the School respects and values student opinion and that there is meaningful dialogue between staff and students leading to change and improvements which enable students to benefit from a high-quality academic experience.

258 In reviewing the student submission [137] and meeting with students, the team was able to confirm that students consider they are engaged in the quality of their educational experience as the impact of student involvement was evident through multiple examples of tangible change made by the School in response. One such change related to the delivery of practical classes, whereby the School 'un-gendered' ballet classes and solo performances, enabling male students to participate in classes developing pointe technique and female students to attend classes to learn how to safely perform lifts. The School has also introduced gender-neutral bathrooms in response to student feedback to support non-binary members of the student body and ensure a culture of inclusivity. Students reported that this change was well received and part of an active discussion in the School to deconstruct and critically examine traditional expectations. The student submission [137] also discussed the introduction of the students' interest in 'anti-racism' work being brought into the School's agenda through sharing resources designed to provide students with a greater understanding of social issues and discrimination with the wider student body. An Anti-Racism and Racial Justice Steering Group made up of students, staff, and industry professionals has been established to ensure that the curriculum and teaching practice within the School is inclusive.

259 The student submission [137] provided evidence of the School improving onsite facilities in response to student feedback, as previously unused outdoor space was developed as an outdoor gym facility specifically catering to the needs of professional dancers in training. The student submission, [137] however, further indicated that the space would be inappropriate to use during winter due to the temperatures outside when resting between sets. Senior staff [M1] commented that they had previously considered providing heaters for the space but had discounted this possibility on environmental grounds and they stated that students have access to alternative indoor facilities, such as the Pilates room, if they want to use any of the gym equipment throughout the year. Students who met the team accepted the limitations of an outdoor gym in winter but indicated that the gym was well received and noted that indoor facilities, such as the Pilates room, provide an appropriate alternative in winter. [M3] The team considered that, although weather conditions in the colder months would necessarily restrict students' ability to use the outdoor gym, this was offset by other space being available for students' use within the School building during this period.

260 In reviewing the student submission [137] it was evident to the team that students are invested in creating positive opportunities within the School and view their role as one of generating ideas, rather than addressing pre-existing issues, as they already perceive the provision as sufficient. Two examples of such student-led initiatives are the introduction of a 'culture day' to celebrate the cultural background diversity within the School, and an event designed to provide an opportunity for students from different year groups to dance together in space where they would not normally be able to do so. Students told the team that the School is proactive in giving students access to the required resources, whether it is staff experience or physical workshop space, and explained that the School is always clear about the reasoning behind the decision, in cases where requests cannot be met, and works with students to find appropriate alternatives. [M3]

261 Students who met the team confirmed their representatives engaged with, and updated them, on how their feedback is actioned. [M3] Student representatives confirmed that they are appropriately trained to effectively represent the views of their peers and find the staff and student meetings helpful in facilitating positive discussion and constructive change within the School. [M3] The representatives present were also able to confirm that they have the opportunity to provide feedback to the School on the training they receive as part of the recruitment process, although caveated that they had not needed to as the training was already sufficient. The size and specialist nature of the School's programmes means that it is able to work with students on an individual as well as a collective basis to ensure that students' specific support needs can be taken into account. The high contact hours also ensure that staff are aware of individual student needs and are able to provide or signpost individual students to support available, as appropriate. Students confirmed that they feel comfortable raising issues with staff on an individual basis, rather than waiting for a focus group or survey to provide feedback [M3] and staff echoed this, indicating that the students are very proactive in providing feedback or raising any matters of concern. [M4]

262 Students confirmed that they view their student representatives as effective in representing their views at committees and at governance level, citing the two-way communication and overall transparency of the School's approach to handling and responding to student feedback as part of 'closing the feedback loop'. Final year students and alumni stated that their journey through their studies met their expectations entirely and there was nothing further they could want or ask for from the School. Postgraduate, first and second year students echoed this sentiment and stated that they view the School as enabling change and responding effectively to student feedback. [M3]

## **Conclusions**

263 As described above, the team considered all of the evidence submitted [Annex 1] to form a judgement as to whether the College meets this Core practice. In making this judgement, the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other assessments and remained outcomes-focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

264 The School actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience and has a clear and consistent approach to facilitating its achievement. The School actively engages students individually through module evaluations and surveys and collectively through its governance structures, including the staff-student meetings and Academic Board. The training provided to student representatives develops relevant skills enabling student representatives to be effective in gathering feedback and representing the views of their peers to individual staff members and at committee meetings.

265 Staff and students were able to provide examples of how student feedback

produced positive improvements to programme delivery, with both groups stressing the importance of engaging with the other regularly and constructively. Student representatives stated that they felt able to participate in governance-level discussions and were actively encouraged by the School to do so. The School uses digital technology to share draft policies with the wider student body to enable individual students to provide feedback and engage in improving the quality of their educational experience. In addition, the School makes use of focus groups to elicit student feedback and the open-door policy operated at the School enables students to provide feedback with staff members. The team concludes, therefore, that the Core practice is met.

266 The multiple avenues supported by the School to enable students to readily provide feedback ensures that the School actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their learning experience. On the basis of the evidence available, the team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

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

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

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

### **The evidence the team considered**

269 The team assessed the evidence submitted by the School before and during the visit to establish whether the School meets this Core practice at a threshold level. The Guidance (paragraph 3) includes a matrix (Annex 4) which the team used to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other assessments and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Postgraduate Student Handbook [015]
- b CDD's Student Complaints Policy and Procedure [033]
- c University of Kent Academic Appeals Procedure [034]
- d Undergraduate Student Handbook [038]
- e CDD Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Harassment and Related Behaviours [039]
- f Complaints and Appeals Case Log [045]
- g Student submission [137]
- h Meeting with senior staff [M1]
- i Meeting with Rambert2 representatives [M2]
- j Meeting with students and alumni [M3]
- k Meeting with teaching and professional support staff [M4]
- l Clarification meeting with staff. [M5]

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

- The School has not received any appeals for the last three years.

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

271 The team was able to review the complaints listed in the complaints log over the last three years given the number of complaints recorded therein.

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

272 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the provider [Annex 1] was considered by the team either prior to the visit, or at the visit itself. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the assessment team to make its judgement regarding the provider's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. This evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below:

273 To identify the School's processes for handling complaints and appeals and confirm

that these processes are fair, transparent, and accessible for potential and actual complaints, the team reviewed the CDD's Student Complaints Policy and Procedure [033] and the University of Kent Academic Appeals Procedure. [034]

274 To assess whether the School has credible, robust, and evidence-based plans for developing and operating fair and transparent procedures for handling potential and actual complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students, the team reviewed the Student Undergraduate and Postgraduate Handbooks [038, 015] and met senior staff, [M1] Rambert2 staff, [M2] and teaching and professional support staff. [M4]

275 To identify levels of complaints and appeals overall and by programme or type, the team examined a Complaints and Appeals Case Log (2018-21) [045] and discussed the overall case management process with professional support staff [M4] to ensure that any cases outlined were dealt with in a fair, transparent, and timely manner.

276 To identify students' views about the clarity and accessibility of information contained in the School's complaints and appeals procedures for both potential and actual complainants and appellants, the team considered the student submission [137] and met students and alumni. [M3]

### **What the evidence shows**

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

278 Under current arrangements, CDD holds overall responsibility for complaints procedures, but the School holds responsibility for the appropriate operation of these in accordance with the CDD Student Complaints Procedure. [033] The School is fully responsible for the informal resolution stage, sharing responsibility at the formal resolution stage with the CDD or another member Conservatoire School, as appropriate. A student who is dissatisfied with the outcome of a formal complaint ('Formal resolution' – Stage 2 of the procedure) may request a review of the decision under one or more of the grounds set out under Stage 3 of the Student Complaints Procedure ('Request for a Review'). Subject to satisfying the Complaint Appeal Reviewer that the case appears to meet one or more of the grounds, a Complaints Appeals Panel may review the complaint. The grounds for appeal are that there is new evidence which could not for good reason have been provided at the time of the investigation of the Stage Two complaint, and that sufficient evidence remains that the complaint warrants further consideration; and that evidence can be produced of significant procedural error in the investigation of the Stage Two complaint, including allegations of prejudice or bias, and that sufficient evidence remains that the complaint warrants further consideration. If the CDD Chief Executive Officer (or nominee) is satisfied that one or more of the above grounds have been met to warrant an appeal to be heard, a Complaints Appeal Panel will be appointed (with no involvement from staff at the complainant's provider) to review the case [033]. Students also have the right to submit 'Academic Complaints' to the University of Kent following the completion of the final stage of the CDD's Complaints Procedure and further escalate to the Ombudsman as appropriate.

279 The Student Complaints Procedure [033] follows the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's (OIA) Good Practice Framework. Academic appeals in relation to academic misconduct or suspension, for example, are managed by the University. The University's Academic Appeals Procedure [034] also follows the OIA's Good Practice Framework. Overall responsibility for managing and operating the student appeal process sits with the School's validating body, the University of Kent. The School has little involvement in managing the process once an appeal had been submitted. The appeals procedure clearly defines the grounds on which students can submit an appeal as well as what is not appropriate for consideration at each stage. [034] The procedures for complaints and

appeals are transparent. They are clearly set out and written in an easily digestible manner. They include well defined timescales for each stage of formal resolution which ensures that potential and actual complaints and appeals are treated consistently and fairly. [033, 034]

280 The Undergraduate and Postgraduate Handbooks [038, 015] provide students with a narrative version of the Complaints [033] and Appeals [034] Policies to ensure that key heading information, such as the stages of resolution and associated timeframes, is available at a glance. Additionally, the handbooks provide students with guidance as to what may constitute a complaint or appeal, including what will not be considered, and articulates any overlap these policies have with other policies the School has adopted, such as the CDD Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Harassment and Related Behaviours. [039] Students are required to review the information contained within the handbooks as part of the induction process. The team considers that the procedures to be applied in the event of complaints and appeals are fair and transparent, noting that the language used in both the formal policy documentation and informal simplified version contained in the student handbooks was sufficient, clear and helpful. Staff induction and the accessibility of staff members ensures that staff and students are aware of the procedures to be followed. Hyperlinks to the formal policies hosted by the CDD are embedded within the student handbooks which further supports the accessibility of resources and overall fairness of the process, as all students have access to the same information and have reviewed the handbook as part of their induction. Furthermore, the School uses its VLE site to host policy documentation as well as the student handbooks to facilitate access as students readily make use of the digital site daily as part of their studies, are already familiar with the Teams configuration and know where to look for essential information.

281 The School plans to adopt the CDD Complaints Policy and Procedure with some adaptation to make the process more School-specific when its relationship with CDD comes to an end. [M1, M4] The rationale behind this decision is to ensure consistency of approach and to ensure a smooth transition to independence from the CDD with minimum disruption for students who are already familiar with the policy and procedures which students consider to be fair and transparent. [M3] Staff were clear about their role and responsibilities with regard to complaints and appeals and confirmed that they were appropriately supported to understand the policies as part of the School's induction process. [M1, M4] The School has also recently recruited a new member of staff, who has worked for the CDD, to support the future development of the policy and procedures to be implemented by the School. [M5] The team considered the School's plans to further develop its already robust complaints and appeals processes to be credible given the nature of the expertise it has secured in further supporting its complaints and appeals procedures.

282 The School's Complaints and Appeals Case Log [045] evidenced that there have been no academic appeals submitted in the last three years, instead detailing cases which fall under the CDD Student Complaints Policy and Procedure [033] and, as such, the team examined these cases against the timescales and stages defined in the policy documentation. The provider confirmed that the responsibility for managing the appeals process is shared jointly between the School and the University, with additional clarification that the details of academic appeals would be recorded separately from their own student casework record. While the Case Log described 12 non-academic misconduct cases, they were, for the most part, linked and could be grouped into two distinct case groups, separated by academic years.

283 The cases were considered separately by the School to ensure that the process was conducted in a fair and transparent manner. By managing the cases separately, it ensured full transparency about the process with the individuals involved, keeping them informed about progress at each stage, the associated timescales and ensuring that sensitive information was appropriately managed. Given the nature of the allegations, the



outcomes received by students reflect the availability of evidence in each case. The team considered the responses made to be proportionate. The team noted that students received timely outcome letters in line with policy expectations and further noted that the School took appropriate precautionary measures to protect the parties involved until sufficient investigation had concluded and outcomes had been received. Lessons learned from the School's experience of complaints had led to staff receiving additional training relating to the School's Support Through Studies Policy [027] to ensure that information shared between staff within the School was only done so where relevant and essential. [M4] Students who met the team confirmed that they found the process to be well managed and that staff provided support, as appropriate.

284 The student submission [137] spoke of the School's commitment to ensure open dialogue with the student body and the multiple communication channels it provides to do so. Students [M3] confirmed that they are aware of the policies and procedures that apply to complaints and appeals, as summary information is contained within the student handbooks [038, 015] and covered in a presentation from the School as part of the induction process. Students in all year groups confirmed that the policy documentation is easily accessible, with hyperlinks to each policy contained in the student handbooks [038, 015] directing students to the full policies hosted by the CDD. [038, 015] They also confirmed that the procedures are clear and transparent, knew who they should speak to if they wanted to raise a complaint or appeal, and stated that guidance would be provided without requiring students to justify their request.

285 Students who need to submit a formal complaint or appeal are allocated a staff member to provide pastoral support and ensure understanding of the process. Students described the support provided as 'extensive and individual'. [M3] Students confirmed that the School maintains dialogue with students who have lodged a complaint or appeal to ensure they are kept 'in the loop' and have appropriate expectations regarding the possible outcomes of submitting a complaint or appeal.

## **Conclusions**

286 As described above, the team considered all of the evidence submitted [Annex 1] to form a judgement as to whether the School meets this Core practice. In making this judgement, the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other assessments and remained outcomes-focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

287 The School confirmed its plans to adopt the CDD's Complaints Policy, with some adaptation of language to better fit the School's circumstances. Its plans to develop fair, transparent and accessible complaints and appeals procedures are robust and credible and are reflected in the appointment of a new member of staff with both CDD experience and expertise in the area of complaints and appeals to further develop the policy documentation and procedures for handling complaints and appeals.

288 The complaints log demonstrated that complaints had been dealt with according to the School's procedures. Policies and procedures governing complaints and appeals are fair, transparent and accessible to all students. The stages for complaints and appeals are specified with clear timeframes to deliver timely outcomes, and it is made explicit how students can appeal a decision. Students have access to the policies through multiple channels, including the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Student Handbooks [038, 015], through the VLE and the School website. Staff support is available to ensure that students understand the procedures involved, timescales and possible outcomes.

289 Students consider the complaints and appeals procedures to be fair, transparent, and accessible. They also confirmed the commitment of staff to support student understanding and to act impartially. The team's review of the complaints log confirmed that the outcomes in each case were evidence-based and in line with the expectations of the School's policy. The team concludes, therefore, that the Core practice is met.

290 Based on the evidence presented, scrutiny of documentation and the team's review of the complaints log, the team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

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

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

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

### **The evidence the team considered**

293 The team assessed the evidence submitted by the School before and during the visit to establish whether the School meets this Core practice at a threshold level. The Guidance (paragraph 3) includes a matrix (Annex 4) which the team used to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other assessments and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Annual Programme Monitoring Reports (APMR) [008 a-c]
- b University of Kent Quality Assurance Procedures for Collaborative Partnerships [010]
- c University of Kent Approval and Quality Assurance Procedures for Collaborative Partnerships [011]
- d Working with Others Policy Handbook [013a] Appendices 1-3 [013 b-d]
- e Working with Others Handbook [013e] Framework for Due Diligence
- f Memorandum of Agreement between the University of Kent and Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance 2019 [035]
- g Memorandum of Agreement between the University of Kent and Rambert School of Ballet and Contemporary Dance and Ballet Rambert Ltd (trading as Rambert Company) MA [036]
- h External examiner report [060] and School response [061]
- i Meeting with Rambert2 representatives [M2]
- j Meeting with students and alumni. [M3]

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

- No third-party endorsements from professional, statutory and regulatory bodies or Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical end-point assessments were available as the School does not run programmes requiring such endorsements.

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

295 The team considered examiner reports for the Foundation Degree and BA (Hons) Degree in Ballet and Contemporary Dance and for the MA Professional Dance Performance to establish external examiners' views about the quality of the programmes delivered in partnership and to confirm the effectiveness of the underpinning arrangements.

## Why and how the team considered this evidence

296 As indicated in the section on how the assessment was conducted, all of the evidence submitted by the School [Annex 1] was considered by the team either before or during the visit. As such, several sources of evidence will have been considered to allow the team to make its judgement regarding the School's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions are outcomes-focused, the team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reasons for scrutinising the evidence are outlined below:

297 To assess how the School ensures that programmes are high quality, irrespective of where or how they are delivered or who delivers them, the team examined the formal arrangements for partnership working between the School and the University of Kent. [035; 036] The team also explored the University's Quality Assurance Procedures for Collaborative Partnerships [010] and Approval and Quality Assurance Procedures for Collaborative Partnerships [011] documents.

298 To establish that the School has credible, robust and evidence-based plans to ensure a high-quality academic experience in partnership work, the team considered the School's own Working with Others Handbook [013a] and associated policies, procedures, its mapping against the UK Quality Code [013 b-d] and the School's Framework for Due Diligence. [013e] To understand the operation of the relationship with Rambert2, the team explored the relationship and opportunities in detail with School and Rambert2 staff involved. [M2]

299 To test the effectiveness of the agreements underpinning the partnership arrangements established, and to understand action taken by the School in response to external examiner reports, the team reviewed the external examiner summary reports of the annual programme monitoring documents (AMPRs) [008 a-c] and comments relating to external examiner references throughout each report.

300 To confirm that external examiners consider the programmes delivered in partnership to be of high quality, the team reviewed external examiner reports, including those relating to the MA Professional Dance Performance [060] and the School's response to this report. [061]

301 To understand how the placement opportunities offered to students involved in the Rambert2 placement are operated effectively, the team considered the views of students [M3] and those of the Rambert2 creative and management team. [M2]

## What the evidence shows

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

303 There are clear, comprehensive and up-to-date policies in place to ensure effective management of its partnership with Ballet Rambert Company Ltd. [010, 011, 013a-e] A formal Memorandum of Agreement, serving as the overarching agreement for the partnership between the School and the University, is in place [035] and there is an associated Memorandum of Agreement between the University, the School and the Ballet Rambert Company Ltd (Rambert2), [036] which is a sister company of the School, relating specifically to the MA Professional Dance Performance programme. The School's Postgraduate Programme Manager works with the Senior Research Director from the Rambert Company who works with School staff to ensure that the agreement between the University, the School and Rambert2 [036] is successfully delivered. The School's Head of

Studies is responsible for ensuring that the School's obligations to the University, as set out in the overarching agreement [035] is met. The School is ultimately responsible for all aspects of the recruitment and selection of students. To that end, a senior member of the School is involved in auditions and interviews.

304 The University's Quality Assurance Procedures for Collaborative Partnerships [010] and Approval and Quality Assurance Procedures for Collaborative Partnerships [011] govern the quality assurance of the programmes and provide an effective structure for the management of the provision. Supplementing these procedural documents, the School has also developed its own comprehensive Working with Others Handbook. [013a] The Handbook sets out broad principles and guidelines that the School follows to ensure that the various parties involved in partnership working and work-based learning understand their respective responsibilities for quality in line with sector standards [13b-d] and the School's Framework for Due Diligence. [013e] The framework covers four types of activity: one-off infrequent short-term ad hoc activity; continuous basis planned short-term activity; continuous basis short-term ad hoc activity; and continuous basis planned long-term activity. Completion of a formal risk assessment, collation and sharing of a School Information Factsheet plus relevant assessment-related information to the placement organisation is required, together with any requests for reasonable adjustments. Other aspects include the need to see insurance policies and health and safety information and defined regular formal and informal communication between parties.

305 The team heard that Rambert2 is a professional dance company related to the Ballet Rambert Company Ltd and produces high-quality professional work as a stepping stone into the world of professional dance. Dancers at the School are able to apply and audition for roles in the Company. The placement is for students on the MA Professional Dance Performance programme. Staff at the School and Rambert2 effectively tutor the students through the placement and assessment only figures in the work the students produce and the report Rambert2 send to the School regarding the students' practice. The School's Postgraduate Programme Manager liaises internally with the Head of Studies to identify and coordinate opportunities available to students. The Senior Research Director from the Rambert Company works with the School team to plan the delivery of assessment and agree each other's roles within the assessment framework to ensure learning outcomes can be met. [M2] Students engaged on placement consider their experience on placement with Rambert2 to be of high quality. [M3] The team heard that the experience very much helps students to develop as dancers and prepares them effectively for working in the industry. [M3] While the team saw no documented discussion of the student academic experience in relation to the Rambert2 placement opportunity by the University, the team noted that the University receives external examiners' reports (which are extremely positive) and the associated responses made by the School to these reports.

306 The Annual Programme Monitoring Reports (AMPRs) and associated School action plans for improvement [008 a-c] provide summary comments on the findings of external examiners which are broadly positive about the level of academic work and are very complimentary about the level and quality of practical work observed on the MA Professional Dance Performance collaborative programme. [060; 061]

## **Conclusions**

307 As described above, the team considered all of the evidence submitted [Annex 1] to form a judgement as to whether the School meets this Core practice. In making this judgement the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other assessments and remained outcomes-focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

308 Up-to-date partnership agreements are in place between the School, the University of Kent and the Rambert Company (Rambert2). The agreements are managed in accordance with the School's regulations and those of the University to ensure that the academic and practical experience for students on placement is of high quality regarding all aspects of the provision delivered in partnership.

309 There is effective communication between the School and Rambert2 about the provision of placement opportunities to students. Both parties understand their roles in the support of students on placement and the assessment of placement learning. Students previously engaged in, or those considering engagement with, Rambert2 praised the learning experience afforded to them, considering it a high-quality professional learning opportunity. External examiners' reports relating to assessment and student outcomes for the Rambert2 placement confirm that the academic experience is also of high quality. The team therefore concludes that the Core practice is met.

310 Based on the evidence available to the team and the positive impact the placement opportunity has on student outcomes, the team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

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

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

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

### **The evidence the team considered**

313 The team assessed the evidence submitted by the School before and during the visit to establish whether the School meets this Core practice at a threshold level. The Guidance (paragraph 3) includes a matrix (Annex 4) which the team used to ensure that the evidence considered was assessed in a way that is clear and consistent with all other assessments and focused on relevant outcomes. A list of the key pieces of evidence seen by the team is below:

- a Rambert Assessment Handbook [014]
- b Postgraduate Student Handbook [015]
- c Support Through Studies Policy [027]
- d CDD Guide to Student Support [028]
- e Attendance Policy [037]
- f Undergraduate Student Handbook [038]
- g CDD Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Harassment and Related Behaviours [039]
- h Code of Conduct and Behaviour [040]
- i Code of Ethics [041]
- j Non-Academic Misconduct Policy [042]
- k Inclusivity Policy and Protocols: Tackling Racial Inequality [043]
- l Student submission [137]
- m Meeting with senior staff [M1]
- n Meeting with Rambert2 representatives [M2]
- o Meeting with students and alumni [M3]
- p Meeting with teaching and professional support staff [M4]
- q Observations of teaching [TEACH]
- r Random sample of assessed student work. [ASSESS]

314 The team considered all of the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4.

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

315 The team considered all students' views expressed in the student submission, [137] internal and external surveys, and in module and programme evaluations to identify students' views about student support mechanisms.

316 The team scrutinised a random sample of assessed student work [ASSESS] to test whether students are given comprehensive, helpful and timely feedback.

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

317 As indicated in the section on how the assessment was conducted, all of the evidence submitted by the School [Annex 1] was considered by the team either before or during the visit. As such, several sources of evidence will have been considered to allow the team to make its judgement regarding the School's ability to meet this Core practice. To

ensure consistency in decision-making and to ensure that those decisions are outcomes-focused, the team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reasons for scrutinising the evidence are outlined below:

318 To identify the School's approach to student support, including how it identifies and monitors the needs of individual students, the team reviewed the Support Through Studies Policy, [027] Guide to Student Support, [028] the Attendance Policy, [037] the Undergraduate Student Handbook [038] and the Post-Graduate Student Handbook. [015]

319 To assess whether the School has credible, robust and evidence-based plans for ensuring that all students are supported to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes, the team reviewed the Post-Graduate Handbook, [015] Undergraduate Handbook, [038] the CDD Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Harassment and Related Behaviours, [039] Rambert School Student Code of Conduct & School Code of Behaviour, [040] Rambert School Code of Ethics, [041] and the Inclusivity Policy and Protocols: Tackling Racial Inequality. [043]

320 To identify and assess students' views about student support mechanisms, and whether students who have made particular use of support services regard them as accessible and effective, the team reviewed the student submission [137] and met students and alumni. [M3]

321 To test whether students are given comprehensive, helpful, and timely feedback, the team considered the Rambert School Assessment Handbook, [014] Attendance Policy, [037] student submission, [137] reviewed a random sample of assessed student work [ASSESS] and met students and alumni. [M3]

322 To test whether staff understand their responsibilities, the School's approach to supporting student achievement and to establish that staff are appropriately skilled and supported, the team met senior staff, [M1] Rambert2 Representatives [M2] and teaching and professional support staff. [M4] The team also conducted observations of teaching.

323 As highlighted, all of the evidence submitted by the School [Annex 1] was considered by the team either before or during the visit. As such, several pieces of evidence will have been considered to allow the assessment team to make its judgement regarding the School's ability to meet this Core practice. To ensure consistency in decision making and to ensure that those decisions focused on outcomes, the team considered the key pieces of evidence outlined in Annex 4 of the Guidance for Providers. These key pieces of evidence and the reason for scrutinising them are outlined below.

### **What the evidence shows**

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

325 The Support Through Studies Policy [027] provides clear steps staff are expected to take where individual student support needs are identified and well defined stages of response to do so. The Attendance Policy [037] outlines the importance of viewing a student's journey at the school holistically and although the policy aims for all students to achieve 100% attendance, it also recognises that absence is sometimes inevitable. The Attendance Policy [037] and the Support Through Studies Policy [027] put particular emphasis on supporting students emotionally and physically, as well as academically, and provides examples of where it is necessary to support students to take a break from their dance studies to recover from physical or mental illness.



326 Staff work as a team, using individual staff members' particular skills set to maximise the offer to students. The team was told that staff share information to enable the School to act to accommodate individual students' needs, whether these relate to physical injury, mental health or unexpected events. The School tests for learning disabilities at the point of induction to ensure that students receive the support they require as early as possible, with lecturers then able to use this information to provide appropriate accommodations and support when students are completing assessed work. Staff discuss student progression at the beginning and end of each academic year, considering the reflective analyses submitted by students as part of their assessed work, to ensure that the provision is effectively supporting them in securing successful academic and professional outcomes.

327 The CDD Guide to Student Support [028] provides guidance to students as to the support that can be expected and accessed during their studies (examples include, but are not limited to, appropriate onsite adjustments for physical disabilities, tailored learning plans to accommodate learning difficulties, counselling and mental health services to support general student wellbeing as well as financial support which may be offered to support students living with disabilities) and underpins the School's specific policies and codes [039-043] to ensure inclusive practice. The Guide [028] augments the School's specific procedures and seeks to contextualise common student support in conservatoires. The Guide [028] supports an inclusive culture within the School as it emphasises supporting all student groups by providing staff with general guidance on how to recognise issues which may impact on a student's ability to study as well as how to respond appropriately and provide effective support. The evidence considered in the School's policies and guides creates a picture of a School whose learning environment is welcoming and conducive to achievement of successful academic and professional outcomes.

328 The Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Harassment and Related Behaviours [039] and the Inclusivity Policy and Protocols: Tackling Racial Inequality [043] ensure that students and staff are welcomed into a safe environment with a zero-tolerance policy on discrimination and related behaviours. The policies are well structured and easily digestible with defined roles and stages to manage expectations and inform the reader appropriately. Students confirmed that these policies were easily accessed, and that staff were available to support and address any queries with no justification required on behalf of the student. [M3] The team considered that these policies provide all students with a commonly shared understanding of the School's expectations for their behaviour and conduct through the duration of their studies. This ensures that students feel comfortable engaging in practical workshops where often students may be physically very close and, as such, should expect to maintain appropriate boundaries and be treated with respect. They further support students in achieving successful professional outcomes as the conduct expected during their time at the School is aligned with industry expectations that fellow professionals should be treated with respect, irrespective of background.

329 While the policies form the backbone of the School's approach to supporting successful academic and professional outcomes by ensuring a safe inclusive culture within the School, the School actively engages students through partnerships with Black Artists in Dance (BAiD) and facilitates an Anti-Racist Curriculum Working Group to promote active dialogue within the student body and explore barriers to student engagement as a community. Students commented that they valued such activities which effectively prepared them to transition into industry, where they would be expected to work with professionals from diverse backgrounds collegiately. [M3]

330 The Undergraduate and Postgraduate Handbooks [038, 015] reference the comprehensive support networks that are in place for all students. For undergraduate students, the peer-mentoring programme and tutor groups provide significant pastoral

support, whereas postgraduate students are mentored by the programme lead. All undergraduate students have termly meetings individually with the lead tutor for ballet, lead tutor for contemporary dance, and with the Head of Studies, which further solidifies the School's consistent approach to holistic support throughout the student journey.

331 Both student handbooks [038, 015] provide a clear breakdown of staff roles and responsibilities within the School as well as guidance to direct queries or concerns to the appropriate staff member. Teaching staff are well established industry professionals with appropriate experience to teach within a Conservatoire context. Students described how much they valued the interconnectedness of the curriculum as staff members were quite often taught by the dancers they studied (or their pupils) as part of their critical studies, enabling students to connect with the history of the art and of the School itself. [M3] As part of the induction process, staff are trained by the Deputy-Principal, who holds responsibility for ensuring understanding of the School's policies and its holistic approach to student support. The handbooks contain concise information about the support services available at the School and examples which students may wish to seek support in addressing.

332 School staff work collaboratively as part of a broad student support network to ensure that students are effectively supported to achieve the academic and professional outcomes expected of them. Although students receive specialised academic support from lecturers, they are able to approach any staff member for individualised feedback or support on written or practical assessed work. This is, in part, due to the School's open-door policy but is enabled by the well qualified and experienced staff who support student progression. [M4] All students are required to familiarise themselves with the student handbooks as part of the induction process, which provides a clear and effective way of communicating the support measures available to them throughout their time at the School. The Undergraduate and Postgraduate Handbooks [038, 015] also outline the progression routes across all programmes, enabling students to plan their academic journeys alongside their tutors and, as such, facilitating successful academic outcomes.

333 Students confirmed that the School's policies are readily accessible, signposted and communicated appropriately. [M3] They also commented that they know which staff members are available to support their understanding of the School's policies and commented that the open-door policy is helpful in ensuring the accessibility of the support measures available. Students understood the School's requirement that they disclose any special support needs at the time of admission for reasonable adjustments to be provided to enable them to succeed. School staff know their students and are responsive to individual student needs.

334 The student submission [137] detailed how the use of digital resources has enabled final year students and alumni to connect with audition opportunities and commented that these resources had been especially helpful during the pandemic where opportunities were significantly reduced. Postgraduate students described how helpful the virtual site has been in enabling networking within the cohort, as often responsibilities, such as full-time employment or childcare, limit the ability of students to consistently engage. Postgraduate students also described how teaching staff treat them as peers as much as students, which they feel is appropriate for the level of study. [M3] Postgraduate students also confirmed that the introduction of deadline flexibility and extensions during the pandemic enabled them to continue to engage with their studies and secure successful academic outcomes. [M3]

335 These measures ensure that potential barriers are mitigated and, while supporting students to achieve successful professional outcomes, it also facilitates successful academic outcomes as students continue to be motivated to engage with their studies and projects aligned to their particular areas of interest. The School also supports students to achieve professional outcomes through facilitating career sessions and workshops in the latter

stages of their study to support student progression to employment or further study. The workshops are tailored towards enabling student professional development and addressing the expectations of the industry. They include sessions covering how to write funding proposals, apply for auditions and what to expect at interviews.

336 Alumni explained that the careers support offered by the School does not stop on graduation. Alumni continue to have access to opportunities and resources via the Teams platform and are able to access the physical resources the School has on offer, such as the workshop space to rehearse or practise. Alumni also commented that the School invests in their professional development by offering opportunities to lead classes to obtain practical teaching experience. [M3] These measures provide effective support for students to achieve successful professional outcomes as they are encouraged to look outward at an appropriate point in their studies. Students are also encouraged to develop their own professional network as they engage with visiting choreographers and guest lecturers who may provide employment opportunities post-graduation.

337 Second year students explained that careers guidance is also extended to their year as it is not uncommon for students to be offered placements whilst studying. [M3] Staff explained [M4] that the careers guidance is appropriately tailored to the year of study and stressed that 'not all placements are equal' and able to meet the learning goals the School has associated with training and studying in second year. Students stated that staff do not prevent them from taking opportunities, but rather support them in considering any opportunities before making an informed decision. [M3] In the team's view, this demonstrates the School's commitment to ensuring professional outcomes for students as individuals with different goals and interests. First year students were clear about why these resources were not currently offered to them as they are expected to focus on developing their technical skills and understanding of anatomy. [M3]

338 The student submission [137] provided student testimonials regarding the accessibility of the Screening, Treatment and Rehabilitation Unit and supportiveness of staff in creating tailored recovery programmes appropriate to a given student's circumstances. Students stated that post-injury they receive support from teaching staff in setting and meeting modified targets for practical classes and were monitored to ensure the success of their recovery. Students considered that the recovery support offered by the School enables them to look after their body beyond their studies, as they learn how to understand their own body and in turn support their own recovery. [M3]

339 Students spoke highly of the support they received to support their physical and mental wellbeing, developing transferable skills which they could apply to their subsequent careers. Alumni particularly emphasised how the support measures at Rambert developed emotional resilience and that, looking back, it was clear that teaching and professional support staff used their own personal experience to anticipate challenges students would face and effectively prepare them to respond. Both groups stressed the importance of developing personal resilience due to the uncertainty of the industry and competitive nature of auditions. Students considered that the School's promotion of critical reflective analysis of their own development and progression, fostered through the close-knit staff-student links, design of practical components and written assessments, stood them in good stead. They stated that there was nothing more they could have asked from the School to better prepare them for professional work within the industry, something that undergraduate and postgraduate students echoed regarding their own experience with the School to date. [M3] Staff and students engage as equals when training, which supports students' long-term professional development as they leave well placed to work alongside professionals in the industry, having already done so in the course of their studies.

340 Students are supported to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes

through a programme and module design structure that facilitates linkages between theoretical concepts and practical skills and competencies. The School supports successful academic outcomes for students through the provision of formative and summative feedback, as part of assessing both practical and academic components of the curriculum. The Assessment Handbook [014] sets out the timeframes which students can expect to receive formative feedback on written work, with the minimum expectation that students receive comprehensive feedback at least two weeks before the final submission deadline. The handbook describes different types of feedback depending on whether the assessment is practical or academic and defines the key points in the academic year when students can expect to receive formal feedback (that is, after tutorials, submission of written assessments, after performances and at the end of each semester).

341 The culture of the School is such that students receive constant informal feedback from staff 'during class, group feedback after an assessment or solos, and personalised feedback either written or through tutorials'. [137] Students reported that they receive regular reminders from staff that they can request personalised feedback at any time and felt comfortable approaching staff to do so. [M3] The observations conducted of practical teaching delivery in both ballet and contemporary classes showed the School's culture of open dialogue and continuous feedback as students sought clarification and guidance in real-time to ensure they were able to engage fully with the lesson content. Students reported that they are satisfied with the level of feedback staff provide during and post classes and stated that there is sufficient time allotted in the timetable to enable students to engage with staff after classes to seek clarification, if necessary. [M3]

342 The student submission [137] indicated a split in student view regarding the consistency of feedback provided through one-to-one tutorials and suggested that some students were not confident that their progress was being appropriately measured against the assessment criteria. The student submission [137] provided a possible explanation for why this is the case suggesting a possible misalignment between student expectation regarding assessment feedback and what the current arrangements can deliver in terms of mapping student progress definitively to assessment criteria. The issue was raised within the meeting with students; [M3] however, no students expanded upon the matter and instead stated that the feedback is well reasoned, comprehensive and ties appropriately to the assessment criteria. Furthermore, students stated that they are made aware of assessment criteria in advance of written or practical work, so students should be aware of staff expectations.

343 The team explored this matter further with the Head of Studies who explained that the School had been working over the past few years to ensure that feedback tied tightly to the assessment criteria as the School was aware of issues raised previously relating to feedback in tutorials, but this had not come up in subsequent years having reiterated the importance of the criteria to staff. The Head of Studies clarified that, since feedback is hosted via Turnitin, the School is able to review the provision of feedback to students, assess whether feedback is appropriate and ensure that issues are identified quickly where this is not the case. The School encourages staff to provide both formative and summative feedback which relates to the core areas of assessment set out in the Assessment Handbook. [014] The team additionally discussed with teaching staff how the School uses two markers, often ballet and contemporary dance tutors, when assessing practical work to ensure that students would not arbitrarily lose marks due to the personal specialisation of the marker. The team found no systematic issues relating to the provision of student feedback which it found to be generally appropriate and helpful [ASSESS] and considered that the School is able to support students in achieving successful academic outcomes.

344 The team considered a sample set of assessed written work [ASSESS] to test whether the written feedback provided was comprehensive, helpful, and timely. The sample

demonstrated that students receive helpful formative and summative feedback on written assessed work across all years of study which directly refers to the marking criteria and grade band descriptors provided ahead of the assessment, as expected by the School's Assessment Handbook. [014] The sample of assessed work largely indicated that students had incorporated formative feedback into final assessments with marks generally increasing in proportion to how well students had been able to incorporate the feedback into their assessments.

345 The team identified two instances of students receiving no summative feedback on their draft submissions out of a sample set of 63 considered by one team member. The Head of Studies clarified that there had previously been an issue [REDACTED] but the matter had now been resolved [REDACTED]. There had been no repeat of this issue.

346 Given the number of students affected out of the random sample; the fact that the sample contained formative and summative feedback on both draft and final submissions and demonstrated a student response to the feedback provided; and the issue was not raised in the student submission [137] or by students, [M3] the team did not consider this to represent a broader concern, affecting the level of confidence of the team's judgement.

347 Meetings with staff and Rambert2 representatives [M1, M2, M4] established that the School has given thought to the potential support requirements of its student body and appropriately considered the industry-specific context and delivery of practical and academic components of the programmes offered by the School. Staff demonstrated awareness of the School's policies for identifying and accessing student disabilities and were responsive to individual student needs and student requests, for example MA Professional Dance Performance student requests for extended assessment deadlines given the need to balance their professional and academic commitments.

348 Staff explained their role in supporting students effectively, through the high-contact hours, averaging five-hours per day which allow for ongoing dialogue and feedback between staff and students, creating personalised feedback opportunities. [M2, M4] Rambert2 representatives explained their role in enabling student achievement and the experience students get working as part of Rambert2 which supports their long-term professional development. Due to the high levels of contact hours, collegiate relationship between staff and students and small student body, staff are well placed to monitor individual student progress. Staff are appropriately qualified and experienced to evaluate whether a student is progressing technically at the appropriate pace as they progress through the key milestones associated with each level of study. Experience at Rambert2 complements students' studies as it exposes students to real industry expectations and experiences as part of the placement. Staff links between the Rambert Company and the School ensure that students' training as part of the placement supports the development of the specialist technical skills associated with their final year of study.

349 Rambert2 representatives demonstrated awareness of the broader student journey at the School and the School's expectations of, and learning outcomes for, students at the end of the placement with Rambert2. They also highlighted the close working relationship between the School and the Rambert Company which ensures consistency in the quality of the student experience. [M2]

350 Staff who deliver practical components of the curriculum, such as ballet or contemporary dance workshops, described how they monitor and evaluate individual student progress against the expectations of each year of study. [M4] Teaching observations

confirmed that workshops are well planned with appropriate pacing. Staff are committed to enabling student achievement as there was consistent dialogue between students and staff on a collective and individual basis throughout sessions observed. [TEACH]

## **Conclusions**

351 As described above, the team considered all of the evidence submitted [Annex 1] to form a judgement as to whether the School meets this Core practice. In making this judgement, the team followed the process set out in Guidance for Providers and took account of the key statements outlined in Annex 5. In so doing, the team ensured that its judgement was consistent with all other assessments and remained outcomes-focused. The team's conclusions, based on the evidence considered, are detailed below.

352 The School supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes. It has credible, evidence-based plans to support students through the duration of their studies and a robust approach to identifying and monitoring student support needs. Staff involved in supporting students' academic and professional achievement are clear about their responsibilities, are appropriately trained, are well qualified for their roles and are clearly committed to ensuring the best possible outcomes for their students. The provision of an industry placement for MA Professional Dance Performance students alongside their studies through the Rambert2 ensemble supports students in securing successful professional outcomes while fine-tuning their technical and performance skills.

353 Students view the support mechanisms as accessible and effective in enabling successful academic and professional outcomes across all levels of study. Approaches to feedback are well reasoned, with strong links to assessment criteria, to ensure that feedback is comprehensive, timely and helpful. While the team identified two instances of feedback on assessed written work not being provided in a timely manner in the random sample of students' assessed work undertaken, the team noted that students had not raised issues about the timeliness of feedback in their meeting with the team and the student submission had similarly not raised any such issue. The team concludes, therefore, that this Core practice is met.

354 Based on the evidence available to the team and the academic and professional outcomes achieved by students, the team has a high degree of confidence in this judgement.

## Annex 1

### Meetings

M1	Meeting with Senior Staff
M2	Meeting with representatives of Rambert2
M3	Meeting with students, student representatives and alumni
M4	Meeting with teaching and professional support staff
M5	Final Clarification meeting with senior staff
TOUR	Tour of facilities, learning resources and support services

### Sampling

ADMISS	Admissions records sample
ASSESS	Assessed student work sample
TEACH	Lesson observations

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001 Background briefing on CDD.pdf  
002 University of Kent Level Descriptors.pdf  
003 University of Kent marking conventions.pdf  
004 University of Kent General Regulations.pdf  
005 University of Kent Regulations Taught Courses.pdf  
006 University of Kent External Examiners Code.pdf  
007a Grade and Level Descriptors.pdf  
007b Assessment Matrix.pdf  
008a APMR Nov 2018.pdf  
008b APMR Nov 2019.pdf  
008c APMR Nov 2020.pdf  
009 University of Kent Degree Classification Conventions.pdf  
010 University of Kent QA for Collaboration Annex O.pdf  
011 University of Kent QA for Collaboration Part P.pdf  
012 PPR Report 2018.pdf  
013a Working with Others Policy \_ Handbook.pdf  
013b Working With Others Appendix 1.pdf  
013c Working with Others Appendix 2.pdf  
013d Working With Others Appendix 3.pdf  
013e Working with Others Appendix 4.pdf  
014 Rambert School Assessment Handbook .pdf  
015 Rambert Post-Graduate Handbook 2020-2021.pdf  
016 Rambert School Critical Studies Marking Guidelines.pdf  
017 UG Admissions Policy 2022 entry.pdf  
018 MA Dance Research Admissions Policy.pdf  
019 MA Rambert2 Admissions Policy.pdf  
020 CDD Admissions Appeals Complaints policy.pdf  
021 CDD Quality Handbook.pdf  
022a Programme Specification FD.pdf  
022b Programme Specification BA.pdf  
022c Programme Specification Rambert2 MA.pdf

023a LTC Minutes Nov 2019.pdf  
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023d LTC Minutes Oct 2020.pdf  
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024 - HR 2021 26 RS Staff Organisation Chart September 2021.pdf  
025 Staff Handbook 2021.pdf  
026 Staff Induction Procedure.pdf  
027 Support Through Studies Policy.pdf  
028 Guide to Student Support.pdf  
029 Good Practice Guide Inclusive Teaching.pdf  
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031 Staff Student Meeting Minutes 2020 and 2021.pdf  
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035 MoA Kent and Rambert 2019.pdf  
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037 Attendance Regulations.pdf  
038 Undergraduate Student Handbook 2122.pdf  
039 Policy on Sexual Misconduct Harassment Related Behaviours.pdf  
040 Code of Conduct and Behaviour.pdf  
041 Code of Ethics.pdf  
042 Non Academic Misconduct Policy.pdf  
043 Inclusivity Protocol Tackling Racial Inequality.pdf  
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047 Learning and Teaching - Peer Observation, feedback pedagogic knowledge exchange.pdf  
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052 MA Professional Dance Performance Validation Conditions and Recommendations 2017.pdf  
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062 Master Marksheet 18-19.xlsx  
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066 Rambert-School-Course-Summary-FD-Ballet-Contemporary-Dance-21-22-entry.pdf  
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074 MAPDP 2019 20 Marksheet .pdf  
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097 Rambert School Guidance Document for Additional Evidence uploads for QSR.pdf  
098 202021 MA Professional Dance Performance Mark Sheet.xlsx  
099 Rambert School additional evidence guidance document.pdf  
100 Further evidence explaining MAPDP Rambert2 .pdf  
101 Course Summary MAPDP Rambert2.pdf  
102 Appendix 1MA Professional Dance Performance.pdf  
103 Appendix 2 MA Professional Dance Performance.pdf  
104 Rambert School Admissions Process.pdf  
105 Student admissions records with link to videos (1).pdf  
106 Student Practical Assessment with video link.pdf  
107 Admissions Records Folder  
108 Assessment Records Folder Sample Essays  
109 113 MA Module Specifications

114 127 UG Module Specifications  
128 133 Anonymised Staff Interview Notes  
134 Operations Manager - Candidate 1 - JA.pdf  
135 Operations Manager - Candidate 2 - JA.pdf  
136 Operations Manager - Candidate 3 - JA.pdf  
137 STUDENT SUBMISSION Rambert School QSR by Hannah Kremmer.pdf  
138 RA3001 Special Project .pdf  
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