**DQB**

Designated Quality Body
in England

# Assessment for New Degree Awarding Powers

## The London Interdisciplinary School Limited

### Review Report

March 2022

Addendum to the report of the New Degree Awarding Powers test assessment of London Interdisciplinary School Limited conducted by QAA in June 2020

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# Summary of findings

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| The provider has demonstrated a full understanding of this criterion (meets the criteria now or in prospect) | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| The provider has a credible New DAPs Plan for ensuring the criterion is met in full by the end of the probationary period | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y | Y |
| The standards set for the proposed courses are at an appropriate level | | | | Y | | | |
| | Overarching New DAPs criterion | | | | | | |
| The provider is an emerging self-critical, cohesive academic community with a clear commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective (in prospect) quality systems | | | | Y | | | |

# About this addendum

This is an addendum to the report of the New Degree Awarding Powers Test (NDAPs) assessment of London Interdisciplinary School Limited conducted by QAA in June 2020 in accordance with the process outlined in *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019.*

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

This assessment was undertaken for the purposes of providing advice on the award of a New DAPs authorisation for Taught Degree Award Powers (TDAP) up to and including Level 7.

# Provider information

| | |
|---|---|
| Legal name | The London Interdisciplinary School Ltd |
| Trading name | The London Interdisciplinary School |
| UKPRN | 10067623 |
| Type of institution | Higher education institution |
| Date founded | November 2017 |
| Start date of proposed higher education provision | September 2021 |
| Application route | New DAPs |
| Level of powers applied for | Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP) up to and including Level 7 |
| Subject(s) applied for | 08-01 (general and other sciences); 14-01 (humanities and liberal arts non-specific); 23-01 (combined and general studies) |
| Current powers held | BDAPs (up to and including Level 6) |
| Location(s) of teaching | London |
| Number of current programmes as at September 2021 | One Bachelor of Arts and Sciences (BASc) in Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods |
| Number of students as at October 2021 | Total and by type/mode of study: 65 full-time |
| Number of staff as at September 2021 | Total and by type: 31 (nine academic staff) |
| Current awarding body arrangements (if applicable) | N/A |

# About The London Interdisciplinary School Limited

The London Interdisciplinary School Limited (the School) was founded in November 2017. Until November 2018 it was known as Odyssey School London. The School is a private limited company with a combination of companies and private individuals as shareholders. The School's mission is 'to create a centre of excellence for interdisciplinary learning, one that better prepares its students for the modern world'. It aims to develop learners who are capable of, and committed to, tackling the most important and complex social problems. The School wants to be a higher education institution with a new style of education where learning will be interdisciplinary and start with the problem, not the discipline. In March 2020 the School approved its own single, three-year, full-time undergraduate programme in Interdisciplinary Problems and Methods (Bachelor of Arts and Sciences) which it began delivering in September 2021. Due to a change in strategic direction, it is now seeking authorisation to deliver its proposed MASc in Interdisciplinary Practice from September 2022.

# How the assessment was conducted

The OfS referred The London Interdisciplinary School (the School) to QAA for a New DAPs test assessment on 3 November 2021 and the provider's submission and supporting evidence was received on 17 December 2021. The assessment began on 17 December 2021, culminating in an addendum to the New Degree Awarding Powers Test report of the provider's intended Level 6 provision, to the Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers on 19 May 2022 and final advice to the OfS.

The team appointed to conduct the assessment was as follows:

Name: Robert Mears
Institution: Independent, formerly Bath Spa University
Role in assessment team: Institutional and subject assessor

Name: Margaret Carran
Institution: City University of London
Role in assessment team: Institutional assessor

The QAA Officer was Monika Ruthe.

The size and composition of this team is in line with published guidance and, as such, is comprised of experts with significant experience and expertise across the higher education sector. The team included members with experience of a similar provider to the institution, knowledge of the academic awards offered and included academics with 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 London Interdisciplinary School prior to the assessment to identify and resolve any possible conflicts of interest.

The team conducted the assessment by reference to a range of evidence gathered according to the process described in the Guidance for Providers. The criteria used in relation to this assessment are those that apply in England as set out in paragraphs 215-216 and in Annex C in the OfS regulatory framework. To support the clarity of communication between providers and QAA, the DAPs criteria from the OfS regulatory framework have been given unique identifiers and are reproduced in Annex 4 of *Degree Awarding Powers in England: Guidance for Providers on Assessment by QAA, October 2019*.

In the course of the assessment, the team read the submission document and 57 further documents in support of the application. An initial set of 40 documents was provided as supporting evidence by the School with the submission document. Following a desk-based analysis of this initial evidence against the New DAPs criteria, a limited request for additional evidence was made and clarification was sought in relation to student support. The additional evidence requests covered criterion D1. The School provided an additional two documents in response and clarified a further two items. Following the formal approval of the proposed postgraduate programme the School submitted another 15 pieces of evidence related to that event in support of its application before the assessment visit.

The team did not conduct any sampling of evidence as the volume of material available was such that all evidence could breviewed by the team. Furthermore, the School only intends to run one postgraduate programme in the immediate future and therefore sampling across programmes was not necessary.

Key themes pursued in the course of the assessment included staff understanding and implementation of the academic governance structures, academic regulations, policies and support frameworks, staffing plans and their proposed implementation; staff development plans including research; and the implementation of the proposed student support arrangements, learning resource and estate plans in relation to its proposed Level 7 provision. The team was asked to consider the impact that the introduction of Level 7 provision would have on the New DAPs Plan supporting the Level 6 provision which is currently being delivered, and to consider whether the introduction of Level 7 provision would impact the School's ability to meet the DAPs criteria by the end of the probationary period in 2024.

The team held three meetings using videoconferencing technology on 11 March 2022. In the course of these meetings the team spoke to senior staff, including the Chief Executive Officer (CEO), the Director of Teaching and Learning, the Director of Student Experience, Careers and Wellbeing, the Director of New Products, the Registrar, the Head of Quality and the Head of Student Support. The team also met three academic staff, including the postgraduate Programme Director.

The timelines for the implementation of the postgraduate New DAPs Plan are those specified in the undergraduate New DAPs Plan for years two and three of the probationary period, and these are therefore not repeated in this addendum.

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

# Explanation of findings

## Criterion A: Academic governance

### Criterion A1 - Academic governance

1       This criterion states that:

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

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

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

**The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence**

2       The assessment team considered or assessed, specifically in relation to the proposed Level 7 provision:

a       Whether the School's higher education mission and strategic direction and associated policies are coherent, published and understood and support its mission, aims and objectives. The team therefore considered the postgraduate New DAPs Plan, [001] the postgraduate strategy addendum, [075] the postgraduate Governance and Academic Regulations, [005] the general policies and procedures [006] and the updated Quality Framework, [004] and discussed the School's approach with senior staff. [M1 academic governance]

b       Whether there is clarity and differentiation of responsibility of function and responsibility at all levels in the School in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its postgraduate provision. To do this the team examined the governance structures, [005 -1.1.] the membership and terms of reference of the Academic Council and its subcommittees, [009] and discussed the School's approach to governance with senior staff. [M1 academic governance]

c       Whether the School develops, implements and communicates its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff and postgraduate students and external stakeholders. The team therefore considered the postgraduate New DAPs Plan [001] and the Academic Development Framework, [011] and discussed the School's approach with senior and academic staff. [M1 academic governance]

d       Whether students individually and collectively will be engaged in the governance and management of the School and its postgraduate provision, with students supported to be able to engage effectively. To do this the team examined the postgraduate New DAPs Plan, [001] the postgraduate Student Engagement Framework, [010] the membership and terms of reference of key academic governance committees and boards [005 – 1.2 , 005 – 1.4, 005 – 1.7, 005 – 1.10, 005 – 1.11, 009] and the postgraduate programme approval report. [110] The team

also discussed the School's approach with senior and academic staff. [M1 governance, M3 student support]

## What the evidence shows

3       The team found that the School's mission and strategic direction remain unchanged [001 PG New DAPs Plan] and the 2020 NDAPs Test found that 'its associated approved and already published policies and procedures are well-developed and coherent and appropriately support its mission, aims and objectives' (paragraph 30 NDAPs Test report).

4       At the assessment visit, senior staff explained, however, that the School had decided to accelerate the provision of a master's programme (previously planned for delivery once the School had achieved full degree awarding powers) with a planned launch in 2022-23 [M1 academic governance] due to the pandemic, and a change in operating context together with a significant uplift in enrolments for taught postgraduate education as the UK enters a period of high economic uncertainty. [075 PG Strategy addendum]

5       The School updated its associated policies to account for the proposed Level 7 provision, [001 PG New DAPs Plan] in particular the Governance and Academic Regulations, [005] general policies and procedures [006] and the Quality Framework, [004] which collectively continue to provide a comprehensive, thorough and consistent set of documents that underpin the provider's education mission, aims and objectives (see criterion B1 below for details of the updates made).

6       To determine whether there is clarity and differentiation of function at all levels, including at Level 7, in relation to academic governance and the management of higher education provision, the team noted that the 2020 NDAPs Test had already established that the School's academic governance structures are 'comprehensive and appropriately referenced, take account of good practice and sector guidance in their development and are likely to provide a robust framework for managing academic standards and quality' and that 'there is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility at all levels in the School in relation to its academic governance structures and arrangements for managing its higher education provision' (paragraph 30 NDAPs Test report).

7       Senior staff confirmed that the academic governance model and structures already assessed in the 2020 NDAPs Test remain unchanged. [M1 academic governance] The function of academic governance committees also remains unchanged. The Academic Council continues to be responsible for matters relating to the quality and standards of academic provision, [001 PG New DAPs Plan] which will include the planned postgraduate provision. The terms of reference of the governing bodies and the scheme of delegation are clearly set out in the updated governance document. [005 PG Governance and Academic Regulations] The procedures underpinning academic governance, such as the programme design, development, monitoring and evaluation procedures in the postgraduate Governance and Academic Regulations [005 -2.21] clarify the roles and responsibilities of different governing bodies in academic governance. Where the Academic Council has established working groups, their terms of reference are clearly articulated and agreed. [009 PG AC working group ToR]

8       While no new committees have been established and reporting lines remain unchanged, [005 -1.1 PG governance structures] the membership and their terms of reference have been amended to include student and staff representation from the planned postgraduate provision. [M1 academic governance] This applies to the Academic Council as the senior academic authority and its subcommittees, the Regulatory Working Group and the Learning Resources and Property Working Group. [009 PG AC working groups] The School also plans to expand the membership of the Student Voice Committee to ensure

postgraduate student representation. [001 PG New DAPs Plan, M1 academic governance] These plans are likely to ensure appropriate involvement of postgraduate students and staff in the development, monitoring and communication of academic policies and procedures.

9       The team, therefore, formed the view that there continues to be clarity and differentiation of responsibility of function and responsibility at all levels in the School in relation to its academic governance structures and that arrangements for managing its postgraduate provision are sound. Because the senior academic authority remains unchanged and based on the findings of the 2020 NDAPs Test, the team determined that the function and responsibility of the Academic Council is clearly articulated. Similarly, because the leadership team has not changed, the team determined that there is sufficient depth and strength in the current leadership team to support the development of the postgraduate provision. Overall, the team was satisfied that the School has the understanding and capacity to manage successfully the governance responsibilities incumbent on a degree-awarding body.

10      The School plans to develop and annually review its policies and procedures in collaboration with its staff, students and external stakeholders through their membership in relevant academic committees [001 PG New DAPs Plan] (see paragraph 8 above). The postgraduate Academic Community Development Framework [011] describes the ambition of the School to develop an 'interdisciplinary community of practice' and places a premium on high levels of engagement with staff in implementing and communicating its academic policies and procedures through staff training.

11      The team undertook a limited assessment of the School's approach to student engagement as it has not changed [010 PG Student Engagement Framework] and the 2020 NDAPs Test found that its 'plans to engage students individually and collectively in governance and management and the support provided to do so effectively are credible and appropriate' (paragraph 28 NDAPs Test report). Postgraduate student engagement is expected to operate in line with the Student Engagement Framework [010] which has been revised to accommodate postgraduate students. It sets out a tiered model for collective and individual student engagement that includes a variety of individual, focused, representative, and collective opportunities for input into and feedback on the running of the School and the quality of its provision such as membership of key governance fora and academic committees including the Board of Directors; [005 - 1.2.membership and ToR BoD] Academic Council; [005 - 1.4 membership and ToR AC] Programme/Module Review and Approval Panel; [005 - 1.7 membership and ToR PMRAP] the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee; [005 - 1.10 membership and ToR EDIC] the Student Voice Committee; [005 - 1.11 membership and ToR SVC] the Regulatory and the Learning Resources and Property Working Groups; [009 membership and ToR AC working groups] termly module feedback forms and student surveys on support services; 'You Said We Did' fora; a postgraduate programme survey aligning with the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), and student focus groups. [001 PG New DAPs Plan]

12      The Student Voice Committee currently consists of an elected undergraduate student committee and programme representatives, and the School plans to broaden the membership to include postgraduate student representatives. [001 PG New DAPs Plan, M1 academic governance] Student representatives for all relevant committees are expected to be in place and inducted by the middle of the first quarter of each academic year. Training on the role and support available will be extended to postgraduate student representatives. Major cycles of formal student engagement are planned during the postgraduate probationary period in the same way as for undergraduate student engagement through the annual programme monitoring process and annual quality review cycles. [001 PG New DAPs Plan] To date, students (albeit not postgraduate students as none have yet been recruited) have been consulted on the setting of academic standards through the inclusion of

a student representative at the Programme/Module Review and Approval Panel [110 PG approval report] which approved the postgraduate programme in February 2022.

13      The School aims to be proactive in ensuring postgraduate students' participation by removing possible frictions or barriers to engagement so that postgraduate students find the experience valuable. This would include providing students with committee papers in advance, ensuring that committee papers are not unduly complex and ensuring that committee meetings occur at times where postgraduate students are more able to attend. [M3 student support] Postgraduate students would also be encouraged to utilise the existing 'comment boxes' available to undergraduate students where they can post feedback on any aspect of their programme anonymously. The School then intends to provide feedback on those comments during all-student 'town hall' meetings at regular intervals, which should ensure that student feedback is considered and that feedback loops are closed. [M3 student support] The team is assured that such measures will, along with the prevailing ethos of the provider, result in effective consultation and meaningful engagement by postgraduate students in the governance and management of the organisation.

## Conclusions

14      The School's strategic direction and the updated associated approved academic policies and procedures, such as the Governance and Academic Regulations, general policies and procedures and the Quality Framework, continue to provide a comprehensive, thorough and consistent set of documents that underpin the School's education mission, aims and objectives.

15      The School's existing academic governance structures are comprehensive and are likely to provide a robust framework for managing academic standards and quality at postgraduate level because the terms of reference and membership of governing bodies and academic committee have been appropriately adapted to include postgraduate provision. There is clarity and differentiation of function and responsibility, with clear and appropriate lines of accountability at all levels in relation to academic governance structures, and arrangements for managing the proposed postgraduate provision are sound. The plans for postgraduate student and staff membership of these governance bodies are likely to enable appropriate involvement in the development, monitoring and communication of postgraduate policies and procedures and ensure academic governance is conducted in partnership with all students.

16      The School's plans to engage postgraduate students individually and collectively in governance and management of the School, and the planned support provided to do so effectively, are robust and appropriate with appropriate amendments made to the membership of academic committees and groups and the Student Voice Committee to accommodate postgraduate student representatives.

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

# Criterion B: Academic standards and quality assurance

## Criterion B1 - Regulatory frameworks

18      This criterion states that:

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

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

**The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence**

19      The assessment team considered or assessed, specifically in relation to the proposed Level 7 provision:

a       Whether the School has created, in readiness, one or more academic frameworks and regulations which will be appropriate for the granting of its own postgraduate qualifications and whether these academic frameworks and regulations that will govern the School's postgraduate provision are appropriate to its current status. The team therefore examined the postgraduate Governance and Academic Regulations [005] and the updated Quality Framework. [004]

b       Whether definitive and up-to-date records of the postgraduate qualification to be awarded are being maintained and whether these records will be used as the basis for the delivery and assessment of the programme, and whether there is evidence that students and alumni will be provided with records of study. The team therefore considered the postgraduate New DAPs Plan, [001] the programme specification, [068, 096] module forms, [097] and the programme design, development, monitoring and evaluation procedure [005 – 2.21] and the academic framework [005 – 2.2.] contained in the postgraduate Governance and Academic Regulations.

**What the evidence shows**

20      The 2020 NDAPs Test found the academic framework and regulations to be 'well developed in that it encompasses all aspects of running a higher education institution' (paragraph 43 NDAPs Test report). The team found that this remains the case. The School updated its general academic regulations [005-2] in light of the planned postgraduate provision and, together with the updated Quality Framework, [004] they define the School's academic framework and take appropriate account of postgraduate provision. It includes arrangements for all aspects of the postgraduate student journey such as postgraduate admissions, [005 - 2.4.2] recognition of prior learning, [005 - 2.10] assessment, [005 - 2.18] postgraduate awards, [005 - 2.2] academic appeals [005 - 2.13] and complaints. [005 - 2.14] They also include the approach to the award of credit and qualifications and classification of postgraduate awards [005–2.3 assessment and classifications framework] and detail the assessment regulations, which include rules on deferrals and mitigating circumstances [005 - 2.12] and academic misconduct. [005 - 2.11] The updated academic regulations and the updated Quality Framework were approved in November 2021 by the Regulatory Working Group, a subcommittee of the Academic Council, and are expected to receive final approval through the Academic Council in advance of the commencement of postgraduate provision.

The School plans to implement them from September 2022 when it expects to have recruited the first postgraduate cohort. [001 PG New DAPs Plan]

21      In the view of the team, the academic framework and regulations that will govern postgraduate provision are appropriate because they are clear and coherent. Examples of modification to the academic regulations to take account of planned Level 7 provision include the addition of Level 7 final and exit qualifications (Postgraduate Certificate and Postgraduate Diploma) and their respective credit requirements, minimum award requirements and notional study hours. [005 – 2.2. academic framework] A discrete admissions regulations section for postgraduate students includes the admissions criteria in the form of programme-specific requirements such as academic attainment and interdisciplinary problem-solving attitudes, English language requirements and requirements for non-home students. [005 – 2.4.2]

22      The School has well developed plans for the maintenance of definitive and up-to-date records for the planned MASc Interdisciplinary Practice. It approved the definitive record of its postgraduate programme and associated qualification through the programme and module specifications in February 2022 [068, 096 MASc Interdisciplinary Practice Programme Specification, 097 MASc Interdisciplinary Practice module forms] when these documents were considered by a Programme Monitoring Review and Approval Panel (PMRAP) in line with the School's formal Programme Design, Development, Monitoring and Evaluation Procedure contained in the postgraduate Governance and Academic Regulations. [005 – 2.21] Final approval of the programme specification by the senior academic authority, the Academic Council, is expected in March 2022. As for its undergraduate provision, the Registry will be the keeper of the definitive postgraduate programme records. Any subsequent changes to the programme specification are expected to be made in line with the programme design, development, monitoring and evaluation procedure and approved by the Academic Council. [005 -2.21]

23      The School's plans for the maintenance of records are credible because a single authority, the Registry, will be responsible for maintaining accurate records of the postgraduate programme in the same way as it does for the undergraduate programme. The programme and module modification procedure [005–2.21] stipulates that any amendments to the programme specification have to be routed through a formal change process managed and recorded by the Registry. This confirmed to the team that the record of the postgraduate qualification would be definitive and current.

24      The School intends to use the programme specification as the basis for the delivery and assessment of the programme and intends to make it available to students in the online student handbook through the learning management system, the School's VLE, and to staff on the intranet. [001 PG New DAPs Plan, 005 – 2.2 academic framework] The team was therefore satisfied that the definitive programme record would be accessible to staff and students.

25      The School plans to provide its postgraduate students with a record of their assessment history as a record of study. Such a record would be created in the student record system. The School plans to monitor the effectiveness of the student record system in delivering definitive records of study during the first year of delivery, with a full review by the Academic Council in the last quarter of each year of the postgraduate probationary period. [001 PG New DAPs Plan] The team therefore found the School's plans for the generation and provision of postgraduate records of study to be sound and robust.

## Conclusions

26      The School has designed and approved an academic framework and associated

academic regulations that will govern its postgraduate provision in respect to the award of academic credit and qualifications that are fit for purpose. The School has made appropriate changes to its existing regulations to accommodate the proposal to offer postgraduate programmes. The resulting updated academic regulations are transparent and comprehensive as they cover all stages of the postgraduate student journey ranging from admissions to assessment and awards and, where necessary, appeals and complaints. While they are yet to be assessed 'in practice' for a postgraduate cohort, the team is assured that the creation of such a framework and regulations is a sign that the School understands the criterion and is likely to manage successfully its proposed postgraduate provision.

27      The School's plans to maintain definitive postgraduate programme records through the Registry are robust with a clearly defined and centrally controlled process for the approval of any subsequent changes to ensure that any changes will be formally approved, and programme records remain up to date. The documents will be made available online to students and staff and can therefore form an accessible reference point for the delivery and assessment of the planned postgraduate programme, its monitoring and review and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni through the existing student record system. This should ensure that the School maintains appropriate oversight of all earned credit and makes appropriate awards.

28      The team therefore concludes that the School has a full understanding of the criterion and its obligations to students, staff and other stakeholders. The team also concludes that the postgraduate New DAPs Plan is credible and would enable the DAP criterion to be met by the end of the probation period.

## Criterion B2 - Academic standards

29      This criterion states that:

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

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

**The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence**

30      The assessment team considered or assessed, specifically in relation to the proposed Level 7 provision:

a       Whether the postgraduate qualifications will be offered at levels that correspond to the relevant levels of the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies. The team therefore examined the postgraduate New DAPs Plan, [001] the academic framework [005 – 2.2] and the assessment and classification framework [005–2.3] in the academic regulations, the programme design and development procedures, [005–2.21] minutes of the Programme/Module Review and Approval Panel for the MASc Interdisciplinary Practice programme, [108] the mapping of learning outcomes to the FHEQ [080] and the programme specification for the MASc Interdisciplinary Practice programme. [068, 096]

b       Whether the setting and maintenance of academic standards takes appropriate account of relevant external points of reference and external and independent points of expertise, including students. To do this the team considered the minutes of the programme development, [078] the programme specification, [068, 096] the programme design and approval procedure, [005–2.21] the external expertise framework, [005 – 2.23] the postgraduate programme approval process, [069] the approval panel membership [109] and the MASc Interdisciplinary Practice approval report. [110] The team also discussed the School's approach with senior staff. [M1 academic governance]

c       Whether the School's programme approval arrangements are robust, applied consistently, and ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with the School's own academic frameworks and regulations and whether programme approval arrangements address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and the academic standards are being maintained. The team therefore examined the programme approval and monitoring procedures, [005 – 2.21] the MASc Interdisciplinary Practice approval report, [110] the programme specification, [068, 096] the module forms, [097] and the academic framework and regulations. [005]

d       Whether credit and qualifications will be awarded only where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of qualifications) has been demonstrated through assessment, and both the UK threshold standards and the academic standards of

the relevant degree-awarding body have been satisfied. To do this the team considered the academic framework, [005 – 2.2] the assessment and classification framework, [005 – 2.3] and discussed the School's approach with senior and academic staff. [M1 academic governance]

e      Whether the School makes use of appropriate external and independent expertise in establishing and maintaining threshold academic standards and comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent level qualifications. To do this the team considered the postgraduate New DAPs Plan, [001] the external academic expertise framework [005 - 2.20] and the External Examiner Policy and Procedure, [005–2.19] and discussed the approach with senior and academic staff. [M1 academic governance]

## What the evidence shows

31      The School intends to offer one qualification that corresponds to Level 7 of The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ). [001 PG New DAPs Plan] The School's academic framework [005–2.2] and the assessment and classification framework [005–2.3] in the academic regulations provide an appropriate reference point for setting and assessing academic standards when designing and approving modules and programmes at postgraduate level because they have been updated by the School to take account of planned postgraduate provision. They are designed in such a way that they are likely to ensure that qualifications are of a standard consistent with Level 7 of the FHEQ. This is because the School's programme design and development procedures, [005–2.21 programme design and development procedures] which apply to the approval of all new provision, require that the threshold standards meet those described in the FHEQ and the minutes of the Programme/Module Review and Approval Panel for the MASc Interdisciplinary Practice programme [108] records that the threshold standards meet those in the FHEQ.

32      The programme design and development procedures [005–2.21] also require that programme learning outcomes are mapped to the relevant levels of the FHEQ and the School has undertaken a thorough mapping exercise for its planned postgraduate programme. [080] The resulting programme specification for the master's programme [068, 096] is clear about the level of the final and exit awards and credits at Level 7 of the FHEQ. Staff involved in the development of the programme have the necessary expertise to design programmes that will enable postgraduate students to achieve the standards required (see paragraph 86 below). The team therefore formed the view that the proposed postgraduate qualification will be offered at Level 7 of the FHEQ.

33      The School carefully considered the use of appropriate external reference points when setting academic standards for its proposed MASc in Interdisciplinary Practice. With only one existing MASc in the country and, in the absence of a Subject Benchmark Statement for interdisciplinary master's awards, there are relatively few benchmarks for programme development which was addressed by the School by emphasising the importance of other external reference points. As a credible alternative, the School used the characteristics statement on master's programmes and the FHEQ Level 7 descriptors as its principal points of comparison in the design and development of the postgraduate programme. [078 minutes of MASc programme development] The programme specification, [068, 096] therefore, draws upon the Master's Degree: Characteristics Statement (February 2020) and in particular 'Category 2: Specialised or advanced study master's degrees'.

34      The team discussed these design challenges with the School during the online assessment visit and learnt that there is currently no underpinning Subject Benchmark Statement in the UK for MASc degree programmes or closely related interdisciplinary

programmes such as Liberal Arts and Sciences and that the approach has, therefore, been to map the language of Level 7 in the FHEQ to interdisciplinary language. The School is also a member of a national subject benchmark working group which has developed an undergraduate benchmark statement and therefore actively engaged in the development of external reference points for interdisciplinary programmes. [M1 academic governance] The team was satisfied, therefore, that the School is taking appropriate account of relevant external reference points when setting academic standards of its postgraduate provision.

35      The School made use of independent and external expertise and students in the development and approval of the postgraduate programme in line with its procedures. [005–2.21 programme design and approval procedure, 005 – 2.23 external expertise framework] Programme development documents show that two student focus groups which discussed the possible structure and content were used to shape the development of the programme. [069 PG programme approval process] From the approval report the use of external expertise is evident as the approval panel was chaired by an external member of Academic Council, with an additional external expert and a student member [109 panel membership] in line with the School's external expertise framework. [005 -2.23] The team concluded that there is clear evidence of the productive use of external and independent points of expertise.

36      The School already has in place approved processes for programme approval. [005 – 2.21 programme design, development, monitoring and evaluation procedure] The programme approval arrangements are robust as programmes and modules must undergo a formal evaluation process prior to final approval by the Academic Council before delivery starts. The procedures focus on setting appropriate standards and approval is conditional (that is, subject to conditions or recommendations) and time-limited (that is, requiring reapproval after a certain period of time. [005–2.21 programme approval procedure] These same processes were used to approve the proposed new postgraduate provision. The School plans to assure the maintenance of academic standards for its postgraduate provision through the same mechanisms as for its undergraduate provision which include annual programme monitoring and the use of external examiners and their reports. [001 PG New DAPs Plan]

37      The MASc Interdisciplinary Practice approval report [110] indicates extensive discussions of the design principles underpinning the programme, the validity and relevance of programme and module aims and intended learning outcomes, the structure of the programme and its coherence and integrity in view of the two planned pathways, and the assessment methodology and its coherence with the programme's learning outcomes and academic standards. The programme specification [068, 096] and the module forms, [097] which were part of the approval documentation considered, show a clear alignment with the FHEQ and consistency with the School's academic framework and regulations. [005 academic regulations] The approval panel made no essential recommendations to standards for the approval of the programme or its modules but made seven advisable recommendations to which the programme development team responded thoroughly. [111 team response to approval recommendations]

38      The team is therefore satisfied that the School's programme approval procedures are robust, applied consistently, and ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the proposed postgraduate qualification and are in accordance with the School's own academic frameworks and regulations.

39      The School's existing academic regulations have been amended to include regulations governing postgraduate provision. It is clear from the updated academic regulations [005 – 2.2 academic framework, 005 – 2.3 assessment and classification framework] that Level 7 credit and qualifications will only be awarded where learning outcomes have been met and assessment results have been ratified by a formally

constituted Examination Board which includes external examiners. The School plans to appoint two external examiners for the postgraduate programme. [M1 academic governance] Postgraduate assessment is expected to take place against clear and agreed criteria with assessment tasks linked to the award of credit. Prior approval of all postgraduate assessment tasks by an external examiner is a precondition of allowing the assessment to take place. There is a clear numeric marking scale for Level 7 student work with a 50% pass mark. [005 – 2.3 assessment framework]

40      The academic framework stipulates that 'an award must meet the minimum threshold academic standards' and that 'credit is awarded to a student on successful completion of the outcomes associated with a particular block of learning at a specified academic level'. [005 – 2.2 academic framework] The minimum credit requirement for the postgraduate certificate is set at 60 credits at Level 7, for the postgraduate diploma 120 credits at Level 7 and for the master's award 180 credits at Level 7.

41      The team concludes that the School has appropriate regulations in place that should ensure that postgraduate credit and qualifications will only be awarded where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment. The stipulation in the academic regulations that threshold standards must be met for the award of credit and qualifications gives the team confidence that this will also be applied to postgraduate credit and qualifications.

42      The team noted that the School's approach to the use of independent external expertise was found to be credible in the 2020 NDAPs Test (paragraph 78 NDAPs Test report) and the School intends to apply the same approach to its postgraduate provision.

43      The School intends to maintain academic standards of its Level 7 programme, its reliability over time and comparability with those at other UK higher education providers through the use of external examiners and their reports. [001 PG New DAPs Plan] The role of external examiners is comprehensively articulated in the external academic expertise framework [005 - 2.20] and the External Examiner Policy and Procedure [005–2.19] and will encompass a range of activities during each academic year, such as agreeing assessment instruments, marking, moderation and attendance at the Board of Examiners, where decisions on the achievement and awards of students will be made. [005 – 2.19] The School intends to appoint two external examiners for the postgraduate programme, [M1 academic governance] which should ensure sufficient spread of expertise and engagement with the programme. The team formed the view that the planned use of external examiners in assessment and resulting confirmation processes is likely to ensure the maintenance of academic standards and comparability of standards with other providers of equivalent qualifications.

## Conclusions

44      The team concluded that the School understands the criterion because it has clear processes for the design, development and approval of postgraduate programmes and modules and its academic framework and academic regulations support the setting and maintenance of academic standards at postgraduate level. The School has operationalised them appropriately in designing and approving its Level 7 qualification. Definitive programme documentation in the form of programme specifications and module forms confirm that the postgraduate qualification will be offered at Level 7 of the FHEQ. Programme approval documentation demonstrates an appropriate use of external reference points and the use of independent external experts, including students, in the design and approval of postgraduate programmes.

45      The School's plans for setting and maintaining academic standards are credible

because the programme approval process is robust, applied consistently, and has ensured that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the proposed postgraduate qualification and are in accordance with the School's own academic frameworks and regulations. The School's academic regulations are clear with regard to the award of credit and qualifications and give confidence that the School will only award postgraduate credit and qualifications where the achievement of relevant learning outcomes has been demonstrated through assessment and once threshold academic standards have been met and confirmed by an Examination Board with input from external examiners. The School's plans for the use of external examiners in maintaining academic standards and their reliability over time are credible.

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

# Criterion B3 - Quality of the academic experience

47    This criterion states that:

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

## The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence

48    The assessment team considered or assessed, specifically in relation to the proposed Level 7 provision:

### Design and approval of programmes

a    Whether responsibility for approving new programme proposals is clearly assigned, including the involvement of external expertise, where appropriate, and subsequent action is carefully monitored. To do this the team examined the programme design and development procedures, [005 – 2.21] the Academic Community Framework, [011] the MASc Interdisciplinary Practice approval report, [110] the checklist for external advisors [095] and the response of the postgraduate programme development team to the approval panel. [111]

b    Whether coherence of programmes with multiple elements or alternative pathways is secured and maintained. The team examined the postgraduate New DAPs Plan, [001] the programme specification for the MASc Interdisciplinary Practice, [068, 096] notes of the meetings of the postgraduate programme development team, [079] and the MASc Interdisciplinary Practice programme approval report. [110]

c    Whether close links are maintained between learning support services and the School's programme planning and approval arrangements. To establish this the team considered the checklist for external advisors, [095] the MASc Interdisciplinary Practice programme approval report, [110] the notes of the postgraduate programme development stages [078] and the academic governance structures. [005]

### Learning and teaching

d    Whether the School articulates and implements a strategic approach to learning and teaching which is consistent with its stated academic objectives. The team therefore considered the postgraduate Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy [067] and the institutional strategy. [075]

e    Whether the School maintains physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use. To do this the team considered the postgraduate New DAPs Plan, [001] the postgraduate estates plan, [019] and the postgraduate learning resources plan. [038]

f    Whether robust arrangements exist for ensuring that the learning opportunities provided to those of its students that may be studying at a distance from the

organisation are effective. To do this the team considered the postgraduate New DAPs Plan [001] and the online Level 7 delivery plan. [082]

**Assessment**

g        Whether the School will operate valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought. To do this the team examined the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy, [067] assessment approval procedure [005–2.16] and the assessment of prior learning policy and procedure. [005 – 2.10]

h        Whether postgraduate students will be provided with opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice. The team therefore examined the postgraduate New DAPs Plan, [001] the Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure [005 – 2.11] and the Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures. [006 – 2.1]

**External examining**

i        Whether the School will make scrupulous use of postgraduate external examiners including in the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work and will give full and serious consideration to the comments and recommendations contained in external examiners' reports and will provide external examiners with a considered and timely response to their comments and recommendations. The team therefore examined the External Examiner Policy and Procedure. [005 -2.19]

**Academic appeals and student complaints**

j        Whether the School has effective procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of the academic experience, that these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement. To do this the team considered the academic appeals procedure [005 - 2.13] and the complaints procedure. [005 - 2.14]

**What the evidence shows**

**Design and approval of programmes**

49        The team noted that the 2020 NDAPs Test already established that the School's 'approaches and processes for the design and approval of its programme are credible, robust and effective and require involvement of independent external expertise' (paragraph 138 NDAPs Test report) and paragraph 36 in this report concluded that the School's procedures were effectively implemented when the postgraduate programme it intends to deliver was developed and approved.

50        The team also noted that the 2020 NDAPs Test found that staff are informed of and provided with guidance and support on these procedures and their roles and responsibilities in relation to them and that they understand them (paragraphs 101 and 104 NDAPs Test report). The team found that the School's existing programme design and development procedures [005 – 2.21] clearly spell out the roles and responsibilities of staff and committees and that the 2020 NDAPs Test established that responsibility for approving new programme proposals is clearly assigned, that it includes the involvement of external expertise (paragraph 101 NDAPs Test report) and that the School has sound processes in

place to monitor actions (paragraph 102 NDAPs Test report).

51      The development of the postgraduate programme is the responsibility of a named development team and leader. [078 minutes of programme development] The team noted that the programme development team is well qualified and experienced in designing and delivering postgraduate provision (see paragraph 86 below). The Academic Community Development Framework [011] makes clear the expectations the School has of its academic staff and how it intends to support staff developing and delivering postgraduate provision through training in curriculum development and assessment design through a series of internal and external development opportunities to carry out their duties effectively. This includes annual postgraduate module development and curriculum design sessions and postgraduate assessment training. [011 Academic Community Development Framework - 3 training programme] The team was satisfied that the School has the required expertise to deliver such training.

52      The conduct of the postgraduate programme approval event [110 PG approval report] demonstrates that staff are clear about their responsibilities and the checklist provided to external advisers, which is thorough and intended to prompt external specialists to cover all aspects of provision, and shows that they have the necessary guidance and support [095 checklist for external advisors] to play a meaningful part in the process.

53      The detailed and considered response of the postgraduate programme development team to the recommendations made by the approval panel [111] evidence that the School is taking appropriate action, the progress of which will be monitored by the Academic Council [001 PG New DAPs Plan] who will be shortly presented with the full approval report and response for sign off. The team is therefore reassured that there are appropriate mechanisms in place to address recommendations or conditions that follow an approval event and that there will be careful monitoring of any actions that may arise from the postgraduate programme approval process.

54      The School plans to launch its MASc Interdisciplinary Practice programme in 2022-23, initially with a single full-time pathway (Culture and Complexity) and plans to add a second full-time and part-time pathway (Collective Intelligence) in 2023-24. [001 PG New DAPs Plan] The different pathways are clearly set out in the programme specification. Both pathways share more than 50% of the taught modules. [068, 096 programme specification] There is evidence of the consideration of these two pathways at meetings of both the programme development team [079] and during the programme approval event where the rationale for the two pathways was explored in detail. [110 PG programme approval report] The team is assured from the documentation that the rationale of the two pathways was properly considered by the programme approval panel and does not constitute a threat to the coherence of the proposed provision.

55      The 2020 NDAPs Test established that 'the link with learning support services in programme planning and approval arrangements is expected to be maintained through the presence of the Director of Admissions and Student Support on the Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel and the Academic Council' (paragraph 108 NDAPs Test report).

56      The programme approval panel is required to specifically address whether the learning resources and student support services are appropriate to deliver a high-quality academic experience [095 checklist for external advisors] but make no requirement for the panel to address learning support specifically, and does not have a member of the professional staff engaged in learning support on the approval panel. [110 PG approval report] However, learning support services were directly engaged in the postgraduate programme approval process with the the Director of Student Experience, Careers and Partnerships, which oversees the student support function, being member of the

programme approval panel. The team also found that learning support professionals have close links with the programme development process through the consideration of the required learning resources and student support provision [079 notes of programme development stages] which are integrated into the broader governance structures of the School where programme developments would be discussed. [005 PG governance] The team is therefore confident that learning support professionals are currently sufficiently engaged in the process.

**Learning and teaching**

57      The postgraduate Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy [067] which the School has developed sets out its vision and philosophy for postgraduate teaching and learning. Postgraduate learning will be defined by the sets of concepts and problems the programme engages with. The interaction between concepts and problems will determine much of the pedagogical content of the programme and will also impact on the methods. Learning is expected to be themed on a small number of targeted complex issues with students working on problem-solving strategies. [067 LTA Strategy]

58      The team formed the view that the School articulates a clear strategic approach to postgraduate learning and teaching. The strategy prioritises the role of students as co-creators of knowledge and aims to ensure that students are equipped to undertake new forms of professional-facing, postgraduate study. Because all students are required to identify a real-world problem they wish to address during the course of their studies and that will provide the basis for their capstone project (dissertation), the approach to teaching and learning is expected to be individualised and tailored to students' learning needs. [067 LTA Strategy]

59      The School's academic objectives of providing a unique and innovatory set of programmes [075 strategy addendum] are carried through in the articulation of learning and teaching for the postgraduate programme, and the specific aim of breaking down barriers between subjects and between teachers and students strongly informs its rationale. The team formed the view that the emphasis on synchronous learning and an approach in which staff and students co-engage with learning materials in a discursive manner, makes a clear link between its overall strategy and its articulated approach to learning and teaching, and is consistent with the School's stated academic objectives.

60      The estates plan [019] sets out how the School plans to accommodate the teaching and learning space needs of its postgraduate student population. For the 2022-23 year of teaching the School intends to fit out one floor as a postgraduate common room and working space which will also be used as a teaching space for postgraduate students. These works are expected to be completed by August 2022. The School will also be creating additional teaching capacity for postgraduate students in the main teaching space on two other floors. In year 2023-24 it intends to bring another floor into operation and the exact use of this space will be based on need and may become another seminar space or an additional private study space. Space needs will be kept under annual review given the rapid growth envisaged by the provider. [001 PG New DAPs Plan] The team formed the view that the planned physical learning spaces should meet the needs of the postgraduate student population. These spaces should support the School in developing active learners, by enabling communication, and creating opportunities for interdisciplinary learning, collaboration and innovation, thus aligning with its Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy.

61      The School's learning resources plan [038] has been updated to take account of postgraduate student needs and continues to evidence a considered approach to the provision of physical and digital resources which is characterised by inclusivity and equity. It

focuses on the provision of sufficient resources through developing its own collection by deploying a dedicated budget to provide access to required materials for all modules, the use of online library provision and institutional partnerships, for example, JISC and the British Library. [038 PG learning resources plan] Access to other digital resources to support students, such as the learning management system, digital tools and software packages and baseline IT equipment is also provided. [038 PG learning resources plan]

62 The School's learning management system, which it also plans to use for the planned postgraduate provision, is intended to be an online hub for students' learning experience. [038 PG learning resources plan] It has the potential to be an accessible, inclusive, and interactive learning community as it will be used for sharing and accessing programme and module information, institutional information and policies and learning materials provided by staff and, where appropriate, curated by students. It will also be used for setting, submitting, and providing/responding to feedback on formative and summative assignments and communication among both students and staff, [038 PG learning resources plan] and the School plans to induct postgraduate students into its use. [001 PG New DAPs Plan]

63 The team considered the School's plans for the provision of physical and virtual learning environments to be credible and comprehensive. They have the potential to aid the provision of a safe, accessible and reliable environment for postgraduate students.

64 There is no immediate plan to offer the postgraduate programme at a distance but there is the stated ambition to offer a part-time distance learning option from 2023. [001 PG New DAPs Plan] In readiness for this the School has developed an online Level 7 delivery plan. [082] To support the provision of a high-quality online-only learning experience at Level 7, the School sets out its main strategic intentions: personalisation, socially augmented learning, impactful content and coherence across the digital and physical worlds by creating immersive, blended experiences, whilst also excelling at online-only. [082 level 7 online delivery plan] The plan sets out areas of continued focus and further development so that the School can make progress towards the successful delivery of online programmes at Level 7. The School seeks to further refine its use of the existing technological ecosystem and intends to give special consideration to accessibility and portability, attendance and engagement, socially augmented learning, technical support, academic support and student support and welfare. [082 level 7 online delivery plan] In addition to the areas of continued focus and further development, the School has also identified aspects of students' online learning experience that would benefit from further enhancement over the next few years. While it does not regard these areas of enhancement as essential for the successful delivery of a robust and high-quality online programme at Level 7, they are in keeping with its strategic intentions and commitment to keeping pace in the future with the latest developments and innovations in online learning.

65 The team formed the opinion that the plan is evidence of robust planning for future distance-only provision and is comprehensive and credible. The team is therefore assured that the School is likely to put in place robust arrangements to ensure that students studying at a distance have sufficient and effective learning opportunities.

66 The School's plans for postgraduate students to monitor their progress are the same as those in place for its undergraduate students. These include interactions with the Academic Tutor, the creation and review of student success plans and the timely provision of formative and summative assessment feedback and tracking of assessment grades through the student record system. The plans were evaluated in the 2020 NDAPs Test (paragraph 116 NDAPs Test report) and found to be credible.

**Assessment**

67      The School's approach to assessment at postgraduate level is set out in its postgraduate Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. [067] It has three elements: diagnostic examinations and assessments which will be used primarily at the admissions stage as well as formative and summative assessments. The School's assessment approval procedure [005–2.16] in the academic regulations outlines its approach to ensuring the validity and reliability of assessment through a process of assessment design and summative assessment approval, including alternative assessments and retakes. The team found these arrangements were already evaluated in the 2020 NDAPs Test and the approach was found to be robust (paragraph 118 NDAPs Test report). The academic regulations also contain the assessment of prior learning policy and procedure. [005 – 2.10] According to the policy the School does not award postgraduate recognition of prior learning.

68      The team concluded that the School has developed valid and reliable processes of assessment that should enable postgraduate students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.

69      The School's plans for postgraduate provision in relation to staff and student engagement in dialogue to promote a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made mirror those for its undergraduate provision and the 2020 NDAPs Test (paragraph 123 NDAPs Test report) established that there are clear plans in place.

70      The School is committed to communicating clearly with postgraduate students the expectations regarding academic integrity both through its Academic Misconduct Policy and Procedure, [005 – 2.11] which it plans to make available to postgraduate students through the student handbook and the School's website, and Student Code of Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures in the general policies and procedures document. [006 – 2.1] The School also plans to educate postgraduate students about good academic practice through induction and ongoing training. [001 PG New DAPs Plan, 005 – 2.11 Academic Misconduct Policy] This assured the team that the School is likely to provide postgraduate students with appropriate opportunities to develop an understanding of, and the necessary skills to demonstrate, good academic practice.

71      In relation to unacceptable academic practice, the School intends to utilise its existing Academic Misconduct Policy [005 – 2.11] for the planned postgraduate provision. The School's approach for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice has been evaluated in the 2020 NDAPs Test and found to be 'credible as it is proactive and has the potential to prevent or minimise academic malpractice' and there is 'a clear protocol for the reporting of suspected cases and a transparent process for addressing cases' (paragraphs 124-125 NDAPs Test report). The team noted the addition of penalty points for academic misconduct offences at postgraduate level to the Academic Misconduct Policy. [005 – 2.11]

72      The processes for marking assessments and for moderating marks of summative assessments are clearly articulated in the School's Marking and Moderation Policy [005– 2.9] contained in the academic regulations. The School intends to use its existing policy for marking and moderating postgraduate student work and these arrangements have been evaluated in the 2020 NDAPs Test and found to be 'robust and likely to aid the validity and accuracy of decision-making as it involves a comprehensive and staged process consisting of standardisation, marking, moderation, sign-off by the assessment leader and external moderation of samples by the external examiner' (paragraph 121 NDAPs Test report).

**External examining**

73      The School's plans for the use of external examiners for the planned postgraduate

provision mirror those for its undergraduate provision as set out in its External Examiner Policy and Procedure [005 – 2.19] and assessed in the 2020 NDAPs Test (paragraphs 127-128 NDAPs Test report) which were found to be sound. The School plans to recruit two external examiners for the postgraduate programme [001 PG New DAPs Plan, M1 academic governance] and their roles and responsibilities will be the same as those of undergraduate external examiners and include the moderation of assessment tasks and student assessed work. [005 – 2.19 EE Policy]

74      The School's plans for considering and responding to external examiner reports for the planned postgraduate provision mirror those for its undergraduate provision as set out in its External Examiner Policy and Procedure [005 – 2.19] and assessed in the 2020 NDAPs Test (paragraph 129 NDAPs Test report) which established that there is 'a clear and transparent process for considering and responding to reports'.

## Academic appeals and student complaints

75      The School intends to use the same academic appeals and complaints policies and procedures [005 - 2.13 academic appeals procedure, 005- 2.14 complaints procedure] for its postgraduate provision that are in use for the undergraduate provision. The School's procedures for handling appeals and complaints have been assessed in the 2020 NDAPs Test and were found to be 'clear and definitive' (paragraph 131 NDAPs Test report) and 'likely to be fair and deliver timely outcomes' (paragraph 135 NDAPs Test report) and the planned approach was deemed to be 'credible and robust' (paragraph 130 NDAPs Test report).

## Conclusions

76      The School's approaches and processes for the design and approval of its programme are credible, robust and effective and require involvement of independent external expertise and students. The School's procedures were effectively implemented when the proposed postgraduate programme was designed and approved and ensured the coherence of a programme with multiple pathways. The School has been able to design a programme with a degree of flexibility in terms of mode of delivery and study location of students. The School's plans to ensure a high-quality student learning experience when some postgraduate provision will be delivered entirely online from 2023 are well advanced and robust with careful planning of learning and dedicated resource allocation to guarantee the quality of the academic experience which should ensure that learning opportunities for distance learning students will be effective.

77      The School has articulated a clear and innovative approach to postgraduate learning, teaching and assessment in its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and the planned approach is credible. The School has developed valid and reliable assessment processes which should enable postgraduate students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought. The approach to enable postgraduate students to monitor their progress is coherent and appropriate. The detailed plans for the development of physical, social and virtual learning environments and learning resources are well considered, credible and likely to meet the need of the postgraduate student population. The planned teaching and learning space is likely to enable the School to provide adequate space that can accommodate the anticipated growth of the student body.

78      The planned processes for marking assessments and the moderation of marks for summative assessments are clearly set out and robust and should facilitate valid and accurate decision-making. The School's plans for preventing unacceptable academic practice are sound. There are clear protocols for reporting suspected cases and a transparent process for investigating and responding to them.

79      External examiners' roles are clearly defined and there are clear lines of responsibility and a transparent process for the consideration of external examiner reports.

80      The School's approach to handling academic appeals and complaints is robust and processes are transparent and are likely to be fair and deliver timely outcomes for students.

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

# Criterion C: Scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of staff

## Criterion C1 - The role of academic and professional staff

82      This criterion states that:

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

**The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence**

83      The assessment team considered or assessed, specifically in relation to the proposed Level 7 provision:

a       Whether the academic staff employed by the School possess appropriate academic and professional expertise commensurate with the expertise required to deliver Level 7 master's programmes. To assess this, the team considered the postgraduate New DAPs Plan, [001] the Quality Framework, [004] the postgraduate Governance and Academic Regulations, [005] the academic staffing spreadsheet, [022] academic staff CVs [017] and non-academic staff CVs. [024] The team also discussed the School's plans as to how academic expertise will be assured in meetings with senior staff. [M4 final meeting]

b       Whether academic staff members have an understanding of current research and advanced scholarship of their discipline appropriate for postgraduate provision and whether such knowledge and understanding will directly inform and enhance postgraduate students' learning. The team also considered how the School will facilitate active engagement with research and/or advanced scholarship required for delivery of a Level 7 qualification. The team therefore examined academic staff CVs, [017] the academic staffing spreadsheet, [022] and the academic pro forma contract. [023] The team further tested the School's understanding of this criterion in meetings with senior and academic staff. [M2 academic and professional staff]

c       How the School will ensure that the staff have opportunities to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design. To assess this element, the team reviewed the postgraduate New DAPs Plan, [001] the Academic Community Development Framework, [011] the Quality Framework [004] and met with senior and academic staff. [M2 academic and professional staff]

d       Whether academic staff have sufficient expertise in providing feedback on assessment, which will be timely, constructive and developmental, and appropriate for Level 7 programmes. The team therefore considered the academic staff CVs, [017] the academic staffing spreadsheet, [022] and the Academic Community Development Framework. [011] The team also discussed the proposed staff training with senior and academic staff. [M2 academic and professional staff]

e       Whether staff have opportunities to engage with the activities of other higher education providers, for example, through becoming external examiners, validation panel members or external reviewers. The team assessed this by examining the

register of external appointments [013] and met with academic staff. [M2 academic and professional staff]

f        Whether the School has made a rigorous assessment of the skills/expertise required to teach all students and the appropriate staff/student ratios. The team therefore considered the postgraduate New DAPs Plan, [001] the postgraduate resourcing plan [073] and met with senior and academic staff. [M2 academic and professional staff]

## What the evidence shows

84        Overall responsibility for ensuring scholarship and pedagogic effectiveness is vested in the School's Academic Council which operates under delegated authority from the Board of Directors [005 – PG Governance and Academic Regulations] and is supported by the Director of Teaching and Learning. [004 Quality Framework, 005 PG Governance and Academic Regulations]

85        The postgraduate New DAPs Plan [001] recognises the importance of the number and quality of staff in both academic and professional support functions. This overarching statement reflects the School's commitment to recruiting high-calibre staff to teach its programmes. Most of the School's academic and professional staff needed to deliver the undergraduate programme have already been appointed and it is the School's intention to extend their teaching responsibility to master's level. The analysis of current academic staff CVs [017] and the academic staffing spreadsheet [022] reveals that the existing faculty have the academic and professional expertise commensurate with the requirements to develop and deliver postgraduate programmes. This is because eight staff hold a doctorate (PhD) qualification, three have master's qualifications and one member of staff is currently in the process of studying for a combined Level 7/8 degree. This demonstrates that all existing staff members who will be expected to deliver the postgraduate programme possess qualifications at a level that is equivalent or higher than the qualification that they will be delivering and have appropriate academic expertise.

86        The analysis of academic staff CVs [017] and the academic staffing spreadsheet [022] shows that all members of academic staff have extensive experience of working within the higher education sector and are actively engaged with continuing professional development. The team concluded that the current faculty possess an in-depth understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their disciplines. This is because one member of staff is a leading expert in the interdisciplinary field, 10 members of faculty have extensively published in peer-reviewed academic journals and/or frequently presented at national and international conferences.

87        While the School does not recruit research-intensive academic staff, it allocates ███ of academic staff's contractual time for research and scholarship activities. ██████ ████████████████████ However, staff members are not contractually obliged to undertake research and may choose to dedicate this time to 'curriculum development, teaching development, or any other activity which is of benefit to the School and is in line with wider duties'. [023 academic proforma contract] The academic staff contract has not been updated to reflect the School's entry into the postgraduate market and this might mean that some members of postgraduate teaching staff would not engage in research and focus on teaching-related activities only. The team therefore discussed the suitability of this allocation in the context of planned postgraduate provision with senior and academic staff to reassure itself that staff members delivering the postgraduate programme maintain an appropriate understanding of current research and advanced scholarship.

88      The postgraduate Programme Director explained that the School does not believe in a dichotomy of research versus teaching and stated that the School's teaching methods and course materials are intended to be continually underpinned by current practical research and, as such, research activities would be inherently interwoven into teaching preparation and would not be limited to the stipulated ███ of the contracted time. [M2 role of academic and professional staff] Furthermore, the team learnt that the School has recently appointed a Head of Research who is currently leading a working group responsible for the development of the School's research strategy and there would be scope to review the ███ allocation of time for research activity.

89      Staff currently teaching on the undergraduate programme stated that they considered the time allocation to be sufficient to ensure that they can keep up to date. [M2 academic and professional staff] On this basis the assessment team was reassured that the School has effective processes in place to ensure that staff will continue to keep abreast of current research and/or advanced scholarship once delivery of the postgraduate programme has commenced. This is because the allocation of ███ research time is consistent with sector practice within institutions that are primarily teaching-focused and because this allocation does not reflect research that is carried out in preparation for teaching. When this is included, the overall time spent on undertaking research activities will be materially larger which means that members of staff would have sufficient time to keep their expertise current.

90      The School is an associate member of Advance HE and existing staff who are not already fellows are encouraged to apply. Staff who are in the process of applying would be supported through internal training sessions including refresher training on module design, Level 7 teaching and assessment. [M2 academic and professional staff] Four members of staff have already been awarded an Advance HE fellowship or higher and all faculty members have experience of delivering higher education programmes, including at postgraduate level, from a variety of institutions in the UK and abroad. [017 academic staff CVs, 022 academic staffing spreadsheet] This clearly demonstrates staff members' commitment to keeping current with their research and scholarship knowledge. Discussions during the online assessment visit revealed that the School has also established a fortnightly internal forum where members of academic staff engage in reflection on their current undergraduate teaching practice and discuss aspects of course delivery, assessment and associated matters. The School plans to extend this forum to include postgraduate provision. [M2 role of academic and professional staff] This should ensure that academic staff continue to reflect on their teaching and share their knowledge and understanding with their colleagues.

91      Training and development opportunities that the School intends to deliver aimed at enabling staff to enhance their practice and scholarship include a range of suitable activities such as workshops on the exploration of the distinction between postgraduate certificate and postgraduate diploma, teaching methods at Level 7, interpreting and implementing Level 7 grade descriptors, assessment of research dissertations, supporting capstone projects at Level 7, and pedagogy training to include supporting advanced independent study at Level 7. [011 – Academic Community Development Framework] Academic staff members who met the team were able to clearly articulate what they hoped to achieve from the training programme including enhanced teaching practice, effective supervision of capstone projects at postgraduate level and continuing development of skills and expertise. [M2 role of academic and professional staff] Attendance at relevant training sessions will be monitored using a training tracker [M2 role of academic and professional staff] and the School plans to monitor engagement with postgraduate staff training and its effectiveness through annual reports to the Academic Council. [001 PG New DAPs Plan, 004 Quality Framework]

92      The School's plans are robust and credible because the proposed list of training activities is extensive and includes staff development on matters that are distinct from

undergraduate provision. This should allow academic staff to make appropriate distinctions between the undergraduate and postgraduate levels of teaching and assessment. The team was therefore satisfied that the School will be offering suitable development opportunities for staff for them to enhance their pedagogic practice.

93      Responsibility for ensuring that all academic staff have opportunities to engage with and gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design rests with the Director of Teaching and Learning and a strategy for staff development to facilitate this has been articulated in the School's existing Academic Community Development Framework. [011] This document has been recently updated to include internal and external training and developmental opportunities relevant to postgraduate provision. In addition to the proposed series of workshops (see paragraph 92 above), faculty members would participate in fortnightly reflective meetings, annual faculty team away days and the annual LIS symposium, [001 PG New DAPs Plan] all of which would provide opportunities to explore postgraduate curriculum development and assessment design.

94      All existing academic staff already have extensive experience in assessing at postgraduate level. [017 academic staff CVs, 022 academic staffing spreadsheet] In addition, the training opportunities discussed above are expected to include workshops relating to the assessment of Level 7 modules and capstone projects. [011 – Academic Community Development Framework] The School is also in the process of appointing two external examiners for the postgraduate programme who will be expected to comment on the standard of marking as well as the quality of feedback. [M2 academic and professional staff] Together this should ensure that feedback to postgraduate students is appropriate and constructive and facilitates their development. Therefore, the team is satisfied that the academic staff will have the appropriate expertise to deliver constructive and developmental Level 7 assessment feedback.

95      The team noted that some academic staff have already had the opportunity to gain experience in curriculum and assessment design as members of the programme development team during the development and approval of both the undergraduate and the proposed postgraduate programmes. [001 PG New DAPs Plan]

96      Staff have sufficient opportunities to engage with the activities of other higher education providers. This is because the School encourages such external activities [M2 academic and professional staff] and some academic staff already hold external examining positions at other UK higher education institutions and are members of advisory groups at other organisations. [013 register of external appointments] This should ensure that staff expertise is underpinned by ongoing exposure to innovations and curriculum developments in the higher education sector.

97      The School undertook a detailed analysis of the human resource requirements for the MASc in its postgraduate resourcing plan [073] to ensure that it has the appropriate number of staff in place to deliver the programme and an appropriate breadth of experience and expertise for its development. There is a detailed workload requirement analysis which shows that the School will need three additional academic staff [073 postgraduate resourcing plan] with two posts currently being advertised [M2 academic and professional staff] and one is due to be advertised and recruited to in time for the planned start date of the master's programme in September 2022. [M4 – final meeting] The School initially plans to appoint new staff on a fractional basis and then extend these fractional appointments or convert them into full-time posts as the need arises in future years when more cohorts will have been recruited. [M4 final meeting] The School also analysed the requirements for professional staff but concluded that no additional posts were needed at this stage as support for the additional 20 students of the planned first cohort could be absorbed within the existing staffing structure. [M2 academic and professional staff] The School plans to open its

postgraduate programme with a student/staff ratio of 6:1. This number is expected to increase to 12:1 from 2023-24 in line with the School's plans to recruit further cohorts. [001 PG New DAPs Plan]

98      In the team's view the proposed current and future staff/student ratios are appropriate because they are set at a level that would allow for in-depth academic and pastoral care and support to be offered to students. The team also formed the view that the School has made a rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise required because it has undertaken a formal and detailed evaluation of the workload requirements in its resourcing plan [073] with a mapping exercise that identifies proposed module content that needs to be developed and the type and volume of expertise that would be required to meet those needs. The plan further identifies expertise that already exists within the current staff complement and identifies those areas that will need to be covered by additional staff appointments. This formal mechanism to determine staffing needs is robust and credible and demonstrates that the School's confidence in being able to acquire the remaining expertise is fully justified.

99      The team found that the School's staff recruitment practices have remained unchanged and have already been evaluated in the 2020 NDAPs Test (paragraphs 158-159 NDAPs Test report) demonstrating rigour of process in the recruitment of staff and provided confidence that the School operates credible and robust recruitment practices. The team noted that academic staff have been recruited on the basis of their proven interdisciplinary excellence in higher education alongside their ability in teaching and have sufficient teaching experience at the required levels (see paragraph 86 above).

## Conclusions

100      The School has a good understanding of what it needs to do to ensure that it has appropriate numbers of staff to deliver the planned postgraduate programme and to ensure that everyone who will be involved in teaching on the postgraduate courses is appropriately qualified, supported and developed to the level of the qualification being sought. The School has made a rigorous assessment of the skills and expertise required of its academic and professional staff to be able to extend their offerings to postgraduate programmes. Staffing requirements have been carefully mapped out against the number of postgraduate students the School proposes to recruit and against the specialist expertise that will be needed to effectively deliver the programme. The staffing plans are credible and appropriate for the type of academic programme it intends to deliver and in respect of the number of postgraduate students it intends to recruit. The plans show an appropriate understanding of the qualifications and expertise that will be required from staff to effectively deliver postgraduate programmes and the School's proposed staff-student ratios are appropriate and exceed sector norms for taught postgraduate provision.

101      The School's recruitment practices are credible, robust, and appropriate for the recruitment of academic staff to deliver postgraduate programmes. The high calibre of existing faculty demonstrates the effectiveness of the process, and plans for future rounds of recruitment correspond to the School's workload planning allocations. The School's existing academic and professional expertise, as well as expertise in providing feedback on assessment, is commensurate with postgraduate provision as academic staff have extensive research, teaching and curriculum design experience.

102      The School's plans to ensure that staff members possess and maintain understanding of current research and advanced scholarship in their discipline are credible as the School devised an extensive training programme that all staff will be expected to attend. A research strategy is currently being developed and will consider the appropriate levels of contractual times that should be dedicated to research. The School is an Associate

Member of Advance HE and academic staff are encouraged to apply for fellowships and to be engaged in external roles in the activities of other higher education institutions.

103    The School plans to ensure that academic staff members have opportunities to gain experience in curriculum development and assessment design. Reflection and evaluation of their teaching and assessment practices are robust and credible as the School's proposed internal training programme for academic staff effectively addresses the distinct needs of postgraduate students with regard to curriculum design, pedagogy, assessment and supervision. The planned internal workshops, faculty away days and annual symposiums should offer ample opportunities for reflection and evaluation.

104    Overall, various sources of evidence clearly demonstrate the School's understanding of this DAPs criterion. There is credible evidence that appropriate staffing resources will be available to deliver the planned postgraduate programme and the School's plans to recruit and support postgraduate teaching staff are coherent, comprehensive and achievable. The team concludes, therefore, that the School understands this criterion and that its postgraduate New DAPs Plan is credible and would enable the criterion to be fully met by the end of the probation period.

# Criterion D: Environment for supporting students

## Criterion D1 - Enabling student development and achievement

105     This criterion states that:

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

**The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence**

106     The assessment team considered or assessed, specifically in relation to the proposed Level 7 provision:

a     Whether the School takes a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to determine and evaluate how it enables student development and achievement for its postgraduate students. To determine this the team considered the postgraduate New DAPs Plan, [001] the Academic Progress Policy, [005 – 2.15] the Attendance Policy, [005 – 2.5] the Quality Framework, [004] the Postgraduate Student Support Framework, [066] the terms of reference of the Learning Resources and Property Working Group, [009] the Postgraduate Student Engagement Framework, [010] the estates plan [019] and the learning resources plan. [038] The team also discussed the School's approach during the visit with senior, teaching and professional support staff. [M3 student support, M4 final meeting]

b     How the School's postgraduate students will be advised about and inducted into their study programmes and whether this process will be effective, and how the School will take account of different students' choices and needs. The team therefore reviewed the postgraduate New DAPs Plan, [001] the Postgraduate Governance and Academic Regulations, [005] the General Policies and Procedures [006] and the Postgraduate Student Support Framework. [066] The team also discussed the School's plans during the visit with teaching and professional support staff. [M3 student support]

c     Whether the School provides opportunities for all postgraduate students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression. To determine this the team reviewed the postgraduate New DAPs Plan [001] and the Postgraduate Student Support Framework. [066] The team also discussed the planned approach with senior, teaching and support staff. [M3 student support, M4 final meeting]

**What the evidence shows**

107     Initially, the School intends to recruit only 20 postgraduate students, but this is planned to be extended to 80 during the subsequent academic years. [001 New DAPs Plan, M3 student support] The School identified postgraduate student development needs and support requirements prior to the development of the postgraduate programme through extensive market research. This research focused on the identification of what is expected from future interdisciplinary professionals and how higher education providers can ensure that those graduate attributes are achieved. In addition, the School invited prospective students to participate in focus groups where the nature of the proposed programme and postgraduate student needs were considered. [M3 student support] The findings from both initiatives contributed to the development of the School's Postgraduate Student Support Framework. [066] The School's student support has three dimensions: personal, academic

and professional development and the new support framework therefore includes the academic support policy and the career development and wellbeing frameworks.

108     The planned support structure for each postgraduate student is made up of an Academic Tutor for academic support, a Welfare Adviser for wellbeing support and a Careers Mentor. Postgraduate students are also expected to have access to specialist support for counselling, mental and occupational health and specific learning differences support upon referral. [001 New DAPs Plan, 066 PG student support framework] Students should meet their Academic Tutor at least twice termly. Meetings would follow a structured format that includes details of consideration of students' successes, areas of challenge, actions for the future and student engagement with community initiatives and wider opportunities. [066 student support framework] This meeting would form the basis for the creation of a student success plan that each postgraduate student would be expected to complete. Additionally, students with specific learning differences would also have a student support plan through which reasonable adjustment needs would be monitored. [066 student support framework]

109     Postgraduate students' academic progression would be monitored in line with the process for undergraduate students and has been outlined in the Academic Progress Policy contained in the Postgraduate Governance and Academic Regulations. [005 – 2.15] This policy is complemented by the Attendance Policy with attendance monitored on a weekly basis. [M3 student support] Students at risk would be flagged and expected to attend additional meetings with their Academic Tutor where support needs would be identified. [005 2.5 attendance policy] To take into account postgraduate students' needs, the interval of the meetings between the Academic Tutor and postgraduate students has been extended [M3 student support] but otherwise if follows the undergraduate approach. To evaluate postgraduate students' development and achievement the School also intends to conduct annual reviews of the provision which would include the consideration of continuation, attainment and progression statistics and student feedback. [001 New DAPs Plan] These reviews would be underpinned by an assessment of the School's achievements against relevant key performance indicators (KPIs). [M3 student support]

110     The School's plans for monitoring postgraduate student progression and achievement are robust and credible. This is because the academic tutoring system combined with attendance monitoring includes several 'touch points' between the tutors and students which should provide ample opportunities to identify any students who may be at risk of non-progression or who may need additional help and support. Attendance monitoring on a weekly basis represents a very regular interval that should ensure that all non-engaging students are identified early, and appropriate interventions can take place in sufficient time for those interventions to be effective. The proposed student success plan provides a sound basis for facilitating students' academic and personal development as it is personalised and requires student reflection prior to and post meetings with the Academic Tutor, thus facilitating direct and meaningful engagement. Moreover, as it is to be in written form that is kept as a formal record of progress and achievement, specific objectives set can be monitored effectively. The planned regular reviews of student progression and achievement and measuring of success against institutional KPIs should ensure sufficient institutional oversight.

111     The School anticipates that, in the initial stages, the support needs of the first postgraduate cohort can be absorbed by the existing support provision, but it would keep the demand and usage under review. [M3 student support] The School has anticipated potential differences in the support needs of undergraduate and postgraduate students and addressed them by making changes to the existing support provision for undergraduate students. For example, the School has recognised that postgraduate students may have more extensive commitments outside of the course due to domestic or professional

requirements. To accommodate those requirements, the counselling services will be extended to six days a week once postgraduate students have been recruited. [M3 student support] The School also aims to be proactive and build resilience among the postgraduate student cohorts and not focus exclusively on reactive support. [M3 student support] While amendments to the existing student support structures are currently limited to the extension of counselling services, they are appropriate as they show clear consideration and evaluation of the needs that are specific to postgraduate students and distinct from undergraduate students.

112      In the team's view, the School's plans outlined above demonstrate a comprehensive strategic and operational approach to the determination of postgraduate student support needs. This is because the School's Postgraduate Student Support Framework is underpinned by robust market research and direct student feedback. Both of those provide sound foundations with regard to students' expectations on what support they would need. The planned support structure for each postgraduate student is appropriate and should enable the personal, academic and professional development of postgraduate students. Therefore, the team concluded that the School takes a comprehensive, strategic and operational approach to determining postgraduate student needs in addition to those that are already identified for undergraduate programmes.

113      To reflect the introduction of a postgraduate cohort, the School has also updated its existing learning resource plan [038] and reconfigured the estate. [019 – estates plan, M3 student support] The layout of the School's premises has been reconfigured to include postgraduate teaching spaces and a dedicated postgraduate common room. [019 – estates plan, M4 final meeting] With regard to learning resources, students on the master's programme will have access to a third-party online provider of textbooks and additional online resources on JSTOR and the Web of Science in addition to the School's own resources. [038 PG learning resources plan] The number of core textbooks available to postgraduate students in hard copy in the School's library will be increased to three in comparison to two that are being offered on the undergraduate programme. Postgraduate students will also have an additional personal resource budget of £200. [038 PG learning resource plan, M4 final meeting] Further discretionary funding that may be used for attending conferences and other developmental activities would also be available to students. [M3 student support] The revisions made show that the School has carefully considered the needs of postgraduate students and recognised the need for additional learning materials and dedicated postgraduate spaces.

114      The School intends to use all formal and informal feedback from postgraduate students to inform future revisions of the student support mechanisms. [001 PG New DAPs Plan] The plans are robust as they include evaluation cycles and annual revisions in response to student feedback. This indicates a systematic approach that will be ongoing and agile and should ensure appropriate responsiveness to student needs. In particular, the focus on ensuring that student feedback is collected through the Student Voice Committee, postgraduate student representation on relevant committees, as well as module and annual programme surveys, [001 PG New DAPs Plan] should ensure that postgraduate students have ample opportunities to raise any concerns that they may have and help to shape the nature of their support arrangements.

115      Information and advice regarding postgraduate programmes will be given to students through the School's prospectus, course materials, the student handbook and during their induction. [001 New DAPs Plan, M3 student support] Postgraduate students would also be allocated an Academic Tutor who will be able to advise them on any matters relating to their course on an individual basis. [M3 student support] Regulations and policies including the academic regulations, the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy, the Disability Policy, the Student Conduct Policy and others are contained in the Postgraduate

Governance and Academic Regulations [005] and the General Policies and Procedures document. [006] Both are comprehensive and provide detailed information regarding assessment and contain the policies on reasonable adjustments, extenuating circumstances, academic misconduct, research ethics and marking and moderation as well as learning and teaching strategies and overall support mechanisms. [005 PG academic regulations, 006 general policies] The School plans to make these documents accessible to postgraduate students on the VLE and to include all of this information in the postgraduate student handbook. [001 PG New DAPs Plan]

116     The School's induction plans for postgraduate students and monitoring of their effectiveness are clearly articulated in the Postgraduate Student Support Framework [066] and mirror those for undergraduate students. The team regards the School's plans for the induction to be appropriate for the size and type of the institution and should cater well to the different types of students that the School expects to recruit. This is because information is planned to be provided in a variety of formats including policy documents, the student handbook, through induction activities, and through individual contact with the Academic Tutor. [001 New DAPs Plan] This means that students should have the ability to choose how they access information and should have the opportunity to clarify any uncertainties they may have with their tutors.

117     The planned induction programme is appropriate for postgraduate students because it includes a combination of social and course-related activities and compulsory sessions are complemented by optional ones. [006 PG student support framework] This should make the induction programme attractive to postgraduate students and should ensure that they appropriately engage with the sessions. The ability of postgraduate students to request additional workshops and the plan to survey the postgraduate students after the induction and to incorporate their feedback when planning activities for the subsequent academic year [066 PG student support framework] is also appropriate as it shows that the School is prepared to be responsive and willing to address specific needs of its postgraduate student population and will be regularly reviewing the effectiveness of the induction programme. On this basis, the team concluded that postgraduate students are likely to be advised about, and appropriately inducted into, their study programme in an effective manner and that account will be taken of different students' choices and needs.

118     Ultimate responsibility for ensuring appropriate postgraduate student support is vested in the Academic Council and its subcommittees in the same manner as is the case for the School's undergraduate programmes. The School plans that the Academic Council will review the effectiveness of both undergraduate and postgraduate student support arrangements annually, based on compliance with KPIs, student feedback and reports from the respective support services. [004 Quality Framework, M3 student support] Specific operational responsibilities have been allocated to individual role holders and dedicated working groups that mirror those for undergraduate provision. Overall postgraduate student support is expected to be managed on a day-to-day basis in the same way as undergraduate provision by the Director of Student Experience, Careers and Partnership, supported by the Registrar, the Head of Quality, and the Postgraduate Programme Director. [004 quality framework, M3 academic staff] The Learning Resources and Property Working Group, a subcommittee of the Academic Council, is responsible for ensuring that undergraduate and postgraduate learning resources are appropriate and that their suitability is reviewed at regular intervals and meetings of the group are to take place three times a year. [009 ToR Learning Resources and Property Working Group]

119     The team is satisfied that Academic Council oversight of student support arrangements for all of the School's provision should ensure that a single body is in control and has responsibility for ensuring the effectiveness of the Student Support Framework and for ensuring that reviews of the support arrangements will be undertaken at regular intervals

and amendments made as appropriate. The allocation of specific responsibilities to individual postholders should assure clear accountability and minimise overlaps.

120     The planned support systems to monitor postgraduate student progression and performance will be the same as for the School's undergraduate provision. [026 PG digital systems and infrastructure] The School intends to use a range of portals and platforms with a clear division of labour between the learning management system centred around teaching and learning and the student record system. They have been deemed fit for purpose in the 2020 NDAPs Test (paragraphs 201-203 NDAPs Test report) and should therefore ensure that postgraduate student progression and performance can also be monitored accurately, and that academic and non-academic information needs can be satisfied.

121     The School's plan for the provision of opportunities for postgraduate students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression are detailed in the postgraduate New DAPs Plan [001] and in the postgraduate student support plan [066] with the latter outlining the plans regarding students' personal, academic and professional development. Personal, academic and professional skills development will begin at application where postgraduate students will be expected to identify an industry-based problem that they would like to address during their studies. They would then be expected to use the methods and techniques learned in each individual module and apply them to their selected problem and all learning would culminate in the students' individual capstone projects. [M3 student support] Thus, the development of personal, professional and academic skills is expected to be highly personalised.

122     The School proposes to recruit onto the postgraduate programme from its own undergraduate programme as well as from traditional, discipline-focused universities. [M4 final meeting] The School is aware that this is likely to result in disparities of students' prior knowledge and understanding of principles and methodologies of either arts (if they come from a science background) or science (if they come from arts backgrounds) and may be exacerbated if there are large numbers of students who enter the programme after having completed the School's undergraduate programme. They would have been trained in interdisciplinary methods for three years while that would not be the case for students coming from more traditional universities. [M3 student support] To mitigate the effects of this, the School intends to ensure that all applicants to the master's programme are clear about those challenges prior to commencing their studies. [M4 final meeting] The School is confident that the structure of the programme and module content that intersects throughout the programme would facilitate the levelling up process but also intends to develop supportive structures, for example through drop-in sessions, the Academic Support Tutor system and peer support. [M3 student support] In the team's view, those initiatives should adequately support students from different backgrounds to understand the methods that are adopted in disciplines not studied previously. However, the effectiveness of those initiatives needs to be monitored closely during the probationary period. Overall, the team was satisfied that the School is likely to provide appropriate opportunities for postgraduate students to enable their personal and academic progression.

123     Senior staff explained that the School's careers framework which sets out the plans for the development of students' professional skills would apply to postgraduate students in the same manner as to undergraduate students. However, as the School expects a diverse group of postgraduate students, it intends to evaluate the postgraduate career support once the students are enrolled so that the School can provide input into what activities students would find beneficial. [M3 student support] In the meantime, the School plans to give its postgraduate students similar opportunities to undergraduate students. [066 PG support framework] The School plans to organise non-compulsory career-oriented workshops that would be offered every two to four weeks and would include topics such as goal setting and decision making, persuasion and negotiation, interview training, presentation, public

speaking and others. [066 PG student support framework] The School also plans to offer additional activities that are intended to help with the development of employment and future career management skills such as a breakfast series with external companies that would make presentations on complex topics relevant to the working environment, professional panels that would explore different workstreams, and external guest talks and visits to outside organisations, as well as lifelong alumni networking opportunities and advice on alumni job applications. [066 PG student support framework]

124    The team formed the view that while the careers framework is not yet fully adapted to postgraduate students' needs as programme delivery has not yet begun, the School's approach of reviewing the framework once it is able to receive feedback directly from postgraduate students is legitimate and likely to result in activities with which students will wish to engage. As such, it shows that the School is agile and student focused. Therefore, the team considers that the School is likely to provide appropriate opportunities for postgraduate students to develop personally and professionally.

125    The School plans to support postgraduate students in developing the skills to make effective use of learning resources and the virtual learning environment through training during induction [066 PG Student Support Framework] in the same way as it supports its undergraduate students.

126    The School's commitment to equity is guided by the same principles that apply to undergraduate provision and the School expects to deliver these principles through the strategic measures discussed in the 2020 NDAPs Test (paragraph 192 NDAPs Test report). The team deemed the strategic measures to ensure equity in delivering the student experience, including access, success and progression objectives for students with different characteristics, to be appropriate.

## Conclusions

127    While the School's plans for meeting this criterion are based on its plans for the undergraduate programme, the New DAPs Plan and other supporting evidence demonstrate the School's understanding of this criterion. Those plans include appropriate provisions to ensure that the specific support needs of postgraduate students are met. This is because the School's existing Student Support Framework, as well as the resources and estates plans, have all been updated to reflect the planned recruitment of postgraduate students. The School anticipates specific postgraduate student needs in relation to learning resources, learning and social space, and wellbeing and mental health support. The quantity and quality of learning resources will therefore be extended by access to additional postgraduate textbooks and specialist online journals with space requirements being met through the introduction of dedicated postgraduate teaching spaces and a postgraduate common room. The availability of counselling services will be extended to meet postgraduate health and wellbeing support needs.

128    The School's plans to support the personal, professional and academic development of its postgraduate students are well considered and should enable students to develop appropriate skills that are relevant to them personally and the chosen 'real world problem' they wish to tackle during the course of their studies. Careers and professional development support follow the undergraduate model, but activities will be tailored to postgraduate student needs once feedback from students can be obtained.

129    The School has credible and robust plans for monitoring the effectiveness of its support provisions. There is likely to be sufficient institutional oversight, with the Academic Council expected to review the effectiveness of postgraduate support arrangements on the basis of formal student feedback and measuring achievement against KPIs. Staff

demonstrated good awareness of what is required and how they plan to support their incoming postgraduate students.

130    Overall, the team concludes that the School's plans are comprehensive, realistic and capable of being delivered within the existing student support structures. The team also concludes that the School understands this criterion and that its postgraduate New DAPs Plan is credible and would enable the criterion to be met by the end of the probation period.

# Criterion E: Evaluation of performance

## Criterion E1 - Evaluation of performance

131      This criterion states that:

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

**The evidence considered and why the team considered this evidence**

132      The assessment team considered or assessed, specifically in relation to the proposed Level 7 provision:

a      Whether critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the School's postgraduate higher education provision and that action will be taken in response to matters raised through internal or external monitoring and review. The team therefore examined the postgraduate New DAPs Plan, [001] the Quality Framework, [004] the postgraduate Governance and Academic Regulations, [005] and the postgraduate Student Engagement Framework. [006]

b      Whether clear mechanisms exist for assigning and discharging action in relation to the scrutiny and monitoring of its postgraduate provision. To do this the team therefore examined the postgraduate New DAPs Plan, [001] the Quality Framework, [004] and the postgraduate Governance and Academic Regulations. [005]

c      Whether ideas and expertise from within and outside the School are drawn into its arrangements for programme design, approval, delivery and review. The team therefore examined the postgraduate New DAPs Plan [001] and the External Expertise Academic Framework in the postgraduate Governance and Academic Regulations. [005 – 2.20] The team also considered the postgraduate approval process, [069] focus group notes for MASc Interdisciplinary Practice, [071] the background to postgraduate programme development document, [074] minutes of MASc programme development stages, [078] postgraduate programme development team notes, [079] and the MASc Interdisciplinary Practice approval report. [110]

**What the evidence shows**

133      The team noted that the 2020 NDAPs Test found that critical self-assessment is integral to the operation of the School's higher education provision (paragraphs 218-219 NDAPs Test report). The School's plans to critically review and self-assess its postgraduate provision through internal and external monitoring and review mechanisms mirror that of its undergraduate provision, [001 PG New DAPs Plan, 004 Quality Framework, 005 Governance and Academic Regulations, 006 Student Engagement Framework] which were deemed to be 'considered and thorough' (paragraph 228 NDAPs Test report) and therefore give confidence in the School's planned approach for the postgraduate provision.

134      The School's plans for monitoring its postgraduate provision mirror those for the undergraduate provision [001 PG New DAPs Plan, 004 Quality Framework, 005 Governance and Academic Regulations] and the 2020 NDAPs Test found that 'clear and appropriate mechanisms for identifying resulting actions, and for assigning and discharging responsibilities both for carrying them out and for oversight' exist (paragraph 228 NDAPs

Test report).

135     The School's plans to use internal and external expertise to set standards through its programme design and approval processes, [005–2.21 PG Programme Design, Development, Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures] and to ensure the quality of teaching and learning through the peer observation process [011 PG Academic Community Development Framework] where all academic staff are observed at least annually, mirror those for its undergraduate provision. These were found to be a 'considered and robust approach to the use of internal and external expertise' in the 2020 NDAPs Test (paragraph 220 NDAPs Test report) and the team did not assess them again.

136     The team noted that the completion of the formal programme approval process for the undergraduate programme in 2020 (see NDAPs Test report paragraph 220) and the postgraduate programme in February 2022, which used ideas and expertise from within and outside the School [069 PG approval process, 071 focus group for MASc Interdisciplinary Practice, 074 background to PG programme development, 078 Minutes of MASc programme development stages, 079 PG programme development team notes, 110 MASc Interdisciplinary Practice approval report] demonstrate that ideas and expertise from within and outside the School are drawn into its arrangements for programme design, approval and delivery.

## Conclusions

137     The School's plans for this criterion with regard to the planned postgraduate provision are not materially different from those for its undergraduate provision. As the School's planned approach to the review and evaluation of its academic provision was deemed to be comprehensive, coherent and realistic in the 2020 NDAPs Test, the team concludes, therefore, that the provider understands this criterion and that the provider's postgraduate New DAPs Plan is credible and would enable the DAP criterion to be met by the end of the probation period.

## New Degree Awarding Powers overarching criterion

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

**Conclusions**

139      The 2020 NDAPs Test found that 'that the School has an emerging self-critical, cohesive academic community with a clear commitment to the assurance of standards supported by effective (in prospect) quality systems' (paragraphs 239-240 NDAPs Test report) and the team found that this remains the case.

## Annex

**Evidence**

001 LIS PG New DAPs Plan
003 Access and Participation Plan
004 Quality Framework Updated (22/07/202)
005 PG Governance and Academic Regulations (17/12/2021)
006 PG General Policies and Procedures (Dec 2021)
009 PG Academic Council Working Groups Terms of Reference
010 PG Student Engagement Framework (2022-2023 onwards)
011 PG Academic Community Development Framework Updated (17/12/2021)
013 Register of External Appointments of LIS Faculty
016a Academic Council Minutes 18/12/2019
016b Academic Council Minutes 16/03/20
017 Academic Staff CVs 2021
019 PG Estates Plan
020 PG Organisation Structure Overview Updated
022 Academic Staffing Spreadsheet 2021/05/10
023 Academic Proforma Contract
024 Non-academic Staff CVs
025 Non-academic Staff Proforma Contract
026 PG Digital Systems and IT Infrastructure 2021
027 Staff Handbook (30 June 2021)
028 Register of LIS External Examiners and Advisors Updated
038 PG Learning Resources Plan Updated
041 Scoring Rubric for Faculty Applicant Classes
043 Structured Questions for Faculty Interviews
049 Academic Risk Register 01/08/2021
066 PG Student Support Framework
067 PG Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 15/09/2021
068 Draft MASc Interdisciplinary Practice Programme Specification
069 PG Programme Approval Process
070 Business Case for MASc Interdisciplinary Practice Programme
071 Focus Group for MASc Interdisciplinary Practice Programme
072 Board of Governors Authorisation to Pursue Level 7 DAPs
073 PG Resourcing Plan
074 Background to PG Programme Development
075 PG Strategy Addendum 09/12/2021
076 Regulatory Working Group Minutes 30/11/2021
077 Academic Calendar 2022-2023 and 2023-2024
078 Minutes of MASc Programme Development Stages 1 and 2
079 PG Programme Development Team Notes (Sept/Oct 2021)
080 Draft MASc Interdisciplinary Practice FHEQ Mapping
082 Level 7 Online Delivery Plan
085 MASC Interdisciplinary Practice Module Hours Guide
086 Examples of Key Blocks of Teaching
094 Programme and Module Review and Approval Panel Agenda and Guidance
095 PMRAP Checklist for External Advisors
096 MASc Interdisciplinary Practice Programme Specification for Approval
097 MASC Interdisciplinary Practice Module Forms
098 Paper A: Academic Staff CVs
099 Paper B: Programme Learning Outcomes to Module Learning Outcomes Matrix
100 Paper C: Draft MASc Interdisciplinary Practice FHEQ Mapping
101 Paper D: PG Student Support Framework

102 Paper E: PG Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy (15-09-2021)
103 Paper F: Business Case for MASc Interdisciplinary Practice Programme
104 Paper G: PG Learning Resources Plan Updated
105 Paper H: PG Resourcing Plan
106 Paper I: PG Governance and Academic Regulations (17/12/2021)
107 Paper J: PG General Policies and Procedures (Dec 2021)
108 Paper K: Programme Design, Development, Monitoring and Evaluation Procedures
109 Paper L: Programme Module Review and Approval Panel Membership and Terms of Reference
110 MASc Interdisciplinary Practice Approval Report
111 Programme Team Response to Approval Panel Recommendations
112 PG Induction Plan

Meetings

M1 Academic governance, regulatory framework, academic standards, monitoring and evaluation
M2 Role of academic and professional staff
M3 Quality of the academic experience and enabling student development and achievement
M4 Final meeting

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