



Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Richmond, The American International University in London

December 2017

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About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Richmond, The American International University in London. The review took place from 5 to 7 December 2017 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Matthew Kitching (student reviewer)
- Professor Debbie Lockton
- Dr Ann Read
- Dr Richard Samuels.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provision and to make judgements as to whether or not academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code)¹ setting out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

In Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
 - the setting and maintenance of academic standards
 - the quality of student learning opportunities
 - the information provided about higher education provision
 - the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#)² and explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).³ For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

¹ The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code.

² QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk.

³ Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education.

Key findings

Judgements

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision.

- The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of the degree-awarding body **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice**.

- The personalised learning support provided to students throughout their studies which enables them to develop their personal and academic potential (Expectation B4).
- The wide and varied range of opportunities for students to develop skills and build experience which enables them to develop their professional potential (Expectations B4 and B10).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations**.

By June 2018:

- ensure that terms of reference of committees and the Quality Manual are accurate, aligned and consistent with the regulations of the awarding body (Expectations A2.1 and C)
- ensure that APEs are consistent in their level of detail and meet the requirements of the awarding body (Expectation B8)
- ensure clear reference in the academic complaints policy to the roles of the awarding body and of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (Expectations B9 and C).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following action already being taken to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to students:

- the steps being taken to ensure the integration of external examining for stand-alone courses into examining board processes (Expectation B6).

About the provider

Richmond, the American International University in London (Richmond) is an independent international university established in 1972. It defines its mission in terms of its commitment to internationalism, cosmopolitanism and diversity, to excellence in teaching and learning, to high quality interdisciplinary research and scholarship, to service to the community, to the development of globally active citizens, to engagement with local, national and international business and to the development of graduates for employment and leadership in the global economy.

Richmond offers UK undergraduate degrees through its partnership with The Open University, which validates its undergraduate programmes. Its programmes additionally lead to the award of degrees accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education (MSCHE) of the USA and are structured in a manner characteristic of the higher education system of the USA as regards their four-year duration, their credit structure, the use of Grade Point Averages to record and classify student achievement, and their commitment to education in the liberal arts.

Richmond offers 23 BA programmes leading to the award of a Bachelor of Arts (BA) with dual UK/USA accreditation, as well as a single programme leading to the award of a US-accredited BA, and nine programmes leading to the award of US-accredited master's degrees. In 2016-17, Richmond enrolled a total of 2,280 students of whom 976 were on undergraduate programmes, 69 on postgraduate programmes and 1235 on study abroad programmes and foundation programmes. Richmond employs a total of 94 academic staff of whom 46 are full-time and the remainder part-time.

Richmond's previous major review undertaken by QAA was an Institutional Review in 2013, which resulted in positive outcomes, identifying three features of good practice and three affirmations of actions being taken, and making eight recommendations. Since then and following annual monitoring visits by QAA in 2015 and 2016, Richmond has made effective progress in addressing the recommendations and building on areas of good practice. It has also undergone a number of curricular and organisational changes. It has established institutional strategies for seven distinct areas of its provision; it has completed the alignment of its provision with the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code); it has embedded its committee structures with increased roles for committees responsible for the oversight of its academic provision; it has revised its systems for student support and advice, and has revised its administrative support services.

A key goal for Richmond is to gain degree awarding powers, and it has been undertaking planning with a view to achieving these powers and to self-regulation thereafter. Richmond is aware of the challenges and opportunities posed by changes in the higher education regulatory regimes in the UK and in the USA, and of the challenge of increasing enrolment and retention.

Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations

Expectation (A1): In order to secure threshold academic standards, degree-awarding bodies:

a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)* are met by:

- positioning their qualifications at the appropriate level of the relevant framework for higher education qualifications
- ensuring that programme learning outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptor in the relevant framework for higher education qualifications
- naming qualifications in accordance with the titling conventions specified in the frameworks for higher education qualifications
- awarding qualifications to mark the achievement of positively defined programme learning outcomes

b) consider and take account of QAA's guidance on qualification characteristics

c) where they award UK credit, assign credit values and design programmes that align with the specifications of the relevant national credit framework

d) consider and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.

Quality Code, Chapter A1: UK and European Reference Points for Academic Standards

Findings

1.1 The Institutional Agreement with its awarding body, The Open University (OU) sets out the areas of responsibility delegated to Richmond, outlining both shared and sole responsibilities. Richmond's undergraduate provision is aligned with the FHEQ.

1.2 Richmond's policies and procedures for the setting and maintaining of standards are articulated in its Catalogue and Quality Manual and are designed to be aligned with the Quality Code and associated guidance, the OU's requirements for its undergraduate provision and MSCHE requirements for its undergraduate and postgraduate provision. Currently all undergraduate provision offered at its study centres in Leeds, Florence and Rome is accredited by MSCHE only.

1.3 A 'credit mapping' exercise in 2011-12 established the basis on which the University's curriculum (including its four-year undergraduate degree provision) is articulated in terms of UK credit value, FHEQ level, course learning outcomes and level-appropriate titles. The Catalogue explains the relationship between US and UK credit values involved in

Richmond's provision at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. It also explains the relationship between major and minor curricula including the restrictions on UK-validated awards and the additional credit requirements that may be involved.

1.4 These arrangements, if securely implemented, would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.5 The review team considered the institutional agreement established between the OU and Richmond, the OU's processes and expectations, and MSCHE accreditation documentation. The team also considered FHEQ alignments and benchmarking, arrangements for validation of programmes, and programme specifications. Additionally, the team explored the application of these processes with senior managers and teaching staff.

1.6 The validation processes, as required by the OU, are effectively implemented by Richmond and ensure that UK qualifications are at the appropriate level, and that modules and programme descriptors are aligned with the FHEQ and address Subject Benchmark Statements. All modules and bachelor awards have learning outcomes appropriate to their level and volume. The titles of UK undergraduate degrees contain the name of the major component plus 'with combined studies', to reflect the multi-disciplinary aspects of the liberal arts and the minor component of the degrees, fully in alignment with the FHEQ. External examiners appointed by the OU confirm that academic standards are appropriately maintained.

1.7 The alignment by Richmond of US and UK credit and qualifications frameworks continues to be effective in providing students with dual-accredited undergraduate degrees. There is, however, a potential conflict between the US postgraduate certificate and the FHEQ, in that the former requires 120 credits instead of the 60 credits required under the FHEQ. Richmond does not currently offer any UK-validated postgraduate programmes and is actively considering the issue. The award of exit qualifications (Certificate of Higher Education and Diploma of Higher Education) on the basis of credit accumulation rather than on achievement of positively-defined programme learning outcomes is consistent with the policies of the OU.

1.8 While the OU has ultimate responsibility for setting academic standards, Richmond effectively manages its responsibilities for the use of external reference points to secure threshold academic standards. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.1): In order to secure their academic standards, degree-awarding bodies establish transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how they award academic credit and qualifications.

Quality Code, Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards

Findings

1.9 The OU defines its expectations for its partner institutions' governance and its academic frameworks and regulations, which form the internal reference point for academic standards and quality assurance procedures. Under its arrangements with the MSCHE, Richmond ensures that its own academic frameworks and regulations meet MSCHE expectations and requirements.

1.10 Richmond's approach to managing standards and quality for both UK and US awards is articulated in the Quality Manual and through its deliberative and executive structures. Richmond's business is operated with the oversight of the Board of Trustees and University Board, with academic matters overseen by Academic Board and its subcommittees.

1.11 These arrangements, if securely implemented, would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.12 The review team explored the academic frameworks used to govern higher education provision by reviewing the Institutional Agreement with the OU, OU policies and procedures, MSCHE arrangements, committee and management structures, minutes of internal meetings, policies and procedures and external reports. The team also met senior staff, teaching staff and students to discuss the approach in practice.

1.13 Richmond's academic regulations, policies and procedures are aligned with the OU regulations and these are consistent with the requirements of the FHEQ in respect of undergraduate provision and the Quality Code. The UK academic framework is systematically and consistently applied to secure academic standards and is overseen effectively by the OU. The academic regulations, policies and procedures are robust and comprehensive.

1.14 Richmond has adopted an institution-wide approach to assessment to ensure parity of expectations and uses a Grade Point Average System, which is clearly articulated in documentation and well understood by students. The arrangements for assessment and awards are clearly explained in the University Catalogue and portal. In view of the wide range of modules offered, a final audit of each student's academic achievement is undertaken to ensure they have met the requirements of the FHEQ and of the MSCHE.

1.15 Richmond is currently seeking degree awarding powers and has designed its Quality Manual with a view to gaining these powers and to replacing the quality assurance and enhancement processes formally conducted by or delegated to Richmond by the OU. Consequently, the Quality Manual states that its committees have powers to approve changes to academic regulations, to approve new programmes to undertake programme review, to approve major changes to programmes, and to appoint external examiners. Nevertheless, these powers currently rest with the OU as the awarding body, rather than with Richmond's committees.

1.16 Committees terms of reference contain a number of inaccuracies. There are, for example, references to non-existent committees and to powers that rest with the OU. Although the executive's terms of reference state that it is a standing committee of University Board, this is not acknowledged in the University Board terms of reference or reflected in Richmond's committee structure. The relationship between the Academic Committee of the Board of Trustees and Academic Board is also still under discussion and there is some duplication of effort with, for example, both committees considering external examiners' reports, annual monitoring reports (AMRs) and academic regulations. The review team **recommends** that Richmond ensures that terms of reference of committees and the Quality Manual are accurate, aligned and consistent with the regulations of the awarding body.

1.17 Richmond operates effective academic frameworks and regulations to manage academic standards and quality in a comprehensive and transparent manner. The Expectation is met. However, in terms of governance, its documentation fails to fully acknowledge the roles and responsibilities of the OU and terms of references of committees are not fully aligned and accurate. These shortcomings indicate a need to amend documentation and will not require major change. The associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A2.2): Degree-awarding bodies maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that they approve (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.

Quality Code, Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards

Findings

1.18 Richmond works with the OU to ensure that there are definitive records of programmes. A standard template for programme specifications ensures reference to relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. Richmond provides access to programme specifications and course descriptors through an online repository acting as the definitive record of programme information. The repository includes catalogued documentation since 2008 and is accessible to all stakeholders. Registry Services are responsible for the distribution of official documentation on student progress to employers or further institutions, with students having online access to unofficial transcripts.

1.19 These arrangements, if securely implemented, would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.20 The review team considered the Expectation by scrutinising programme specifications and associated documentation as well as the Quality Manual, and in meetings with senior staff, teaching staff and students.

1.21 Due to the credit-based structure of Richmond's programmes, the component parts of all possible minors are not integrated into programme specifications. Nevertheless, Richmond's processes and procedures allow programme specifications to act as key reference points for its provision. Internal procedures provide version control, with Registry Services retaining definitive versions. Students confirmed that they have access to all information about their programmes and that they understand the intended learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

1.22 Richmond has effective internal procedures for version control and compliance with responsibilities set by the OU. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.1): Degree-awarding bodies establish and consistently implement processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees that ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations.

Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards

Findings

1.23 Richmond follows the validation framework and regulations of the OU as the awarding body. The detailed design and development of new and revised programmes is the remit of Richmond, with processes and responsibilities outlined in its Quality Manual. The relevant Dean of School takes responsibility for the development of programmes and for ensuring appropriate internal and external consultation in the design process. Internal processes require the Academic Board to approve new curriculum developments prior to submission for validation by the OU.

1.24 These arrangements, if securely implemented, would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.25 The review team considered the processes and procedures that enable Richmond to meet the Expectation by scrutinising documentation relating to programme development and approval including the Quality Manual, the OU's regulations, minutes of relevant committees and of programme approval events, as well as meetings with senior and teaching staff.

1.26 Richmond fulfils its responsibilities for programme approval effectively within the context of the agreement with the OU. Faculty members are supported in ensuring that degree programmes comply with equivalent UK standards: documentation provides clear guidelines on key external reference points, including Subject Benchmark Statements and the FHEQ. Academic standards as laid out in programme specifications are set at a level that meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification.

1.27 Additionally, Richmond has a comprehensive approach to programme development and approval, with active participation from across the institution. Proposals are discussed in the School of Study and at the Provost's Council to allow feedback on benchmarking from across different Schools of Study. The Curriculum Development Committee provides the opportunity for further discussion of proposals prior to advancing the proposal to Academic Board for approval.

1.28 Richmond operates effective procedures and processes in programme design and approval and is compliant with the requirements of the awarding body. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.2): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that credit and qualifications are 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**
- **both UK threshold standards and their own academic standards have been satisfied.**

Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards

Findings

1.29 The process for approval of new programmes includes consideration of arrangements for assessment as described in programme and course specifications, and in particular for ensuring that assessment allows the stated learning outcomes to be met, that the relevant learning outcomes are at the appropriate level within the FHEQ, that any Subject Benchmark Statements have been taken into account, and that course learning outcomes align with programme learning outcomes. These arrangements, if securely implemented, would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.30 In considering the Expectation, the review team met with senior staff, students and teaching staff. It also considered external examiners' reports and examination board minutes.

1.31 External examiners are members of school examination boards and are responsible for confirming that learning outcomes have been achieved. School examination boards report their recommendations to a University examination board which then sends recommendations to the OU examination board. Students confirmed that they are made aware of the learning outcomes assessed by each assessment task. Richmond manages its responsibilities for the award of credit and qualifications effectively. The achievement of intended learning outcomes is demonstrated through assessment. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.3): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree-awarding body are being maintained.

Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards

Findings

1.32 Richmond's system for annual monitoring at course and programme level is described in the Quality Manual and combined with an 'Institutional Overview', it informs an institutional AMR to the OU. In addition, the OU revalidates each programme, normally every five years, specifically considering whether learning outcomes are demonstrated and assessed, and including references to Subject Benchmark Statements, the FHEQ and the requirements of relevant professional bodies.

1.33 These arrangements, if securely implemented, would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.34 The review team considered the Expectation by meeting senior staff, students and teaching staff. It also looked at course evaluations, minutes of student major meetings, evidence of moderation, committee minutes, institutional AMRs and annual programme evaluations (APEs), and MSCHE documentation.

1.35 The annual monitoring process involves the completion of a course evaluation using an institutional template and is informed by feedback from evaluations conducted by students. Schools hold major meetings, which discuss action to be taken in light of student feedback. Course evaluation and moderation reports, based on moderation of a sample of student work, include evaluations of student achievement against learning outcomes.

1.36 Each programme validated by the OU produces an APE with a parallel process for US programmes involving the production of an Annual Programme Monitoring Assessment (APMA). Each APE/APMA considers statistics, programme learning outcomes, course evaluations, external examiners' reports, progress on the previous action plan, any changes to programme specifications, and any major changes to existing programmes that have been approved by Academic Board and by the OU and forms an action plan for the following year. The action plans are then monitored through departmental meetings and Academic Board. Key programme outcomes for each programme enable programme teams to focus on specific programme outcomes, assess whether it is being achieved and any further action needed to be taken.

1.37 In addition to annual monitoring, each programme is subject to revalidation by the OU every five years, using the process for approval of new programmes as described in Expectation A3.1.

1.38 Richmond is required to comply with the Standards for Accreditation and Requirements of Affiliation of MSCHE in respect of its US provision. MSCHE's policy is to conduct an institutional review every eight years, based on an institutional self-study with supporting evidence. The MSCHE review conducted in 2016 resulted in Richmond being found to be compliant after a further visit in Spring 2017. Ongoing monitoring takes place through annual institutional updates and a desk-based peer review conducted mid-cycle.

1.39 Richmond has a thorough process for annual programme monitoring, involving approval and comment from deans and heads of department, Academic Board and the Academic Committee of the Board of Trustees. Action plans arising from APEs are monitored through departmental meetings and Academic Board. The OU gives detailed feedback to Richmond on its AMR to which Richmond responds. The OU in addition revalidates Richmond's provision normally every five years. The Expectation is therefore met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (A3.4): In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, degree-awarding bodies use external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards to advise on whether:

- **UK threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved**
- **the academic standards of the degree-awarding body are appropriately set and maintained.**

Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards

Findings

1.40 The OU has the ultimate responsibility for making use of external and independent expertise in the setting of standards through validation and revalidation, and in the maintenance of academic standards through assessment and external examining processes. Under the OU's arrangements for validation and revalidation, Richmond has delegated responsibility for the nomination of an external panel and the OU nominates a process panel member for the final meeting. Richmond also follows the OU's regulations for external examiners, who are nominated by Richmond and appointed by the OU.

1.41 External examiners' annual reports detail whether academic standards are successfully achieved and maintained and are considered as part of the annual monitoring cycle.

1.42 These arrangements, if securely implemented, would enable the Expectation to be met.

1.43 The review team considered documentation including the OU's requirements and processes, external examiners' reports, the AMR, and documents relating to programme validation and revalidation. The team held meetings with senior and academic staff, professional support staff, and students.

1.44 Richmond robustly and effectively follows the OU requirements for validation and revalidation. The documentation of its processes makes clear what is expected of external members whose attendance is shown in the record of the panel's meetings. In addition, the views of external examiners are sought for programme design and major changes.

1.45 The key assessment for each module contributing to degree classification is sampled by external examiners, who have consistently confirmed that standards have been set and assessed appropriately.

1.46 Richmond seeks to attain professional accreditation where it may lead to significant improvement in student recruitment and/or institutional profile and to date has achieved accreditation for relevant programmes by the British Psychological Society, the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants and the Chartered Management Institute.

1.47 Richmond and the OU work effectively together to ensure appropriate use of external expertise in the setting and maintenance of academic standards. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations: Summary of findings

1.48 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All Expectations in this judgement area are met with a low level of risk.

1.49 The single recommendation in this judgement area arises from the need to ensure that terms of reference of committees and the Quality Manual are accurate, aligned and consistent with the relationship with the awarding body.

1.50 There are no features of good practice or affirmations in this judgement area.

1.51 Richmond has secure frameworks to ensure that standards are maintained at appropriate levels and that the definitive record of each programme is used to govern the award of academic credit and qualifications.

1.52 The review team concludes that the maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations at the provider **meets** UK expectations.

2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

Expectation (B1): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes.

Quality Code, Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval

Findings

2.1 Programme approval processes conform to the relevant frameworks and regulations of the OU as the awarding body. A single programme specification template ensures the same standard of documentation. Initial proposals for new or modified programmes are generally introduced at subject level within Academic Schools and require internal approval at Academic Board. Structures have been introduced in recent years to provide greater external consultation on curriculum development and periodic reviews. In the case of the Business School, a Business Advisory Council comprising academic and professional representatives has been established to feed ideas into curriculum development.

2.2 These arrangements, if securely implemented, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.3 To test the Expectation, the team met a range of academic staff and senior managers. The team also reviewed documentation including the Quality Manual, OU Regulations and Handbook, documents and templates relating to programme approval and minutes of relevant committees.

2.4 The review team found that Richmond operates effective processes for programme design and approval. Senior managers confirmed that extensive consultation underpins the development of new programmes. Links with professional practitioners and independent experts support Richmond in setting and maintaining academic standards, with an emphasis on the development of key transferable skills to enhance future employability. Richmond is additionally active in soliciting feedback and ideas from the student body with direct influence on curriculum development. For example, responses from student representatives directly led to the development of a minor in mathematics.

2.5 Adjustments to internal processes have additionally strengthened the depth of consideration for new programme designs. The Curriculum Development Committee was recently set up to allow for in-depth discussion of proposals and any further work required prior to advancing the proposal to Academic Board for internal approval. Documentary evidence and discussions with senior management show that the introduction of the Committee improves the usefulness of discussions on academic development and provides greater opportunity for discussions on new course proposals and adjustments to existing courses.

2.6 Richmond operates effective processes for programme design and approval that demonstrate clear oversight and responsiveness to student needs. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B2): Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.

Quality Code, Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education

Findings

2.7 Richmond's approach to admissions is guided by its Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions Integrated Strategy 2017-19 and implemented by the Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions Department. The strategy is aligned to the overall strategic plan and designed to help Richmond achieve its enrolment targets.

2.8 Richmond also operates a distinct Admissions Policy, available through its website, which outlines the application, selection and admissions procedures in detail. Richmond operates a sequence of timed communications to applicants and this is supplemented by open days, calling campaigns, webinars and face-to-face meetings.

2.9 The Admissions and Recruitment Policy Committee, with Provost's Council, has responsibility for setting policy, operational monitoring and review, and oversight of the cycle. A process is also in place for students to appeal if they are dissatisfied with an admissions decision. The clear strategic framework, comprehensive admissions policy and operational procedures combined with accessible entry requirements on Richmond's website are sufficient to enable the Expectation to be met.

2.10 The review team tested this Expectation by meeting staff and students, including staff from the Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions Department. The team also considered the admissions strategies for the periods between 2012 and 2019 and viewed Richmond's website.

2.11 The Admission Policy and Summary of Practice is comprehensive and details practice around entry requirements, staff training and support, credit transfer, programme changes, and complaints and appeals processes for applicants. Staff are familiar with these processes and informed the team that interviews are routinely held for postgraduate applicants but not for students applying to undergraduate programmes. Staff with responsibility for recruitment and admissions were able to provide examples of attendance at relevant training events. Students reported high levels of satisfaction with their admissions experience including the information provided.

2.12 The policies and procedures governing admissions, arrangements for staff development and a high level of student satisfaction ensure that the Expectation is met and the level of associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B3): Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.

Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*

Findings

2.13 Learning, teaching and research is a central focus of the strategic plan and Richmond's objectives are articulated in the teaching and learning strategy, which has been recently updated. Richmond's aim is to provide a high-quality student learning experience that combines academic rigour, personal and professional development and employability in a context of international and global developments. This is supported by the commitment to provide excellent teaching and learning opportunities articulated for students in the student charter.

2.14 The responsibilities of the previous Learning and Teaching Committee are now undertaken by Academic Board, which has the responsibility for implementing the Learning and Teaching Strategy and ensuring the delivery of a quality in-class experience for Richmond students. The Centre for Learning and Teaching (CLT) operates seminars and workshops that combine internal and external expertise and administers funding for development in teaching and learning through the Faculty Development Fund supplementing local staff development support.

2.15 Richmond's Research and Professional Engagement Strategy aims to support the quality and enhancement of teaching and learning through staff engagement with research and external professional activity. The staff development policy aims to foster a working environment where all employees are encouraged to develop their skills and knowledge with the aim of promoting the continuing success and development of the institution and of individuals.

2.16 These arrangements, if securely implemented, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.17 The review team scrutinised a range of documents including the strategic plan, the Learning and Teaching Strategy, committees' terms of reference and minutes, and the employment handbook. The team also considered Richmond's virtual learning environment (VLE) and the CLT website, and met students, teaching staff, senior managers and support staff.

2.18 The effectiveness of the teaching and learning strategy and Richmond's practice is carefully considered and evaluated through the annual monitoring process. Information on learning and teaching outcomes is provided through an annual statistical digest covering key statistics, staff views (included in staff module evaluations and meetings), external examiners' reports, and student course evaluations. The process and resulting actions plans for enhancement are overseen by Academic Board.

2.19 The liberal arts structure of degree programmes enables students to consider their strengths and preferences before committing to a primary area of study after completion of levels 3 and 4. This approach provides students with considerable choice and opportunities to study their chosen subjects in depth, and students were clear on their responsibilities to engage with the learning opportunities provided and the options to shape their learning

experiences. Students are effectively supported in their choices of modules and learning by the academic advising system, the clear module documentation, which states the intended learning outcomes, teaching and assessments methods and reading requirements, and materials on the VLE and in the library. Students were confident in how to track their own progress through the PowerCAMPUS portal, and in how to access a wide range of information to support their learning and the wider opportunities available to them. Faculty staff have office hours during which they can provide additional individual feedback to students.

2.20 For new permanent and adjunct staff, Richmond offers a comprehensive induction programme, which includes a detailed explanation of the US and UK systems, and of Richmond's approach to learning, teaching, assessment and class observation. Both academic and support staff were positive about the staff development opportunities provided and about the role of the CLT in disseminating best practice and supporting and encouraging innovative approaches to learning and teaching through workshops and financial support for external staff development. The CLT takes the lead on supporting staff applications for Higher Education Academy (HEA) fellowships and the implementation of the UK Professional Standards Framework.

2.21 While Richmond is a teaching intensive institution, it is committed to supporting staff with their research and professional development. Academic staff are expected to have a research degree or relevant professional experience and staff confirmed that they are research active and that their research activities are supported and feed into the development of new modules and the curriculum of existing modules.

2.22 Richmond has effective arrangements for articulating and reviewing learning opportunities and teaching practices. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B4): Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.

Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement

Findings

2.23 Richmond's commitment to enabling student development and achievement is articulated in its strategic plan, supporting strategies, student charter and operational priorities. The Student Experience Strategy is focused on preparing students for employment, supporting students in academic life and personal development, and improving the physical spaces for student engagement. The Employment Strategy focuses on the development of student leadership, internships, partnerships with industry and embedding careers development in the curriculum. The Retention Strategy sets out academic and non-academic actions to improve retention.

2.24 The University Catalogue provides an overview of structures and services to support student learning and development. The Student Experience Policy Committee is responsible for developing and delivering support to students in non-academic areas, and Academic Board is responsible for ensuring the delivery of a quality in-class experience for Richmond students.

2.25 These arrangements, if securely implemented, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.26 The review team investigated Richmond's policies and regulations on enabling student development and achievement through meetings with senior staff, teaching staff, support staff and students. It also considered a range of documentation, including strategies, policies and procedures, committee minutes, the student submission and online resources.

2.27 In alignment with its mission, student charter and integrated strategies, Richmond takes an integrated holistic approach to enabling students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential. Students, most of whom are international, confirmed that they were offered both practical and academic support and guidance through the recruitment and induction processes, which they found helpful as preparation for studying at Richmond and in the UK. Students entering as freshmen, at level 3, undertake an in-house diagnostic test of academic literacy, the results of which shape a student's early support for the development of academic reading and writing. Richmond also offers a range of modules under its broad-ranging and well-received Academic Literacies Programme, which aims to empower students to communicate effectively, proficiently and appropriately throughout their undergraduate studies; additionally, two mandatory transitions modules help students to develop the skills to become independent learners and to understand the demands of the workplace as well as encouraging students to undertake volunteering opportunities to further develop their skills. Students confirmed that they regard the transitions courses as very beneficial.

2.28 Richmond offers a full, effective and well-received range of welfare support services, including counselling and support for students with disabilities: the quality of support was confirmed by students. In addition, each student has access to an academic adviser whose role is to help students to plan and develop their academic path. Both students and staff confirmed the effectiveness of academic advisers. Richmond also provides extra academic support for mathematics and for academic writing through drop-in workshops and the use of more experienced students as peer tutors: students expressed positive views about these support arrangements.

2.29 As part of its retention strategy Richmond monitors the progress of all students and takes extra steps for those students it considers to be at risk of failing to meet its academic and/or social standards. Students with behavioural challenges, attendance problems and other causes of concern are identified by faculty and staff through daily interactions both inside and outside of the classroom. In addition, students achieving below a grade C at the mid-semester point are offered written advice to seek the help of their tutors and academic adviser. Students at risk are offered support through a range of mechanisms including additional support from their academic adviser, peer mentoring, peer tutoring and referral to student affairs for counselling or financial advice and support. The personalised learning support provided to students through their studies, which enables them to develop their personal and academic potential, is **good practice**.

2.30 Richmond has developed a number of opportunities to help students' professional development and employability skills. In the first two years of study, as part of the transitions programme, students are encouraged to volunteer in the local community. In the later stages of study, students also have opportunities to undertake internships, and to take on the roles of peer mentors, (voluntary roles to support first-year students), peer tutors (suitably qualified students who provide a source of academic direction, guidance and support in approved subject areas) and student representatives (to represent the student voice at various meetings). Students can also participate in the recently introduced Richmond Leadership Programme, an umbrella organisation to promote student leadership and increase employability skills by offering information and guidance, careers-based seminars and workshops, access to external speakers, alumni and industry leaders, transferable skills development and guidance in building a portfolio of achievement. The wide and varied range of opportunities for students to develop skills and build experience, which enables them to develop their professional potential, is **good practice**.

2.31 Richmond offers a high level of individual student support, pastoral care and encouragement, supported by a wide range of opportunities for developing skills and building experience. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B5): Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement

Findings

2.32 Richmond's approach to student engagement is outlined in its Student Experience Strategy the implementation of which is overseen by the Student Experience Policy Committee. Richmond's organised student body, known as the Student Government, has an elected executive committee who attend a range of committees. The Academic Chair attends Academic Board and other representatives are members of the University Board, Appeals and Complaints and Student Experience Policy committees among others.

2.33 The clear policy framework, detailed guidance for student representatives, high levels of student representation on committees and training for student representatives are sufficient to enable the Expectation to be met.

2.34 The review team tested the Expectation by considering the Student Experience Strategy, Student Government Constitution and Student Charter. The team also studied committee minutes, terms of reference and Student Senate Guide 2017-18. In addition, the team met with staff and students including student representatives.

2.35 The Student Experience Policy Committee provides an effective forum for engaging students about issues affecting the student experience and for identifying areas for enhancement. Recent themes for improvement include improvements to IT systems, the need to build community on campus and to develop a focus on practical training in courses such as work experience and student leadership. Students are provided with access to key data such as external examiners' reports through the website and portal and there is evidence that students have been engaged in institutional efforts to improve retention rates.

2.36 Student Forum meetings are led by the Student Government and identify issues for discussion in committees such as the Student Experience Policy Committee. The team found the written guidance for student representatives to be comprehensive, and representatives reported that this is supplemented by effective one-to-one induction and support. Student representatives act as an effective conduit for relaying information about action taken in response to student feedback.

2.37 The detailed guidance for student senators, membership of students on committees and arrangements for gathering feedback and communicating action, combined with high levels of satisfaction among representatives and students with student engagement systems, ensure that the Expectation is met and that the level of associated risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B6): Higher education providers operate equitable, 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.

Quality Code, Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning

Findings

2.38 Primary responsibility for the maintenance of academic standards lies with Academic Board, which has oversight of the assessment strategy and of its implementation. These arrangements, if securely implemented, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.39 In considering the Expectation, the review team met senior staff, students, teaching staff and professional and support staff. It also considered assessment and feedback norms, and grade descriptors, the conduct of examination boards and their minutes, the student code of conduct and the process of the graduation audit.

2.40 Richmond has adopted a number of policies and practices that aim to ensure robustness of standards and fairness, transparency and consistency of application. In addition to norms for assessment, feedback and grade descriptors, these are the alignment between US and UK grading practices, the system of continuous assessment and final examinations, grading feedback and internal moderation procedures, examination boards, assessment documentation procedures, and student academic conduct expectations.

2.41 Richmond uses a letter grade marking system of A to F, with an associated Grade Point Average (GPA) between 0.0 and 4.0. A minimum GPA of 2.0 is required for a bachelor's award. A minimum GPA of 3.0 is required for a master's award. The classification for the award of UK undergraduate degrees is based on achievement on all courses completed at levels 5 and 6.

2.42 Richmond uses a system of continuous assessment. Course syllabi given to students show learning outcomes for the course and in some cases how these relate to programme outcomes, as well as the types of assessment, grade descriptors, the policy in respect of late submission and attendance monitoring, and information relating to academic misconduct. A final written examination is typical, unless pedagogical reasons for an atypical assessment are approved by Academic Board. Examinations are administered by Registry Services under Richmond's examinations policy. The Academic Progress Committee addresses student requests for submission of work after the normal course completion date and for resits of examinations due to extenuating circumstances. Students confirmed that feedback on assessment is timely and is effective in helping them to improve their work.

2.43 In addition, Richmond has a clear policy for academic misconduct, which can lead to failure of a component of the course, failure of the course or dismissal from the University in the case of two proven cases. Students confirmed that they are made aware of what constitutes academic misconduct.

2.44 There are clear policies for the conduct of examination boards. The process begins with moderation of a sample of student work, which includes a course evaluation by the lecturer of the results. Registry Services conduct a graduation audit to ensure that each student meets all requirements for graduation. An internal degree assessment board takes place that includes a member of Registry Services. The annual school examination board for

each programme is responsible for confirming that moderation has been correctly performed and for confirming degree classifications for recommendation to the University, the examination board and the OU. Examination boards are attended by all the external examiners. The University examination board enables Richmond to have oversight of all assessment practices and of student results.

2.45 While the arrangements for the conduct of examination boards are generally sound, Richmond acknowledges that its arrangements for the oversight of the assessment of courses in subjects that do not contribute to major awards need to be strengthened. Richmond has given consideration to how external examining of these 'stand-alone' courses can be effectively integrated into the examination board structure. The review team noted that Richmond has identified options for addressing this, and that these have been the subject of discussion by Academic Board. The team **affirms** the steps being taken to ensure the integration of external examining for stand-alone courses into examining board processes.

2.46 The University Catalogue contains information on the policy for transfer of credit gained in previous study or at another institution. The policy permits up to 180 credits to be transferred at levels 4 to 6. Requests for credit transfer are subject to approval by the student's academic adviser and by Registry Services, which ascertains the suitability of the other institution and determines credit equivalency.

2.47 Richmond has clear and effective procedures for the conduct of examination boards, moderation, assessment and feedback norms and grade descriptors. It also has clear policies on academic misconduct and credit transfer. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B7): Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners.

Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining

Findings

2.48 External examiners are nominated by Richmond and are appointed by and report to the OU. The terms under which they engage with Richmond and the programmes to which they are appointed are also determined by the OU. Richmond's internal processes for the nomination and recommendation for extensions and termination of external examiners are contained in the Quality Manual. The role and responsibilities of external examiners are also defined in the Quality Manual, which includes attendance at school-level boards. An OU representative attends the University examination board to support the board on behalf of the OU.

2.49 These arrangements, if securely implemented, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.50 The review team explored the effectiveness of these procedures by considering relevant documentation including external examiners' reports, Annual Programme Evaluations and the institutional overview. The review team also met with staff and students to discuss the role of external examiners.

2.51 As the Quality Manual has been drafted with a view to being used after degree-awarding powers have been gained, it refers to the proposed Richmond processes for external examining and does not acknowledge the current roles and responsibilities of the awarding body. It implies that Academic Board acts as the final authority for external examining processes rather than the OU for UK awards. Academic Board does act as the final authority for US awards. With the exception of committee authority, the processes proposed and currently applied follow the OU guidance and are robust. External examiners are appointed to specific programmes and minors, and consider courses at levels 5 and 6. Richmond has recently addressed the issue of 'standalone modules' by formalising the appointment of specialised external examiners and is currently addressing the issue of their role in the examination boards, as described in Expectation B6.

2.52 The OU provides a written briefing to all its external examiners and Richmond provides an additional comprehensive local briefing on its degree structures and marking practices, including the use of grades and Grade Point Averages. External examiners use the OU report template, which is comprehensive and robust, covering topics such as standards, assessments and quality of the student experience. The reports are considered in a number of ways. Schools are responsible for responding directly to external examiners and for addressing the points made in their reports. Actions are included in the programme's action plan and monitored as part of annual monitoring. The reports and the schools' responses are considered by the schools and Academic Board as part of the annual monitoring process. The provost considers the reports and responses and raises any institutional significant issues with the executive and/or trustees. The University examination board and the Academic Committee of the Board of Trustees also considers the reports. Reports are available to students via the portal although some students seemed unaware of this, and are also available to student representatives via programme team meetings. External examiners are also consulted as part of new course developments.

2.53 Richmond makes scrupulous use of its external examiners. It engages thoroughly with their work and has a secure process for addressing issues raised within their reports.

The reports are shared with students at the programme team meetings and are available to all students through the portal. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B8): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes.

Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review

Findings

2.54 The arrangements for monitoring and review of programmes are described in the Quality Manual and comprise annual monitoring at course level and programme level as well as periodic revalidation by the OU. These arrangements are described in Expectation A3.3. In addition, Richmond has processes for programme closure. These arrangements if securely implemented would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.55 The review team met senior staff and teaching staff. In addition, it considered APEs and AMRs, moderators' comments, Academic Board and Academic Committee minutes, the tracking of action plans arising from APEs, and the OU's comments on AMRs and Richmond's responses.

2.56 Each OU-validated programme must complete an APE each year. Programmes that lead only to a US degree conduct APMAAs. Each APE/APMA considers statistics, programme learning outcomes, course evaluations conducted, all external examiners' reports, progress on the previous action plan, any changes to programme specifications, any major changes to existing programmes that have been approved by the Academic Board, and an action plan for the following year.

2.57 Deans and heads of department review all APEs and APMAAs. The Academic Board reviews all APEs as part of its scrutiny of the AMR. As part of enhancement of the process the Academic Committee of the Board of Trustees also reads APEs.

2.58 The APEs feed into the institutional AMR to the OU, which includes actions from the previous year, student feedback, APEs, external examiner reports and responses, the mapping of institutional policies and procedures against the Quality Code and an action plan for the forthcoming year. The AMR is scrutinised by Academic Board and Academic Committee before being forwarded to the OU. The OU sends detailed comments to Richmond including actions needed at programme and institutional level: Richmond's response to these comments shows evidence of detailed consideration and of the adoption of appropriate actions.

2.59 Despite the levels of scrutiny of APEs and the AMR carried out by Richmond, the OU has made a number of adverse comments about AMRs in relation to consistency and levels of detail. Its comments on the 2015-16 AMR drew attention to missing curriculum vitae, of changes to programmes not being communicated to the OU, and to two programmes that had not responded to recommendations from the validation panel. The OU's comments also referred to variability between APEs, some of which provided detailed responses to views expressed by students and by external examiners, while others lacked comparable detail. These comments echoed those made in relation to the 2013-14 AMR. While recognising issues of incompleteness and inconsistency, Richmond failed to identify any steps being taken to address them. The review team **recommends** that Richmond ensure that APEs are consistent in their level of detail and meet the requirements of the awarding body.

2.60 In addition to annual monitoring, the OU conducts revalidations of its programmes normally every five years. Revalidations follow the same process as that for programme

approval and confirm that the FHEQ and any Subject Benchmark Statements are met. Revalidations carried out in 2017 resulted in re-approval of the programmes concerned and identified a number of commendations, recommendations and conditions. Although the Academic Board has noted these outcomes, it has not yet taken steps to satisfy itself that recommendations and conditions have been met.

2.61 Richmond has sound processes for annual monitoring of its programmes and meets the requirements of its awarding bodies in respect of periodic review. The failure to address issues relating to lack of consistency and level of detail in APEs is indicative of shortcomings in the rigour with which its processes are applied. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is moderate.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Moderate

Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.

Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints

Findings

2.62 Richmond's Student Charter makes explicit reference to complaints and appeals. Richmond operates Academic Appeals and Grade Challenges Policy and Procedures as well as an Academic-Related Complaints Procedure and a Non-Academic Related Complaints and Appeals Procedure. These are made available on its website and are supported by forms for students to complete if they have an issue. Although Richmond students are entitled to have recourse to the services of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA), the Academic-Related Complaints Procedure does not specify the role of the OIA in considering complaints.

2.63 The Academic Appeals Committee considers all academic appeals. Information is housed on Richmond's electronic platforms, and committee members have access to general guidance from the OIA on good practice in handling cases. Individual departments consider academic-related complaints. Annual monitoring systems report on complaints, which are in turn considered by Academic Board if there are wider, systemic issues identified.

2.64 Student Affairs staff are available to provide support for students accessing these procedures and act as a first point of contact for students raising informal complaints.

2.65 Although the Academic-Related Complaints Procedure does not specify the role of the OIA, the presence of policies covering complaints and appeals, monitoring arrangements and availability of support for students would, if securely implemented, be sufficient to enable the Expectation to be met.

2.66 The review team tested this Expectation by meeting with students and staff. The team also read the Academic Appeals and Grade Challenges Policy and Procedures as well as the Academic-Related Complaints Procedure and the Non-Academic Related Complaints and Appeals Procedure. In addition, the team scrutinised committee minutes and forms made available for students to complete.

2.67 OIA's Completion of Procedures guidance states that, where an awarding body is a member of the scheme, the awarding body should conduct the review stage of complaints relating to academic standards or the quality of learning opportunities. The team noted that while the Institutional Agreement between Richmond and the OU allows for students on a programme leading to an award from the OU to access the OU's complaints processes, this is not made clear in Richmond's complaints policies. Richmond's Academic-Related Complaints Procedure does not specify the role of the OIA. The team therefore **recommends** that Richmond should ensure clear reference in the academic complaints policy to the roles of the awarding body and of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

2.68 Students confirmed that they are aware of how to access complaints and appeals procedures and that support is readily available for those students who wish or need to access it. Satisfactory arrangements are in place to ensure that complaints and appeals are all monitored by the Academic Appeals Committee.

2.69 Richmond has suitable and accessible policies governing complaints and appeals, and has suitable arrangements for supporting students and for monitoring outcomes. The failure to specify the roles of the awarding body and the OIA in the academic complaints policy indicates a need to amend details in documentation and will not require major change. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B10): Degree-awarding bodies take ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them. Arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations other than the degree-awarding body are implemented securely and managed effectively.

Quality Code, Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others

Findings

2.70 Richmond has arrangements with employers for the provision of internships for undergraduate students and for the management of learning opportunities with these employers. Internships at Richmond are optional, though the significant increase in the number of internships undertaken by students in recent years is in line with Richmond's strategic direction towards promoting employability. They are credit-bearing, and so form an integral part of the programme for any student who chooses to take an internship.

2.71 Students are provided with information about the organisation and assessment of internships through detailed manuals and a Careers and Internship portal. The Internship Office is responsible for working with employers to support students in finding a suitable placement and to provide support throughout the internship experience. A Contract of Internship is required prior to any student beginning an internship, with information to employers provided through a Guide for Employers. A Faculty Supervisor is responsible for assessing the internship and works with a Workplace Supervisor whose role is to assist and support the intern at work. The Workplace Supervisor also completes a Workplace Assessment Form at the end of the internship, which is considered by the Faculty Supervisor in the final assessment. Richmond evaluates the effectiveness of the internship programme annually with the Internship Office generating an Annual Internship Report.

2.72 These arrangements, if securely implemented, would enable the Expectation to be met.

2.73 The team tested the Expectation by meeting employers, students on internships and professional support staff and teaching staff involved in the internship process. The team also evaluated documents including manuals for staff and employers.

2.74 The review team found that Richmond has established effective processes for determining the suitability of the internship provider, with a risk assessment required prior to a written internship agreement. A member of staff normally visits the site prior to students starting the internship, though the assessment of a suitable working environment for overseas providers who cannot be visited remains an acknowledged challenge. Students and employers confirmed that the Internship Office plays an important function in supporting students identify suitable internship opportunities, with alumni often used for promoting internships.

2.75 Documentation outlining assessment structures for internships is sufficiently detailed, with students confirming that they believe the assessment to be clear and transparent. Employers stated that communication with the Faculty Supervisor is maintained throughout the internship period and that assessment forms are completed at the end of the internship.

2.76 Richmond has effective processes for reviewing student satisfaction and employer relationships with actions to strengthen collaborative provision highlighted in the Annual Internship Report. Students and employers were very positive about the internship experience and students expressed the view that the experience has had a positive impact

on future employability. Internship arrangements contribute to the range of opportunities for students to develop skills and build experience, which enables students to develop their professional potential, and this supports the good practice identified in Expectation B4.

2.77 Richmond has a robust structure in place to ensure that internship providers are suitable, that students and employers are being appropriately supported and that students' learning needs are attended to in a structured way. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

Expectation (B11): Research degrees are awarded in a research environment that provides secure academic standards for doing research and learning about research approaches, methods, procedures and protocols. This environment offers students quality of opportunities and the support they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees.

Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*

Findings

2.78 Richmond does not offer research degrees; therefore, this Expectation does not apply.

Expectation: Not applicable

Level of risk: Not applicable

The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.79 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. All Expectations in this judgement area are met. One Expectation (B8) is associated with a moderate level of risk. The level of risk was judged to be low for all other Expectations.

2.80 There are two features of good practice in this judgement area, relating to the wide and varied range of opportunities for students to develop skills and build experience, which enables them to develop their professional potential, and to the personalised learning support provided to students throughout their studies, which enables them to develop their personal and academic potential.

2.81 The review team made two recommendations in respect of the quality of student learning opportunities. The first relates to the need to ensure that Annual Programme Evaluations are consistent in their level of detail and meet the requirements of the awarding body. The second arises from the lack of a clear reference in the academic complaints policy to the roles of the awarding body and of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

2.82 The single affirmation relates to the steps being taken to ensure the integration of external examining for standalone courses into examining board processes.

2.83 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the provider **meets** UK expectations.

3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

Expectation (C): UK higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the higher education they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

Findings

3.1 Richmond regards its website as the primary source of information for anyone external to the institution. The website contains a wide range of information including the strategic plan, mission and vision. A range of departments jointly manage content on the website and guidance on the process for updating this information is detailed in the Quality Manual. Richmond has a Data and Information Policy Committee in place which oversees the institution's approach to data, records and public information.

3.2 The Catalogue is the authoritative source of information for students each year and is updated on an annual basis. It provides comprehensive information on a wide range of Richmond's activities including admissions, resources, fees and student support arrangements. This information is supplemented by detailed programme and course specification documents, which are also housed online and updated annually. The Vice-Provost for Academic Affairs is responsible for coordinating the revision process; all changes to publicity materials are subject to approval by the OU prior to publication.

3.3 Richmond also produces a prospectus for prospective students. This supplements the catalogue and the website and helps to provide information such as entry requirements and details on fees and financial support. Students who accept an offer are provided with a copy of the Student Charter and an acceptance letter.

3.4 The Quality Manual is the primary document for staff with responsibility for academic standards and quality and provides detailed guidance about a wide range of Richmond's policies and procedures.

3.5 Richmond's range of information sources for staff and for current and prospective students and in particular the Catalogue and Quality Manual are sufficient to enable the Expectation to be met.

3.6 The review team tested the Expectation by scrutinising the Quality Manual, prospectus, Catalogue, and programme and course specifications. It also met students and staff, viewed Richmond's website and VLE and minutes of committees.

The Quality Manual outlines responsibility for the creation and management of information, which is variously shared between Marketing, Recruitment and Admissions; the Department of Academic Affairs and Quality Assurance; Registry Services; and the Student Affairs department. Teaching staff also play a central role in content creation. The owners of individual portal pages are responsible for their maintenance. The team found several instances of minor inaccuracies in documentation, including interchangeable references to student senators and representatives, gaps in committees' terms of reference (supporting the recommendation in Expectation A2.1), and omissions in complaints policies relating to the role of the awarding body and the OIA (supporting the recommendation in Expectation B9). Despite this, responsibilities in relation to the management of information were well understood by staff and the minor inaccuracies and need to update certain documentation

did not appear to have had a detrimental effect on the Richmond's management of student learning opportunities.

3.7 Students informed the team that the VLE was well used and supported their studies. They also spoke positively about other information sources such as the website, catalogue and prospectus.

3.8 Richmond produces information for prospective and current students, and for staff, which is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. There is a need to amend or update details in some documentation, but this will not require major change. The Expectation is met and the level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met
Level of risk: Low

The quality of the information about learning opportunities: Summary of findings

3.9 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. Richmond effectively manages its responsibilities for the production of information for its various audiences. The Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

3.10 Richmond provides accessible and clear information about its provision. Students express a high level of satisfaction in respect of the availability and suitability of information provided for them. There is a need to amend or update details in some documentation, but this will not require major change.

3.11 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the provider **meets** UK expectations.

4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

Expectation (Enhancement): Deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.

Findings

4.1 Richmond regards enhancement as being at the heart of its mission towards its commitment to excellence in teaching and learning and the provision of a high-quality student experience for an international student body. The embedding of improved quality enhancement systems forms part of its strategic plan. A major restructuring of academic management and support services and a major reorganisation of committee structures in 2011-12 was intended to facilitate an increased emphasis on enhancement, as it allowed for transparency and the involvement of staff and students in quality assurance and enhancement. Each school and department, including support services, produces an operating plan that is reviewed on an annual basis.

4.2 The review team considered the Expectation by meeting senior staff, students, teaching staff and professional support staff. In addition, it considered the strategic plan, the assessment and feedback norms and grade descriptors, details of the Centre for Learning and Teaching and programme team consideration of Key Programme Outcomes (KPOs).

4.3 The strategic plan 2015-19 lists a number of activities regarded as enhancement-related, including the pursuit of taught-degree awarding powers, a review of the existing academic portfolio and the introduction of a limited number of postgraduate degrees, additional professional accreditation and the full integration of the Florence and Rome study centres into UK processes. A number of these initiatives have been completed: the validation of postgraduate degrees, professional accreditation for the BSc (Hons) Accounting and Finance with Combined Studies and the revision of general education. Further enhancement activities include the formation of the Academic Workload Working Group to establish a framework for measuring and assessing faculty workload based on a points, rather than hours, system; the new system is being piloted in 2017-18. Further examples of enhancement lie in the introduction of assessment norms, grade descriptors and feedback norms. Students affirmed that they have a clear understanding of what they are required to do to achieve a particular grade and of how to improve their grades.

4.4 The draft Learning and Teaching Strategy 2017-19 builds on the successful goals of the previous strategy and aims to develop Richmond's deliberate steps towards enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities. The Centre for Learning and Teaching, whose creation was an objective of the strategic plan and the Learning and Teaching Strategy, was developed to enhance and support staff in all areas of their learning and teaching by seminars, workshops and training sessions. Teaching staff spoke positively about the work of the Centre in providing a forum for the structured discussion of pedagogic issues. The Centre also provides funding for pedagogic research and is working towards targets for staff development activities, including offering six annual workshops and enabling 30 per cent of academic staff to be Fellows of the Higher Education Academy by 2019.

4.5 Richmond has taken deliberate steps at institutional level to enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities, as exemplified for instance by the institutional introduction of feedback and assessment norms and grade descriptors, the process of focusing on

KPOs, the establishment of the Centre for Learning and Teaching and the availability of a number of opportunities for students to enhance their employability. The Expectation is met and the associated level of risk is low.

Expectation: Met

Level of risk: Low

The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.6 In reaching its judgement, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook. Richmond takes deliberate steps at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities. The single Expectation for this judgement area is met and the associated level of risk is low.

4.7 There are no features of good practice, recommendations or affirmations in this judgement area.

4.8 Richmond has taken deliberate steps at institutional level to enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities. The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the provider **meets** UK expectations.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 21-24 of the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) handbook](#).

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality.

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer Glossary on the QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx.

Academic standards

The standards set by **degree-awarding bodies** for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

Award

A qualification, or academic credit, conferred in formal recognition that a student has achieved the intended **learning outcomes** and passed the assessments required to meet the academic standards set for a **programme** or unit of study.

Awarding organisation

An organisation authorised to award a particular qualification; an organisation recognised by Ofqual to award Ofqual-regulated qualifications.

Blended learning

Learning delivered by a number of different methods, usually including face-to-face and e-learning (see **technology enhanced or enabled learning**).

Credit(s)

A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education **programmes of study**, expressed as numbers of credits at a specific level.

Degree-awarding body

A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the power to award degrees, conferred by Royal Charter, or under Section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or under Section 48 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, or by Papal Bull, or, since 1999, granted by the Privy Council on advice from QAA (in response to applications for taught degree awarding powers, research degree awarding powers or university title).

Distance learning

A course of study that does not involve face-to-face contact between students and tutors but instead uses technology such as the internet, intranets, broadcast media, CD-ROM and video, or traditional methods of correspondence - learning 'at a distance'. See also **blended learning**.

Dual award or double award

The granting of separate awards (and certificates) for the same **programme** by two **degree-awarding bodies** who have jointly delivered the programme of study leading to them. See also **multiple award**.

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

Enhancement

The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in our review processes.

Expectations

Statements in the **Quality Code** that set out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

Flexible and distributed learning

A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations. See also **distance learning**.

Framework

A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

Framework for higher education qualifications

A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FQHEIS).

Good practice

A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

Learning opportunities

The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, and resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

Learning outcomes

What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

Multiple awards

An arrangement where three or more **degree-awarding bodies** together provide a single jointly delivered **programme** (or programmes) leading to a separate **award** (and separate certification) of each awarding body. The arrangement is the same as for **dual/double awards**, but with three or more awarding bodies being involved.

Operational definition

A formal definition of a term, establishing exactly what QAA means when using it in reviews and reports.

Programme (of study)

An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

Programme specifications

Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of programmes of study, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

Quality Code

Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of **reference points** for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the **Expectations** that all providers are required to meet.

Reference points

Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

Self-evaluation document

A report submitted by a higher education provider, assessing its own performance, to be used as evidence in a QAA review.

Subject Benchmark Statement

A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

Threshold academic standard

The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic **award**. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national **frameworks** and **Subject Benchmark Statements**.

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

An intranet or password-only interactive website (also referred to as a platform or user interface) giving access to **learning opportunities** electronically. These might include such resources as course handbooks, information and reading lists; blogs, message boards and forums; recorded lectures; and/or facilities for online seminars (webinars).

Widening participation

Increasing the involvement in higher education of people from a wider range of backgrounds.

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