



London Studio Centre

Review for Educational Oversight
by the Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education

May 2013

Key findings about London Studio Centre

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in May 2013, the QAA review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the programme it offers on behalf of Middlesex University and the University of the Arts London.

The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the quality and enhancement of the learning opportunities it offers on behalf of these awarding bodies.

The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the information that the prov19T(t)-4()6(t)-4(he)14()] TJ

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at London Studio Centre (the Centre), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to the programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of Middlesex University and the University of the Arts, London. The review was carried out by Ms Camilla Bunt, Ms Deborah Trayhurn and Professor Anthony Whitehouse (reviewers) and Dr Peter Steer (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).² Evidence in support of the review included documentation supplied by the Centre, meetings with staff and students and a QAA report.

The review team also considered the Centre's use of the relevant external reference point:

the UK Quality Code for Higher Education

Please note that if you are unfamiliar with any of the terms used in this report you can find them in the [Glossary](#).

London Studio Centre was established in 1978. Its original premises were in Tavistock Square, Central London. It then relocated to premises in King's Cross, which it occupied for 26 years until summer 2012 when the Centre relocated to the 'artsdepot' in North Finchley. The artsdepot is a professional arts venue which opened in 2004. The practical training of the final year students takes place at two external dance spaces, although the Centre plans to locate these activities at the artsdepot from the academic year 2013-14. Approximately 100 full-time, part-time and fractional teaching staff deliver the programmes.

Management at the Centre is led by the Director who is responsible to the Trustees. Reporting to the Director, the Dean of Studies/Programme Leader leads the management of the two higher education programmes. Each area of subject specialism is led by a Head of Department and each module administered by a Module Leader on the Middlesex University programme. Enrolment in the academic year 2012-13 totals 274. All students programme Leader

The provider's stated responsibilities

The Centre takes responsibility for the delivery of the provision, including the development and marking of appropriate assessments. The awarding bodies oversee the provision using a variety of procedures, including validation, annual monitoring and the appointment of external examiners. The Centre is responsible for information about learning opportunities, with the awarding bodies sharing responsibility where documents carry their name or logo.

Recent developments

The Centre is in the process of transferring the delivery of all the provision to the artsdepot, North Finchley, and having the BA (Hons) Theatre Dance validated only by Middlesex University. The validation by the University of the Arts, London was part of a long-term plan for a merger with the Centre that ultimately did not proceed. The plan had involved the Centre being increasingly integrated into the University of the Arts, London's structures and

Detailed findings about London Studio Centre

1 Academic standards

How effectively does the Centre fulfil its responsibilities for the management of academic standards?

1.1 Responsibilities delegated to the Centre by its university validating partners are clearly defined in institutional agreements and are

1.6 Since the Middlesex University validation in September 2011, there has been little mapping of the Centre's practice against the guidance in the Quality Code to ensure the maximum benefit is achieved. For example, a detailed consideration of the Quality Code, Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality, *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning*, has not occurred beyond validation to ensure all aspects have been covered and to inform appropriate staff development. The Centre provides staff with little detailed written guidance on assessment practice based on the Quality Code. It is **advisable** for the Centre to further develop its engagement with the Quality Code.

How does the Centre use external moderation, verification or examining to assure academic standards?

1.7 The moderation of work is effective. The assessment process is thorough with internal and external moderation in place. Internal moderators provide helpful comments to the original markers on student work and sometimes indicate possible changes to marks which then form the basis of an agreed mark. Statistics about the level and distribution of marks are considered to ensure compatibility between subject areas. Student work is subject to external moderation by the university validating partners. Moderation processes inform the progression and examination boards. University staff and external examiners attend these formal boards, the reports of which properly inform university processes and annual monitoring. Minutes of the boards indicate that academic standards are carefully considered and that decisions on individual candidates are made using the relevant university regulations.

1.8 External examiners confirm the effectiveness of the assessment process. Each assessment is accompanied by a programme description, learning outcomes and grade descriptors. External examiners visit up to five times a year giving them various opportunities to observe performances and studio-based technique assessments as well as written work. They indicate that assessment is effective in measuring student achievement. Their feedback is positive, with few suggestions for improvement. Where matters have been raised by an external examiner, the Centre has made and recorded an appropriate response coupled with suitable monitoring of the action points. External examiners have frequently acknowledged the Centres' positive response to their few concerns. The Middlesex University validated programme has not yet assessed at level 5, at which stage the University-appointed external examiner will be involved in the oversight of the programme.

The review team has **confidence** in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

How effectively does the Centre fulfil its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities?

2.1 The mechanisms for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities are generally appropriate. The Centre is responsible for teaching and learning, student support and the provision of resources necessary to deliver the award. The Director controls the resource budget. The Dean has operational responsibility for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. Requests for resources to enhance learning are responded to by the Director, and recent examples cited by staff and students, including the relaying of a studio floor, confirm the process is timely and effective. The Centre uses the structures described in paragraphs 1.2 and 1.3 to also oversee the maintenance and

particular types of session. This information is available to teaching staff and is used to provide extensive support on an individual basis. The Board of Study and external examiners have reported that students in need are supported effectively. Students confirmed that the support they receive is comprehensive and useful in helping them to achieve their individual professional and academic aims. They reported that the various methods available for the collection of student views described in paragraph 2.4 gave them an effective influence on the nature of the support they receive. The comprehensive student support that is highly responsive to individual needs represents **good practice**.

How effectively does the Centre develop its staff in order to improve student learning opportunities?

2.7 The Centre's staff development strategy document provides adequate general guidance for the identification and dissemination of effective practice. It was produced as a condition of programme approval by Middlesex University in October 2011. Over 80 per cent of the teaching staff are self-employed and take primary responsibility for their own staff development. Two staff development priorities are the further development of the peer observation scheme and its closer linking to staff appraisals, which are being overseen by the Staff Development Strategy Group. The Centre encourages staff to undertake teaching awards although this is not a formal requirement. Ten staff have recently completed the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education award.

2.8 Staff development of a subject-specific nature is effective. Staff maintain active links with professional practice and have produced papers and undertaken higher degrees associated with their subject disciplines. Other external organisations have provided valuable guidance for staff. For example, the Centre is a member of DanceHE, the association representing universities and other institutions delivering higher education dance programmes. The 1 0 0 1 292.27 The

How effective are the Centre's arrangements for assuring that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy?

3.5 There are effective procedures to oversee the production of most information about learning opportunities. Responsibility for the website rests with the Director, who checks the material before it is uploaded onto the website. He is also proactive in coordinating future developments. Arrangements for the monitoring of printed publicity materials involve a staff panel producing information which is then authorised by the Director. This arrangement is effective in ensuring that the materials are pertinent to their markets and that the content is both accessible and trustworthy. The Academic Administrator manages and checks the information about programme delivery before it is uploaded onto the VLE. The attendance of a student representative at strategy meetings about the VLE contributes to its development and helps to ensure its accuracy.

3.6 Procedures for oversight of the Centre's use of social media are not fully effective. The Centre is aware of the opportunities and challenges of social media and the need for

Advisable

(paragraph 2.9)	Negotiate with the University to seek access to their staff development programmes	November 2013	Institutional Link Tutor
	Pursue Higher Education Academy membership	November 2013	Dean of Studies

About QAA

QAA is the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. QAA's

Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/about

highly trusted sponsor An education provider that the UK government trusts to admit migrant students from overseas, according to Tier 4 of the UK Border Agency's points-based immigration system. Higher education providers wishing to obtain this status must undergo a successful review by QAA.

learning opportunities The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, resources, and specialist facilities (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.

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

programme 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.

provider A UK degree-awarding body or any other organisation that offers courses of higher education on behalf of a separate **awarding body** or **organisation**. In the context of REO, the term means an independent college.

public information Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

Quality Code Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is being developed from 2011 to replace the **Academic Infrastructure** and will incorporate all its key elements along with additional topics and overarching themes.

reference points Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured. Internal reference points may be used by providers for purposes of self-regulation; external ones are used and accepted throughout the higher education community for the checking of standards and quality.

quality See **academic quality**.

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.

threshold academic standards 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 qualifications frameworks and **subject benchmark statements**. See also **academic standards**.

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

