

Quality and standards review report for Ming-Ai Association

Provider legal name: Ming-Ai Association

Provider trading name: Ming-Ai (London) Institute

UKPRN: 10004389

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Executive summary

For providers seeking registration with the Office for Students (OfS), the OfS will assess their application and relevant evidence to determine whether the provider satisfies the initial conditions of registration.

To conduct the quality and standards review (QSR), the OfS appointed a review team in May 2024 that consisted of two academic expert assessors. It also appointed a member of OfS staff to coordinate the review. The team was asked to give its advice and judgements about Ming-Ai Association's compliance with seven relevant core practices of the UK Quality Code for higher education (the quality code), which provides a reference point for quality assurance.

The report does not represent any decision of the OfS in respect of compliance with the initial conditions of registration B1, B2, B4 and B5.

1. The OfS made changes to its initial and ongoing conditions of registration relating to quality and standards on 1 May 2022.¹ However, under transitional arrangements, the registration process for providers with a live registration application between 1 March and 30 April 2022 involves a decision by the OfS about whether the provider complies with the initial conditions of registration B1, B2, B4 and B5 that were in place at the time of the provider's application, and a risk assessment in relation to the revised ongoing conditions of registration B1, B2, B4 and B5 (which would apply upon the successful registration of the provider).²
2. For providers that had a live registration application between 1 March and 30 April 2022, a QSR is normally used to provide the OfS with evidence so that it can decide whether the provider complies with the applicable initial conditions and to inform a risk assessment against ongoing conditions.
3. The previous QSR guidance produced by the Quality Assurance Agency set out that in a QSR a provider would be assessed against all 13 core practices of the quality code. However, the QSRs undertaken by the OfS after 1 April 2023 only assess against seven core practices. In line with the risk-based approach in the regulatory framework and in the interests of minimising regulatory burden, the OfS took the view that it does not require a review covering all core practices of the quality code to inform its assessment of whether a provider meets the original initial conditions or whether it poses risks against the revised ongoing conditions.
4. The OfS requires that all higher education providers applying to register meet initial conditions relating respectively to quality and to standards. It also conducts a risk assessment in relation to the revised ongoing conditions of registration B1, B2, B4 and B5 (which would apply upon the successful registration of the provider).

¹ See [Regulatory framework for higher education in England](#).

² See [Notice of determination of initial and general ongoing conditions of registration](#).

5. To provide the OfS with evidence to decide whether Ming-Ai Association ('Ming-Ai') complies with initial conditions and to enable a risk assessment against ongoing conditions, the OfS arranged for a QSR of Ming-Ai.
6. The OfS appointed a review team in May 2024 to conduct the QSR. The team consisted of two academic expert assessors. The OfS also appointed a member of OfS staff to coordinate the review. The team was asked to give its advice and judgements about Ming-Ai's compliance with seven relevant core practices of the Quality Code.
7. The review team considered a range of information. This included information:
 - submitted to the OfS by Ming-Ai
 - gathered from Ming-Ai by the review team during its assessment
 - gathered during the review team's visit to Ming-Ai on 22 and 23 October 2024, which included a tour of facilities, and meetings with staff, students and alumni.
8. The review team's conclusions relating to the core practices are set out in Tables 1 and 2.

Table 1: Standards

Ref	Core practice	Outcome	Confidence	Summary of reasons
S1	The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks.	Met	Moderate	<p>Based on the evidence reviewed, the team considers that the standards set for Ming-Ai's postgraduate courses are consistent with sector-recognised standards defined in the OfS's regulatory framework. This is because the programme handbook, module specifications, and assessment standards align with national qualifications frameworks, ensuring consistent academic standards.</p> <p>Ming-Ai has established academic regulations and processes that align with FHEQ standards and the validating partner's regulations, with external examiners confirming that appropriate threshold academic standards are met. However, the language in these regulations and processes lacks clarity, making it difficult to implement learning objectives effectively.</p> <p>While marking generally meets threshold standards, the review team found it challenging to assess the breadth and depth of disciplinary knowledge achieved. Additionally, assessment feedback did not always refer to the criteria, leading to unclear justification for marks.</p>

				Overall, the review team concludes that threshold standards for Ming-Ai's qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks. Considering the issues summarised above the review team concludes that this core practice is met, and the level of confidence is moderate.
S2	The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.	Met	Moderate	<p>Ming-Ai's governance framework, academic regulations, and strategies support student achievement beyond sector-specific threshold levels. The review team agrees that student outcomes are comparable with other UK institutions and often exceed threshold standards, as confirmed by external examiner reports.</p> <p>The programme handbook provides detailed assessment guidance, explaining assignments, feedback types, and assessment criteria, thereby communicating standards for achievement beyond the threshold level to staff and students.</p> <p>The team is confident that Ming-Ai has suitable oversight from the validating partner, aligning with its quality assurance processes to maintain standards.</p> <p>However, the review of assessed student work showed that feedback does not always clearly indicate achievement at or above the threshold level, making it difficult for students to identify their performance beyond the final numerical mark. Some assignments were marked highly despite not meeting all assessment criteria, such as critical analysis or referencing.</p> <p>While the team recognises that student achievement goes above the threshold level, its view differs from Ming-Ai's on the extent of this. Overall, the review team concludes that the core practice is met with moderate confidence, because the students have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level comparable with other UK providers, but the assessment feedback and demonstration of student achievement could be clearer.</p>

Table 2: Quality

Ref	Core practice	Outcome	Confidence	Summary of reasons
Q2	The provider designs and/or delivers high quality courses.	Met	Moderate	<p>The review team considers that Ming-Ai designs and delivers high quality courses because the programme handbook and module guidance provide detailed information, external examiner reports are positive, and the recent re-validation process has resulted in clear and flexible course design. Appropriate processes and procedures for maintaining the quality of the courses on an ongoing basis are in place and followed, with curriculum and assessment design primarily developed by the senior leadership team with input from teaching staff. Students have positive views about the MA course and its delivery.</p> <p>However, most teaching staff have limited formal higher education teaching qualifications and there is limited continuing professional development (CPD) for them. While staff engage in CPD with their main employer, CVs provided lacked detail on CPD undertaken. A stronger alignment with CPD and growth of teaching qualifications would support Ming-Ai in delivering high quality courses, because it would ensure staff are up to date with the latest teaching methodologies and sector developments.</p> <p>Ming-Ai demonstrates independence from its validating partner and confidence in its course design and delivery, while engagement with the validating partner for quality assurance is modest.</p> <p>Overall, the review team concludes that this core practice is met with moderate confidence because, while processes are robust, there is an opportunity to enhance staff development, CPD, and engagement with quality assurance to further improve course delivery.</p>
Q3	The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high quality academic experience.	Met	Moderate	<p>The review team considers that Ming-Ai has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high quality academic experience because the staff possess a mix of industry experience and academic credentials. Ming-Ai prioritises real-world, culture and heritage industry experience in appointing teaching staff, which students appreciate.</p>

				<p>However, Ming-Ai relies heavily on fractional, visiting and guest lecturers, which could impact course consistency and cohesiveness. A minority of teaching staff have teaching qualifications, and there are no clear plans for CPD opportunities for teaching and professional services staff. This poses a risk to maintaining a high quality academic experience if staff are not exposed to new pedagogical approaches or relevant scholarly literature.</p> <p>Ming-Ai has increased professional services and support staff to maintain quality, and current staffing levels are adequate for the number of students.</p> <p>Overall, the review team concludes that this core practice is met with moderate confidence, because the academic staff base is appropriately qualified and skills and staffing levels are sufficient. However, there is a risk to quality if student numbers increase without corresponding increases in full-time, qualified teaching staff and CPD opportunities.</p>
Q4	The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high quality academic experience.	Met	Moderate	<p>The review team considers that Ming-Ai has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources, and student support services to deliver a high quality academic experience, because the academic tutoring system works effectively, and the virtual learning environment provides beneficial access to study materials and support. The facilities include classrooms, a library and social spaces, fostering a community feeling.</p> <p>Overall, the review team concludes that the core practice is met and that the level of confidence is moderate. This is because there are a limited number of recent publications in the on-campus library, a reliance on academic resources from third parties, limited campus accessibility and a lack of a formal structured tutorial support system in place.</p>
Q5	The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.	Met	Moderate	<p>The review team considers that Ming-Ai actively engages students in the quality of their educational experience because it captures feedback through formal mechanisms like the programme voice group, learning, teaching and quality committee and module evaluation forms, as well as informally through staff-student interactions. Students felt listened to, and</p>

				<p>Ming-Ai provided examples of responsiveness to feedback.</p> <p>Despite the informal nature of some mechanisms, the consistent positive outcomes, positive student feedback, and absence of formal complaints over the past five years demonstrate a robust approach.</p> <p>Overall, the team concludes that this core practice is met with moderate confidence as there are limited opportunities for anonymous feedback, and informal engagement mechanisms may need reviewing if cohort sizes increase.</p>
Q9	The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.	Met	Moderate	<p>The review team considers that Ming-Ai's courses emphasise the development of social skills, particularly benefiting international students in the UK. Students and alumni highlighted career guidance and practical skills development as key benefits of their education.</p> <p>Students are given a comprehensive induction to introduce them to the course and to studying at Ming-Ai. Small cohort sizes mean students benefit from a personalised approach to support.</p> <p>Assessment, award and graduate destination data gives evidence that successful academic and professional outcomes are being achieved by students.</p> <p>The review team concludes that this core practice is met with moderate confidence because Ming-Ai effectively supports students in achieving these outcomes through personalised attention and robust support mechanisms. The team's level of confidence is moderate because the current informal support structures may not be sustainable with larger cohorts.</p>

Introduction and background

Context

9. Ming-Ai Association was founded in November 1992 in London. Its values include enhancing relations between Chinese and British people; preserving Chinese cultural education in the UK; assisting the Chinese community in the UK in developing services that are not provided elsewhere; offering opportunities to enable the Chinese community to integrate with mainstream society in the UK; and supporting Christian values.
10. Ming-Ai offers a Master of Arts (MA), MA top-up, Postgraduate Diploma (PG Dip) and Postgraduate Certificate (PG Cert) in Chinese Cultural Heritage Management, and a PG Cert in Heritage Skills for Community.
11. The PG Dip and PG Cert in Chinese Cultural Heritage Management courses are offered both as standalone courses and as exit awards for students who are enrolled on, but do not complete, the MA. The MA top-up course is available only to applicants who have previously completed the PG Dip Chinese Cultural Heritage Management.
12. The MA and its embedded qualifications have been validated and awarded by Middlesex University since 2014, with the first cohort of students enrolling in 2016. The most recent revalidation of the courses took place in 2021, with that validation period lasting for six years. In February 2024, Middlesex University decided to end the partnership with Ming-Ai because Middlesex was rationalising its partnership arrangements. The final students studying courses validated by Middlesex University will complete in the academic year 2025-26. Ming-Ai is therefore currently seeking a new validating partner for its courses from academic year 2026-27 onwards, and has stated that it is in early discussions with three providers with degree awarding powers to explore this.
13. Ming-Ai's courses are delivered at a single campus in north London. At the campus, Ming-Ai also offers non-higher education courses in Chinese calligraphy and painting, teaching Chinese as a foreign language, and Chinese food and cooking. Ming-Ai also collaborates with other higher education providers on research, for example the School of Oriental and Asian Studies' Food Studies Centre, and Oxford University's China Centre.
14. Ming-Ai is a registered company and charity run by the board of directors and trustees, with a dean as its senior executive. The board of directors and trustees has overall responsibility for setting the strategic direction of Ming-Ai. It delegates authority and responsibilities on academic matters to the academic board, and to the project steering committee for its heritage projects. The board of directors and trustees holds the dean and members of the senior management team to account for its delivery of Ming-Ai's day-to-day operations.
15. Academic governance is the responsibility of the academic board. Assessment boards and the sub-committees of the academic board – learning, teaching and quality committee, programme voice group, and research and scholarship committee – report to the academic board.
16. Table 3 summarises the higher education Ming-Ai currently offers, with student numbers for academic year 2024-25.

Table 3: Higher education courses offered

Course	Level	Awarding body	Location of study	Student numbers (full-time)	Student numbers (part-time)
Master of Arts in Chinese Cultural Heritage Management	7	Middlesex University	London	5	0
Postgraduate Diploma in Chinese Cultural Heritage Management	7	Middlesex University	London	0	0
Postgraduate Certificate in Chinese Cultural Heritage Management	7	Middlesex University	London	0	0
Master of Arts (top-up) in Chinese Cultural Heritage Management	7	Middlesex University	London	0	0
Postgraduate Certificate in Heritage Skills for Community	7	Middlesex University	London	0	0

17. Upon registration with the OfS, Ming-Ai intends to continue delivering the MA course and offering the PG Dip, PG Cert and MA top-up courses in Chinese Cultural Heritage Management, and the PG Cert in Heritage Skills for Community. Its strategic five-year business plan states that it aims to recruit 25 full-time equivalent (FTE) students to the MA by 2028-29.
18. Ming-Ai is also considering whether to apply to Pearson Education Limited to deliver a two-year Higher National Diploma in Business and Entrepreneurship. Ming-Ai would deliver the course with cohorts of up to 25 students at each annual intake. Any decision on whether to apply to Pearson would not be taken until after a registration decision by the OfS, and after the outcome of its search for a new validating partner for postgraduate courses.

Assessment process

Information gathering

19. The review team gathered a range of information to determine whether Ming-Ai met the seven relevant core practices. The review team conducted the assessment according to the process set out in the OfS's Quality and Standards Review Guidance for Providers Applying to Register with the Office for Students ('the Guidance').
20. The review team used information from Ming-Ai's QSR submission; from an initial information request and requests for further information; from a student written submission; and from a site visit on 22 and 23 October 2024.
21. During the site visit the review team:
 - met with a range of staff, including the senior leadership team, teaching staff, and professional services and support staff

- met with current students studying on the MA course and MA course alumni
- observed teaching sessions
- viewed physical and digital learning resources and facilities.

22. Annex D of the Guidance expects review teams to sample certain types of key evidence. Because of the small volume of higher education courses at Ming-Ai and their small cohort size, the review team considered all assessed student work from the previous two academic years. This was to test:

- that students' assessed work reflects relevant threshold standards
- that marks and awards given to students are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers
- that, where Ming-Ai works in partnership with other organisations, the standards of awards are credible and secure
- whether Ming-Ai gives students comprehensive, helpful and timely feedback.

Explanation of findings

Core practice S1

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

23. To meet this core practice a provider must ensure that threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks. These standards must be articulated clearly and must be met, or exceeded, through the delivery of the qualifications and the assessment of students.
24. The sector-recognised standards that are used in relation to this core practice are those that apply in England, as defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS's regulatory framework published in 2018 (OfS 2018.01). That is, those set out in Table 1, in paragraphs 4.10, 4.12, 4.15, 4.17, 4.18, in paragraphs 6.13 to 6.18 and in the Table in Annex C, in the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications for UK Degree Awarding Bodies (FHEQ) 2014. These sector-recognised standards apply for this review and represent the threshold academic standards for each level of the FHEQ and the minimum volumes of credit typically associated with qualifications at each level.

What the evidence shows

25. To understand Ming-Ai's approach to maintaining threshold standards, the review team examined the programme handbook (a single handbook for the MA course which incorporates both PG Certs and the PG Dip and MA top-up courses); module handbooks; assessment briefs; teaching materials; student assignments and feedback; external examiner reports, assessment board reports and conferment lists and grades; and academic regulations and frameworks, notably the quality enhancement strategy and teaching and learning strategy policy. These documents set out Ming-Ai's responsibilities and efforts to ensure a consistent approach.
26. Ming-Ai maintains its own academic standards and has developed guidelines, processes and policies for designing and delivering courses and modules. These include academic regulations and strategies, the programme handbook, module specifications, assessment standards, and assessment grids. These documents outline the criteria for identifying and assessing threshold standards, and specify the levels of achievement required. The assessment criteria for determining threshold achievement are aligned with the FHEQ Level 7 descriptors. For example, the teaching and learning strategy policy stipulates that the curricula of the courses are developed and updated 'to ensure they reflect current knowledge, trends, and professional practices in the field' and to allow for 'clear learning outcomes and opportunities for integration of theory and practice'. This is achieved through, for example, active learning strategies including group discussions, case studies, problem-solving activities, and student-led projects. These are in line with FHEQ Level 7 descriptors as they seek to ensure an understanding of knowledge, current problems and new insights, and a conceptual and practical understanding of how to examine these in a student-led

manner. This promotes self-direction in tackling these problems and insights, and the ability to communicate findings to different audiences.

27. However, the review team notes that the teaching and learning strategy policy is predominantly written in aspirational language, in that it mainly describes a set of ambitions and objectives rather than outlining which standards will be achieved and how Ming-Ai will ensure it meets them in practice. Aspirational objectives are also evident in other Ming-Ai strategies and policies, for example the quality enhancement strategy, the assessment policy and the admissions policy.
28. The programme handbook and module handbooks provide more specific detail on threshold standards. Pass thresholds and their achievement are implicitly linked to the FHEQ standards and explicitly explained in the 'assessment criteria and course outcomes' section of the programme specification, contained within the programme handbook. The programme handbook also includes a curriculum map which lists 21 course learning outcomes that relate to key knowledge and understanding, practical skills, critical analysis (called 'cognitive skills') and problem-solving skills (called 'graduate skills'). The handbook maps these onto each individual module to ensure that students, if successful, will obtain a comprehensive understanding of knowledge, techniques and concepts, as stipulated in the FHEQ Level 7 descriptors. The programme handbook and module handbooks list the key knowledge, issues, concepts and practical methods to be studied in each module, emphasising that each course requires students to explore, discuss and critically analyse them in class and in assignments. This promotes students' critical awareness and application of concepts and methods, as well as supporting them to manage complex issues within the field, in line with FHEQ Level 7 qualification descriptors.
29. External examiners evaluate and report on whether these threshold standards are being met at both the module and qualification award levels. All external examiner reports considered by the review team stated that credits and qualifications are awarded only when these standards are met. The validating partner maintains oversight of academic standards through the assessment board and assessment board data, and the educational monitoring and enhancement report process.
30. The review team found that course and module documentation and associated administrative and operational processes are consistent with those of the validating partner, as set out in the memorandum of cooperation between Ming-Ai and the validating partner. Ming-Ai has established academic regulations that provide a framework for setting and maintaining threshold standards, though its regulations and associated processes do not explicitly set out how Ming-Ai's courses align with the FHEQ standards. The regulations address essential aspects of course development and delivery, though the team considered the articulation of these to be unclear. For example, the teaching and learning strategy policy states that programme leads 'oversee the delivery of the programme, ensuring alignment with academic standards and strategic goals,' but it is not clear how this is done in practice. Staff stated in meetings with the review team that course delivery is mainly monitored and assessed via educational monitoring and enhancement reports submitted to the validating partner, external examiner reports, assessment board meetings and student feedback. The review team was told that staff are provided with regulations and the programme handbook, which are updated annually or biannually. However, educational monitoring and enhancement reports largely consider quantitative data around student recruitment, achievement and progression, and do

not include substantial consideration of academic standards. The link tutor mainly assesses assessment and degree outcomes. Module evaluation forms do not allow for an assessment of whether academic standards are being met, though they do ask students to rate module content and knowledge delivery. While external examiners provide Ming-Ai with assurance on whether FHEQ Level 7 descriptors are met, it is less clear how Ming-Ai's internal processes ensure this in practice, beyond providing staff with the relevant regulations, policies and course and module handbooks.

31. The postgraduate offer at Ming-Ai is flexibly designed, allowing students to enrol onto the MA, PG Certs or PG Dip. The PG Certs and PG Dip are standalone qualifications consisting of modules drawn from the MA, but they also serve as exit awards for students leaving the MA course early with the necessary credits. An MA top-up, consisting of the 60-credit dissertation module, is offered for students holding the PG Dip. No students have enrolled on either of the PG Certs, the PG Dip or MA top-up since the courses were revalidated, with all students since 2020-21 studying on the MA only.
32. Ming-Ai has a credit system defining the volume of learning expected of students on each of the above qualifications. These reflect the typical Level 7 credit volumes set out in Table 2 of the sector-recognised standards, and are set out in the MA programme specification. The credit volumes are as follows:
 - a. The PG Cert Chinese Cultural Heritage Management course has four Level 7 modules of 15 credits each, totalling 60 credits.
 - b. The PG Cert Heritage Skills for Community course has four Level 7 modules of 15 credits each, totalling 60 credits.
 - c. The PG Dip Chinese Cultural Heritage Management course has eight Level 7 modules of 15 credits each, totalling 120 credits.
 - d. The MA (Top Up) Chinese Cultural Heritage Management course has one Level 7 dissertation module of 60 credits, totalling 60 credits.
 - e. The MA Chinese Cultural Heritage Management course has eight Level 7 modules of 15 credits each, and one Level 7 Dissertation module of 60 credits, totalling 180 credits.

The credit volumes and level of each qualification are appropriately titled in line with the Level 7 qualifications set out in the FHEQ.

33. To ensure that the specified threshold standards align with relevant national qualifications frameworks, the team examined course documentation, including the programme handbook and a sample of module handbooks for the following modules from each of the courses:
 - CCHM1000: Cultural and Chinese Cultural Heritage
 - CCHM1003: Digital Heritage and Digitalisation
 - CCHM2000: Research, Oral History and Employability Skills in Cultural Heritage
 - CCHM2003: Work-based Culture Project

- CCHM3000: Dissertation.

34. The programme handbook demonstrates an understanding of the threshold levels in the FHEQ, and maps some of the required skills to the different modules within the courses. The handbook demonstrates standards that are aligned with relevant national frameworks. It also outlines the courses' overall structure and provides an overview of the available modules, learning resources and academic support services, and key policies. Further detail on the knowledge and skills that students must develop is provided in module handbooks. These documents set out that students are required to engage with and understand relevant techniques, key concepts and emerging trends in the academic discipline. They also set out that the courses provide opportunities to apply the knowledge and practical skills gained to create and interpret new knowledge in the discipline.
35. The review team considered, however, that it was not clear from the documentation provided which disciplinary knowledge and skills were required of students to pass the qualifications, since feedback on assessed student work did not specify where requirements were met. The team was also unable to evaluate the extent to which disciplinary knowledge was delivered in a systematic manner to achieve the threshold standards, as module assignments did not appraise knowledge delivered in the module itself, and the programme handbook, notably the curriculum map, did not demonstrate how learning and learning outcomes were scaffolded across the course. The team therefore asked for additional information from Ming-Ai to clarify this, which was provided in the form of a skills development statement. However this document mainly outlined a general five-stage approach stating, for example, that students receive a fundamental understanding of core concepts in the first stage of the course, which becomes more advanced in the second stage. However, the specific concepts or skills that are taught at each stage, and how these relate to each module, were not clear. The team therefore asked staff to clarify how modules scaffold the learning and application of theories and concepts. Teaching staff did not provide a definitive answer, but explained that modules showcase three dimensions: what heritage is, how to manage it and how to study it.
36. The review team examined detailed course descriptions included in the module handbooks, which outline the aims and objectives of each module, intended learning outcomes, assessment methods and types, and the contribution of each assessment to the final grade. The team found that the course documentation indicates programme learning outcomes are aligned with FHEQ levels and credit requirements, but could be more clearly mapped to demonstrate how sector-recognised standards are met. For example, the programme handbook lists 21 intended learning outcomes on the acquisition of knowledge and understanding, practical skills, critical analysis and problem-solving skills, which are in line with the FHEQ Level 7 requirements. While these individual intended learning outcomes are mapped onto each module, the documentation reviewed and the meetings with staff did not demonstrate to the review team how these jointly ensure that sector-specific requirements are met.
37. The intended learning outcomes outlined in module handbooks refer to critically analysing case studies, identifying key issues in the field, exploring and gaining confidence in using practical technical tools and obtaining conceptual understandings. Students are familiarised with the research methods they need to attempt the dissertation, as evidenced during meetings with staff, the curriculum map in the programme handbook and the course and module documentation.

38. The module handbooks, however, were not sufficiently clear on what conceptual understandings learners would obtain, since many of the handbooks referred to practical (not conceptual or theoretical) topics. Teaching staff stated to the review team that the module design used a scaffolded approach, where students obtain a critical understanding of key concepts and issues in the first semester, which they then apply in the second semester, where modules are more practical and follow a project-based and problem-focused approach to learning. The staff, however, did not clearly articulate what the key concepts and theories embedded in the courses are, or how they are systematically and effectively integrated across the curriculum.
39. To assess the strength and reliability of Ming-Ai's plans for maintaining threshold standards, the team reviewed its academic management and governance structures, including essential academic frameworks, regulations, and educational monitoring and enhancement reports. The assessment policy aligns with the FHEQ, as it states that assessment 'criteria for each module have been defined according to a framework to ensure that standards are consistent in the qualification and across the suite as a whole.' It also refers to a marking rubric, which requires feedback to link to assessment criteria.
40. To verify that students' assessed work aligns with the relevant threshold standards, the team sampled oral presentations and written assessments from the five modules listed at paragraph 33 from 2022-23 and 2023-24. Based on the team's judgement of the student assessed work reviewed, the marking was generally in line with the threshold standards. The feedback given on the samples of assessed work reviewed by the team did not explicitly set out how the marks awarded were meeting relevant sector-recognised standards. For example, the dissertation feedback did not include reference to the marking rubric, assessment criteria or individual learning outcomes outlined in the programme handbook. The feedback included three to four sentences on the strengths of the dissertation, but did not highlight weaknesses that the student could address. The review team also did not see evidence of feedback or comments made by second markers on the feedback forms to fully evidence the rigour of the marking process. Therefore, it was not sufficiently clear which threshold standards students met and how.
41. Ming-Ai has an academic misconduct policy, which is included in the programme handbook. Ming-Ai's process for detecting plagiarism is manual and relies on the expertise of instructors for checking the authenticity of students' work. It does not have access to its validating partner's plagiarism detection software. Teaching staff informed the review team that assignment topics are very specific, and assessment markers are familiar with the students and their writing styles, which makes it easier to detect academic misconduct or poor academic practice, for example by looking for inconsistencies in language and citations. Teaching staff also require students to undertake a viva voce exam to verify their work if they doubt its authenticity. Ming-Ai stated that it is considering the introduction of plagiarism detection software, though small student cohorts mean this is currently not cost-effective. The review team concluded that while manual checking may be practical and sufficient at present, there is a significant risk to its reliability if student numbers increase.
42. The team reviewed external examiner reports from 2017-18 to 2022-23 to determine whether external examiners over time considered that Ming-Ai's standards align with national qualifications frameworks, and to seek assurance that qualifications are awarded only when

these threshold standards are met. The team also reviewed assessment board documentation.

43. The external examiners' reports state that, in their view, the courses at Ming-Ai meet the criteria of relevant external frameworks, such as those for higher education qualifications and subject benchmark statements. The external examiners verify that Ming-Ai consistently assesses student work in a fair and consistent manner, and that they believe standards are in line with sector-recognised standards at the required levels. Their reports indicate that credits are correctly awarded, solely based on the proven achievement of these standards.
44. One external examiner report comments on a lack of understanding of research methodology and skills in the dissertation module, and suggests that Ming-Ai needs to emphasise to the students the importance of applying key concepts and using adequate referencing techniques. Since this feedback, preparatory lecturers on research methods were introduced when the course was revalidated, students receive formative feedback from the research methods tutor, and greater referencing skill provision is available (see paragraph 107). However, this evidence suggests that students' conceptual understanding and their ability to design and execute research needs continuous monitoring and may need further development.
45. To evaluate how academic standards are monitored across the courses and modules, the team reviewed the assessment policy, academic misconduct policy, assessment board reports, programme voice group meetings and educational monitoring and enhancement reports. The documentation reviewed did not set out explicitly how quality assurance processes support the establishment and maintenance of threshold academic standards in line with the relevant national qualifications frameworks. While the regulations are in line with the validating partner's regulations and explicitly refer to FHEQ standards, the documentation does not fully demonstrate how these standards are used in practice.
46. To ensure that staff involved in assessment processes can understand and implement Ming-Ai's approach to the maintenance of standards, the team held meetings with the senior leadership team and teaching staff. Teaching staff described a clear process for setting assignments. This is led and monitored by the chair of the board of trustees and the dean, who together provide the academic leadership and direction of, and teach on, the courses. The description of assessment practices in this meeting and the external examiner reports indicated that the marking and moderation process adheres to the assessment policy. This was confirmed by the link tutor from the validating partner. Overall, the review team was satisfied that the assignment setting, marking and moderation processes supported a level of achievement and demonstration of skills and knowledge in line with the sector-recognised standards. In a meeting with the validating partner's link tutor, the team was told that marks were confirmed after second-marking, and that the link tutor reviews the spread of marks but not the work itself. Staff also described formal and informal processes for students to provide feedback on their assessments, which allow for the continual review and maintenance of course standards, for example via programme voice group meetings, module evaluation forms or informal conversations with staff.

Conclusions

47. Based on the evidence reviewed, the team considers that the standards set for Ming-Ai's postgraduate courses are consistent with the sector-recognised standards defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS's 2018 regulatory framework. The review team's view is supported by evidence showing that the standards described in the approved course documentation are set at levels consistent with sector-recognised standards. This is because the programme handbook, module specifications, and assessment standards align with national qualifications frameworks, ensuring consistent academic standards. Ming-Ai has established a range of fundamental academic regulations and processes, which align with relevant threshold standards articulated in the FHEQ and the regulations of the validating partner, and there is scrutiny of these processes by the validating partner. External examiners also report that courses meet the appropriate threshold academic standards.
48. While Ming-Ai has regulations and processes to ensure it meets sector-recognised standards, the language used in these regulations and processes lacks clarity and does not consistently and adequately explain how to implement the learning outcomes outlined in the documentation. Based on the team's judgement of the student assessed work reviewed, the marking was generally in line with the threshold standards. However, while the courses and individual modules meet threshold standards and clearly outline the intended learning outcomes, in reviewing the assessed student work and its feedback the team found it challenging to determine the extent to which a breadth and depth of disciplinary knowledge was achieved, and whether it was delivered systematically to ensure consistent adherence to these standards. Additionally, assessment feedback did not always align with the assessment criteria, making the evidence for a marker's justification for the given marks sometimes unclear. The team also notes that the robustness of the approach to plagiarism checking and detection is weak, and that knowledge of staff in this evolving area relies on their independently engaging with training. This reliance may be a risk to the reliable assessment of student work.
49. The review team considered that the academic regulations and processes are designed to support the maintenance of threshold standards, and that course and module content are in line with the threshold standards. Threshold standards for Ming-Ai's qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks. Considering the issues summarised above, the review team concludes that this core practice is met, and the level of confidence is moderate.

Core practice S2

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

50. To meet this core practice a provider must ensure that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers. These standards must be articulated clearly and must be met, or exceeded, through the course delivery and the assessment of students.
51. The sector-recognised standards that are used in relation to this core practice are those that apply in England, as defined in paragraph 342 of the OfS's regulatory framework published in 2018 (OfS 2018.01). That is, those set out in Table 1, in paragraphs 4.10, 4.12, 4.15, 4.17, 4.18, in paragraphs 6.13-6.18 and in Table in Annex C, in the FHEQ 2014. These are sector-recognised standards that apply for this review and represent the threshold academic standards for each level of the FHEQ and the minimum numbers of credit typically associated with qualifications at each level.

What the evidence shows

52. To understand Ming-Ai's approach to the design and delivery of its courses to allow students the opportunity to achieve standards above the threshold level, the review team examined the academic regulations, including the assessment policy, teaching and learning strategy policy, skills development strategy, educational monitoring and enhancement reports, and programme and module handbooks. These academic regulations establish a sufficient framework for articulating achievement. This is done through the assessment criteria, which inform students of what to do to pass the assignment, thereby achieving FHEQ standard thresholds, and how to exceed a pass (i.e. attain a merit, distinction or higher distinction) in the assignment.
53. The programme handbook provides further assessment guidance for students by explaining each module's assessments, assessment criteria and methods of feedback. The assessment criteria vary by type of assignment, which includes presentations, written essays, case studies, research proposals and dissertations. These criteria are consistent with FHEQ standards for a pass at Level 7 and explicitly outlines how students can demonstrate achievement beyond the threshold level and what constitutes a pass with high distinction (80 to 100 per cent), distinction (70 to 79 per cent), and merit (60 to 69 per cent).
54. Ming-Ai has established a sufficient framework for setting and maintaining standards and has developed strategies on how to monitor and continuously enhance quality and standards. This framework aligns with the assessment requirements and practices of the validating partner, which has some oversight of assessment processes to ensure that students are meeting the threshold standards. The validating partner's link tutor attends the assessment and academic boards, moderates assignments when the first marker and second marker disagree on a mark, and reviews the annual educational monitoring and enhancement

reports submitted by Ming-Ai. However, this involvement only allows the link tutor to oversee assessment and degree classification outcomes, and offers limited oversight on the extent to which an assignment exceeded specific threshold standards. The documentation provided did not include any information on the validating partner's formal requirements for students to exceed the threshold standards.

55. To evaluate whether the marks and awards given to students are reasonably comparable with those from other UK providers, the review team examined assessed student work from 2022-23 and 2023-24 across the five modules sampled, external examiner reports and the programme and module handbooks. External examiner reports indicate that student performance meets threshold standards, and one report states that performance was exceeding the threshold compared with students at other UK institutions. Students did not raise any issues about the fairness or clarity of marks awarded at programme voice group meetings, in module evaluations or to the review team at the visit.
56. One external examiner report queried limited differentiation in marking at an assessment board in 2018, noting that 92 per cent of students had received a merit or distinction. This was explained by Ming-Ai as a consequence of the small cohort size. Also, the review team noted that distribution has since become more diverse. 73 per cent of students received a merit or distinction in 2019-20, 82 per cent in 2020-21 and 80 per cent in 2022-23). The 2023-24 educational monitoring and enhancement report identified a normal distribution of postgraduate awards from 2019-20 to 2022-23, with 18 to 20 per cent distinction, 55 to 64 per cent merit and 9 to 18 per cent pass.
57. The sample of assessed student work, its feedback and the programme handbook indicate that all assessments are moderated or second-marked. For example, assessment feedback forms for all modules included areas where the first marker provided a mark and comments, and the second marker confirmed the mark by leaving their initials. However, in all student work the marking and feedback did not explicitly refer to the stated assessment criteria to indicate where and how students had exceeded the threshold in practice. An assessment rubric was not used and most pieces of feedback consisted of three to four sentences outlining the strengths of the assignment, and none on the weaknesses. Based on the team's judgement of the assessments, the marking was able to recognise achievement above the threshold. Yet there were examples where the given mark was above the team's own assessment of the work. For example, one of the 2022-23 dissertations received a distinction, yet its research outcomes were only briefly explained and lacked critical thinking and analysis. Also, some of the sources referenced within the text did not appear in the reference list.
58. To help assess students' understanding of how to achieve standards above the threshold, the review team met with a group of current students and alumni and examined the student written submission. Students stated that they understood the marking criteria for their assessments and what was needed to meet different achievement thresholds, and that they considered assessment and marking to be fair. They stated that the programme handbook was clear and guided them appropriately on how to achieve highly in their assessments.
59. External examiner reports provide mixed evidence on the quality of feedback in relation to classification levels. For example, one report states both that feedback adequately reflects on the strengths and weaknesses of the student's work, but that comments in feedback

forms could reflect the quality of work more accurately. External examiner reports also confirm that student outcomes are reasonably comparable with those of other UK higher education institutions.

60. Internal quality assurance processes are outlined in Ming-Ai's governance framework and in strategy documents. They are also outlined in a submission to the review team from its validating partner, which indicates that quality assurance is chiefly carried out via the educational monitoring and enhancement reports process, feedback from the validating partner's link tutor, and external examiner reports. The governance framework stipulates that the assessment board and the learning, teaching and quality committee are responsible for monitoring academic standards and quality of courses. The learning, teaching and quality committee meets twice a year and has three standing agenda items: curriculum development and review, teaching quality and innovation, and support and resources. The minutes of the committee show that the meetings focused on providing updates on changes that have been made to the curriculum and its delivery, and teaching and learning resources. The minutes do not show evidence of monitoring or standards-related discussions. However, standards related to student performance are discussed at the assessment board, which discusses and approves student marks, confirms that marking and moderation processes have been fair, and confirms that external examiner scrutiny has taken place. The validating partner's link tutor is a member of the assessment board and reviews student outcome data as part of the process. Staff confirmed to the review team that Ming-Ai chiefly relies on the external examiner to assess whether sector-specific thresholds are met and exceeded. Therefore, whether standards exceed the threshold level is mainly monitored and evidenced through external examiner reports.

Conclusions

61. Ming-Ai's governance framework, academic regulations and strategies support student achievement beyond the sector-specific threshold levels. The review team agrees that student outcomes are comparable with other UK institutions, often exceeding threshold standards, which is confirmed by external examiner reports. The programme handbook provides appropriate and moderately detailed assessment guidance on marking above threshold level by explaining assignments, feedback types, and assessment criteria to students. In so doing, standards for student achievement beyond the threshold level are communicated to staff and students.
62. The review team is confident that Ming-Ai has a suitable level of oversight from the validating partner to support it in maintaining standards. The framework for setting and maintaining standards aligns with the validating partner's quality assurance processes. There is a framework to identify and monitor standards above the threshold level, and quality assurance processes in place, and the team therefore concludes that standards are being met.
63. A review of a sample of assessed student work shows that student achievement is recognised above threshold level. However, this review showed that assessment feedback does not always clearly or consistently indicate student achievement at or above the threshold level. Student feedback therefore does not always allow students to identify whether or how they have achieved a standard above the threshold level, other than via the final numerical mark. Also, based on the team's review of assessed student work, some assignments appeared to be marked highly although they did not meet all of the assessment

criteria, for example critical analysis or referencing, to the extent the team would have expected. Therefore, while the team recognises that student achievement is recognised above the threshold level, the team's view differed from Ming-Ai's judgement as to the degree to which this is the case.

64. The review team is satisfied that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers. This is supported by the external examiners' view of the courses. Ming-Ai clearly communicates standards for student achievement to students and staff. However, student feedback does not always enable the students to clearly recognise where they have achieved standards above the threshold level, and the extent to which students' achievement is above the threshold level was not clearly demonstrated to the team. Therefore the team concludes that this core practice is met, and that the level of confidence is moderate.

Core practice Q2

The provider designs and/or delivers high quality courses.

What the evidence shows

65. Ming-Ai designs and delivers courses within the framework provided by its agreement with the validating partner. Within the scope of that agreement, Ming-Ai has regulations and processes that cover the design, approval and validation, and delivery of courses. The review team viewed a range of academic policies and process documentation, such as the governance framework, programme and module handbooks, quality enhancement strategy, student feedback and engagement processes, and external examiner reports. As part of the visit the review team evaluated these documents, held meetings with teaching staff and students and alumni, and observed teaching sessions.
66. To better understand the quality of the courses, the review team considered curriculum design through the review of the 2023-24 programme handbook; module handbooks, module content and assessment briefs; external examiner reports; the most recent course revalidation document; module evaluation forms; academic regulations and frameworks, including the quality enhancement and teaching and learning strategy policy. It also held meetings about the development of the courses with the senior leadership team and teaching staff.
67. The validating partner revalidated the current postgraduate provision at Ming-Ai in 2021. The revised versions of the PG Certs, PG Dip, MA top-up and MA courses were designed by the dean and chair of the board of trustees, who together provide the academic leadership of, and teach on, the course. The courses were revalidated in alignment with the FHEQ and with the Quality Assurance Agency subject benchmark statements for master's degrees in business and management. The revalidation redesigned and approved the structure of the courses and their modules and assessments for delivery over the six-year validation approval period.
68. Ming Ai's provider submission states that module tutors design assessments in conjunction with the dean and chair of the board of trustees, and that these are submitted to the external examiner for review and approval. It also sets out how the module leader, or module team where there is joint teaching, implements any recommended changes. However, teaching staff stated to the review team that assessment design in general was largely the responsibility of the dean and chair of the board of trustees, though module leaders did have input into assessment tasks based on their subject expertise or background. Ming-Ai's teaching and learning strategy policy does not explicitly outline how assessment is designed, but does state that assessment is coordinated by course leadership and that assessment strategies are informed by evidence from academic research, best practice, and feedback from students and staff. Ming-Ai also described how the course team meets informally each semester to monitor progress and the quality of assessment and course delivery.
69. To assess the degree to which conceptual and practical understanding of key theories, methods and techniques is integrated in a systematic manner, the team reviewed the course

and module documentation. The team did not see that a clear scaffolding and underpinning of theory had been integrated into all parts of the curriculum. The programme handbook, module handbooks and teaching and learning strategy policy did not provide sufficient insight into how key concepts and skills development are taught across the curriculum to achieve a systematic and scaffolded approach to student learning. The team therefore requested additional information, which was provided in the form of the skills development statement. However, this only outlined five general stages, such as 'familiarisation with concepts' (stage 1) and 'advanced understanding of concepts' (stage 2), without stating which concepts were considered essential and how these stages were to be integrated into the curriculum. The team therefore inquired about this in meetings with staff. The senior leadership team and teaching staff articulated that the first semester of the MA prioritises background knowledge and preparation, and that this supports students to progress to the second semester, which takes on a more active work-placement focus. In the final semester, students elect to study either an academic or project-based dissertation. When asked for further clarification, staff were not able to state which key concepts or theories were taught in the courses or how this was scaffolded. Therefore, the team considered that the documentation and staff did not clearly articulate how sufficient challenge and theoretical integration are robustly built into the courses.

70. The review team noted that teaching staff are sufficiently experienced to enable high quality delivery of the courses. Most of the teaching staff are on fractional contracts and either teach at other higher education providers or are employed in the culture and heritage sector. Academic staff CVs demonstrate a sufficient balance of both higher education-level teaching and industry experience across those involved in delivering the courses. Evidence of continuing professional development for staff was requested from Ming-Ai to understand how academic staff were engaging in pedagogical training or awareness of sector trends. Ming-Ai's response stated that Ming-Ai staff would engage in CPD with their 'home' higher education provider, where they are employed for most of their time. The review team noted that the academic staff CVs submitted were last updated in 2021 in preparation for the revalidation of the courses. The CVs demonstrated limited evidence of CPD undertaken, and in many examples what had been undertaken was not clearly detailed. The senior leadership team stated to the review team that it was willing to support staff in engaging with CPD if requested. The senior leadership team cited examples of training courses that staff had participated in, which were primarily free and open-access courses, such as those offered by other universities. Additionally, professional services staff engage in CPD, for example in relation to the Prevent duty. Staff also noted that they had undertaken online training sessions offered by the validating partner.
71. The review team observed two teaching sessions during the visit. All classes are delivered in person, though they are recorded so there is the opportunity for students unable to attend to join virtually or to catch up after the session has ended. There was a suitable learning environment in terms of space and surroundings, and both sessions were delivered effectively by the teachers. They were predominantly delivered in a formal lecture style, supported by a presentation. All presentations and other class materials are also made available on the virtual learning environment (VLE).
72. Because of the size of the cohorts recruited, Ming-Ai delivers its courses to small classes. This gives the opportunity for students to easily involve themselves during classes, and for teachers to offer a high level of personalised support both during and outside of the class.

During the teaching sessions observed by the review team, students demonstrated active engagement and contributed meaningfully, primarily through raising their hands to ask questions.

73. To understand student views on the design and delivery of the courses the review team met with a group of current students and alumni and reviewed the student written submission, module evaluation forms and programme voice group meeting minutes. Students gave positive feedback on the quality of the design and delivery of the course both at and ahead of the visit. Module evaluation forms showed students' responses to a question on module content and knowledge delivery to be overwhelmingly positive for all modules. There was no evidence of negative feedback from students in minutes of programme voice group meetings. Students also commented positively on both the expertise and the leading reputations of the teaching staff. The evidence confirmed to the team that students felt assured that they received a high quality learning experience at Ming-Ai.
74. Current students, alumni and the student written submission highlighted one main area for improvement, stating that feedback on assignments was not always received ahead of the next assignment deadline. However, though the review team had identified some lack of clarity in the assessment feedback reviewed (see paragraphs 40 and 57), the students and the written submission both praised the quality and usefulness of the assessment feedback.
75. A large proportion of the students who have studied the courses at Ming-Ai are from China. Staff stated that learning social skills to help support their transition to, and enhance their experience of living in, the UK was a key part of the institution's educational philosophy. Students and alumni commented positively about the supportive, family-type environment provided by Ming-Ai. The student written submission expressed students' view that they received a high quality learning and supportive pastoral experience.
76. Ming-Ai's validating partner provides support to Ming-Ai primarily via the link tutor role and the annual educational monitoring and enhancement report process. The validating partner monitors quality and standards through this process in a sufficient way, based on the academic governance processes in place that the review team examined. Discussions at the visit confirmed that the link tutor reviews assessment marks but not the student work itself, unless called to moderate in the case of disagreement on a mark between the first and second marker. The link tutor is not involved in close monitoring of teaching quality mechanisms, for example teaching observations. On this basis, Ming-Ai largely operates independently, with light-touch support and supervision from the validating partner. The review team considers that there is limited involvement of the validating partner in the oversight of quality and standards. This is a potential weakness to Ming-Ai in its work on ensuring that courses and learning materials remain consistently pitched at an appropriate academic level, as Ming-Ai does not fully benefit from the externality and expertise of the validating partner.
77. External examiner reports contained largely positive feedback about the courses as part of the 'programme/subject design, content and standards' section of the reports. Ming-Ai's governance framework and quality processes, and comments from staff in meetings with the review team, made it clear that these reports are chiefly relied upon as an important quality assurance indicator. The review team considered that a more robust annual monitoring

processes and greater validating partner engagement would help enhance quality assurance at Ming-Ai.

Conclusions

78. The review team considered that Ming-Ai designs and delivers high quality courses because the programme handbook and module guidance provide detailed information for students, external examiner reports are positive, and the recent revalidation process has resulted in clear and flexible course design. The review team found that appropriate processes and procedures for maintaining the quality of the courses on an ongoing basis are in place and followed. Curriculum and assessment design is primarily developed by the senior leadership team, with some evidence of input from teaching staff. Students have positive views about the MA course and its delivery.
79. The majority of teaching staff members are fractionally employed and have wide experience teaching at other higher education providers or in the culture and heritage industry. However, the review team notes that staff have limited formal higher education teaching qualifications. Additionally, there is limited CPD for teaching staff. Ming-Ai's response was that staff engage in CPD with their main employer, but the team saw no evidence of recent CPD activity for teaching staff from CVs. The review team identified that a stronger alignment with CPD endeavours and growth of teaching qualifications among staff would support Ming-Ai in furthering how it delivers high quality courses. This is because it would ensure that staff are up to date with the latest teaching methodologies and sector developments.
80. The review team observed that Ming-Ai demonstrates independence from its validating partner and showed confidence in its course design and delivery, while the level of engagement with the validating partner to ensure quality was modest. Therefore, based on its scrutiny of the evidence provided, the team concludes that this core practice is met, and that the level of confidence is moderate. This is because, while the course is of high quality and there are robust processes to maintain this quality, there is opportunity for Ming-Ai to enhance staff development, staff CPD and engagement with quality assurance to ensure the quality of course delivery is maintained.

Core practice Q3

The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high quality academic experience.

What the evidence shows

81. To assess whether Ming-Ai has credible robust and evidence-based plans for ensuring it has sufficient and appropriately qualified staff to deliver a high quality academic experience, the review team assessed documents including staff CVs, job descriptions and adverts for recruiting academic and professional services staff, the list of highest qualifications and teaching qualifications of teaching staff, and examples of research undertaken by staff. The team also met with the senior leadership team, teaching staff, professional services and support staff, partner link tutor, and students and alumni.
82. The review team viewed staff CVs and observed that most of the teaching staff are employed on fractional contracts and either teach at other higher education providers or are employed in professions within the culture and heritage sector. This could impact the consistency and cohesiveness of the courses when multiple staff are teaching different sessions and topics of the same module. The team considered that the Ming-Ai staff base demonstrates an appropriate balance of both higher education teaching experience and industry experience across those involved in delivering the courses.
83. The review team explored how Ming-Ai ensures its teaching staff are sufficiently aware of up-to-date theoretical debates within their discipline or are using regular CPD to develop pedagogical skills aligned with current trends. It found that CVs and teaching qualifications of teaching staff show that nine out of 18 teaching staff have a formal higher education teaching credential, and one permanent teaching staff member with oversight of assessment and the curriculum has qualified teacher status. A minority of teaching staff have doctoral qualifications, but most have experience of teaching on undergraduate and postgraduate courses at other higher education providers. The senior leadership team explained that this is largely because it places particular emphasis on professional experience working within the culture and heritage sector as a baseline for recruitment.
84. The review team considered the process for how the validating partner ensured new staff are inducted. Ming-Ai sends the CVs of all newly recruited staff to the validating partner, which is not otherwise actively involved in staff recruitment. The validating partner offers training sessions for new staff, and staff undertake induction sessions at Ming-Ai over a week. For teaching staff, this entails an explanation of the teaching responsibilities and induction into the physical and digital resources available at Ming-Ai. For staff involved in collaborative research projects with other providers, training on the requirements of the particular project is given. New members of the board of directors and trustees are inducted by its chair on a one-to-one basis. Induction processes for new professional and support staff contain training on student wellbeing, for example on identifying mental health issues and how to refer to appropriate mental health services, which are effective in supporting relevant parts of their roles.

85. Teaching observations conducted by the review team showed that teaching is predominantly delivered in a formal lecture style, with limited use of digital or alternative learning technologies or methods. Students had opportunities to actively engage in and contribute meaningfully to the classes. The review team observed that some content that could have been opened up to the class for critical discussion was presented as fact. It was also unclear how some of the teaching materials presented in the observed sessions related to the assessments. However, when questioned on this staff told the team that all materials are relevant to and aligned with the assessment regime, because assessments are typically case-study driven. The review team noted that the presentations used during the classes, and those from other classes that are available on the VLE, did not include reference sources.
86. Ming-Ai shared evidence of a planned new system for teaching observations and new teaching observation form. Teaching observations had not so far been formally introduced, as the senior leadership team is confident in the expertise and academic experience of the current teaching team, who are employed at other higher education providers. However, Ming-Ai confirmed the dean will conduct observations this academic year. The output from these observations will be a feedback discussion between teacher and observer to evaluate the effectiveness of classroom activities and agree ways to ensure high quality teaching is maintained. Ming-Ai added that CPD and training would be undertaken by the principal reviewer of these observations, to ensure they can support a high quality academic experience.
87. Ming-Ai is a research active organisation, and its formal governance structure includes a research and scholarship committee. This reports and advises on its staff's research contributions. The senior leadership team emphasised to the review team the importance of teaching staff engagement in research. It also stated that one of the motivations behind Ming-Ai's application for registration with the OfS was a desire to achieve greater research independence, noting that it currently cannot receive direct research grant funding or act as a principal investigator, and must instead act in collaboration with lead partners. Ming-Ai also noted the importance of research in supporting the creation of an enhanced academic environment and student experience, and provided examples of research projects undertaken in collaboration with other higher education providers, culture and heritage sector organisations. In addition, the validating partner's link tutor highlighted an example of research funding they had secured in collaboration with Ming-Ai during the previous academic year.
88. The review team met with students and alumni and reviewed the student written submission to obtain their views on whether staff at Ming-Ai deliver a high quality academic experience. The responders were satisfied with the quality and standards of teaching and support offered to them by staff and the availability of staff. Module evaluation responses to the question asking students to score and comment on the knowledge and expertise of their teacher are overwhelmingly positive. The students and alumni also stated that they were impressed by both the academic and industry experience and reputation of the teaching staff and considered many of them to be experts in their field.
89. External examiner reports comment on staff being highly committed to students' learning experience. The review team also found a clear and strong sense of community among the students, who said that they support each other rather than solely relying on staff to do this.

One student, who had difficulties using presentation design software, positively described how interactions with their class peers had helped support them and how working together had improved their skills.

90. As the review team considered that staff-student ratios are sufficient considering the current size of the cohorts, it considered whether any potential significant growth would present a risk to quality of the academic experience. Ming-Ai did not submit plans on how it would increase staffing resources if cohort sizes were to increase beyond what the campus can currently accommodate (see paragraph 96 and 103). However, the senior leadership team stated that any plans to significantly increase student numbers were a potential vision for the future rather than a definitive commitment.

Conclusions

91. The review team considers that Ming-Ai has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high quality academic experience, because it found that staff possess a sufficient mix of appropriate industry experience and academic credentials. Specifically, the team noted that Ming-Ai prioritises knowledge of the real world and culture and heritage industry experience in the appointment of its teaching staff, which contributes to a positive academic experience for its students. Students fed back to the review team their appreciation of the industry expertise and academic credentials of the teaching staff. The review team notes that Ming-Ai relies strongly on fractional, visiting and guest lecturers who typically deliver only one or two sessions per module. Therefore, there is a risk that the consistency and cohesiveness of the courses could be impacted where multiple staff are teaching different sessions and topics of the same module.
92. The review team found that a minority of the teaching staff have teaching qualifications, and that Ming-Ai does not have clear plans for CPD opportunities for both teaching and professional services staff. This leads to a risk to Ming-Ai's ability to ensure and maintain an up-to-date and high quality academic experience if staff are not regularly exposed to new pedagogical approaches, or do not maintain familiarity with relevant scholarly literature. The review team has also recognised that Ming-Ai has made active efforts to increase the number of professional services and support staff to help maintain a high quality experience (see paragraph 108). Based on the current number of students, staffing levels are adequate.
93. Based on its scrutiny of the evidence provided, the review team concludes that this core practice is met, and the level of confidence is moderate because the academic staff base is appropriately qualified and skills and current staffing levels are sufficient for the existing student body. However, there is a risk of a potential impact on quality if student numbers were to increase significantly without corresponding increases in full-time, qualified teaching staff and CPD opportunities.

Core practice Q4

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

What the evidence shows

94. The review team assessed several key pieces of evidence to understand the learner experience to evaluate whether Ming-Ai has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high quality academic experience. This included examining the student welfare policy, the programme handbook, programme voice group meeting minutes, learning, teaching and quality committee minutes, physical learning resources, digital resources and the virtual learning environment, and student absence policy. The review team also held meetings with staff and students.
95. Teaching facilities and services are provided on a single campus, which staff consider creates a close and supportive community feeling among staff and each cohort of students. Facilities include a main classroom, a secondary classroom and a reading and tutorial room on the first floor, and a private tutorial room, staff offices and reception area, a large multifunctional room, a small library and a training kitchen used for Ming-Ai's non-higher education courses on the ground floor.
96. The team noted that the main and secondary classrooms had space for approximately ten students and a lecturer, but noted that previous cohorts had comprised 14 students. The rooms were equipped with a projector and screen allowing lectures, student and staff presentations, and class participation virtually. In addition, there is a noticeboard that includes relevant academic information for students.
97. The campus also includes a dedicated study space and a small tutorial room allowing students to have private meetings with staff, who are located in shared offices. Students have access to kitchen and dining facilities. There is one large multi-functional room, which is used for social and cultural activities or talks by external speakers. Students are generally expected to use their own devices, as there are no on-campus desktop computers available; however, the students did not raise any concerns about Ming-Ai's on-site IT provision to the review team. The review team considered that the campus offers a range of facilities that encourage a supportive study environment and community-building among staff and students.
98. Library facilities at Ming-Ai include both physical and electronic resources, in the form of a library at the campus and an e-library accessible via the VLE. The on-campus library is small and primarily houses a collection of books focused on Chinese literature and language. Students can borrow books freely on an honour system, although the available texts are limited, and the review team saw few up-to-date publications. Students and alumni confirmed to the review team that the library was adequate, though some recently enrolled students stated that they were unaware there was a library on campus. While the library provides a basic resource for students, the limited number of recent publications and limited awareness

of the library among students are a risk to the provision of a high quality academic experience.

99. Students do not have access to the validating partner's library, though they can request this for a fee. However, the senior leadership team and link tutor stated that the validating partner's library does not contain resources that are particularly relevant to or valuable for the study of Chinese culture and heritage. Students are encouraged to use other libraries to access relevant materials for their course, for example the British Library. Students confirmed that they regularly use these libraries and found them valuable in supporting their studies. However, Ming-Ai's reliance on students' access to third parties' academic resources presents a risk to the provision of a high quality academic experience if access should become interrupted or cease.
100. Learning resources are available in a digital format through the VLE, where students are provided either with digital copies of key texts or with a host of links to the online databases of other cultural institutions or international organisations within the heritage sector. Students also have access to a range of journals, open access dissertations and research material from other universities, and e-books. Moreover, each module handbook includes a list of learning materials specific to that module. The review team considers that Ming-Ai has a sufficient range of fundamental teaching resources to support student research and independent activities. However, the team notes that materials for purchase, including key journals and books, are not easily or readily accessible to students.
101. The review team met with students, alumni and staff to evaluate whether they view the facilities, learning resources, and student support services as sufficient and conducive to a high quality academic experience. The students expressed a high level of confidence that they were receiving a high quality experience, though limited library resources had been raised as an issue by students in the programme voice group. Module evaluation forms, which include a question on how students rate the facilities, consistently rate them as excellent. Staff told the review team, that since Chinese culture and heritage are a very defined subject area, purchasing access to the validating partner's library resources would not sufficiently give students access to appropriate, subject-relevant library resources. Ming-Ai therefore compiled as many open access resources within its own physical and digital library as possible. The review team noted that increasing student access to library resources is an ongoing aspiration.
102. The main campus entrance has several steep steps leading up to the reception area. There is step-free ramp access at a side entrance; however, this enters the building via the training kitchen space. The second floor, where teaching takes place, can only be reached via a staircase. A disabled or injured student or visitor could therefore only access the first floor of the building. There is a risk therefore that such a student would not be able to access the physical resources that would be commensurate with them receiving a high quality academic experience.
103. The large multi-functional room is also available for teaching in addition to the two classrooms. It can provide additional space, or be used if a student has accessibility issues. The space does, however, currently act as a pathway to other facilities in the building (such as the kitchen). Ming-Ai did not submit plans on how it could expand physical resources and facilities if cohort sizes were to increase beyond approximately ten students (see paragraph

90). However, the senior leadership team stated that any plans to significantly increase student numbers were a potential vision for the future rather than a definitive commitment.

104. The senior leadership team stated that there is a difficulty in increasing access due to the building's age, and that if Ming-Ai had a student who was unable to use stairs, it could relocate classes to the ground floor to accommodate this. A student welfare policy sets out Ming-Ai's commitment to offer students with diverse needs adequate support, though staff confirmed that this is provided on an ad hoc basis and there is no formal process in place. The review team noted that Ming-Ai relies on its past experience of having few students with additional support needs as grounds for not currently having robust plans for students who may have additional access needs or support.
105. Ming-Ai's VLE is managed by the MA programme leader. It hosts course and module materials, and students can contact staff members via the platform. The VLE is also used for online meetings and conferences. Students have cloud access but are advised to also save a hard copy of their materials. Each cohort has a dedicated VLE space where all materials are centrally located. Students have access to a suite of multi-use desktop software, which they use for study purposes.
106. Students can attend classes virtually if they cannot attend physically, as classes are delivered in a hybrid manner through the simultaneous log-in and recording of an online meeting on the VLE. Online recordings of sessions are made available on the VLE after the session. These consist of the presentation slides and audio of the class, rather than the class being captured via a camera. Students stated that they find the VLE efficient and consider it an asset to their learning experience, and that it is suitably populated with information.
107. Ming-Ai provides a range of academic support sessions focusing on study-related skills. Starting from induction to the courses, students are able to attend study skills sessions that cover topics such as referencing, academic writing, IT skills, presentation skills and research ethics. Additional and complementary study-skills sessions are offered on the VLE in the form of open access online webinars and videos offered by other universities. Because of the small cohort sizes, staff stated they can easily identify students who are struggling academically and who may need additional support in the form of study or technical skills.
108. Ming-Ai has a range of professional services and student support staff. It has made a commitment to increasing its student support capacities and capabilities through recruitment to recently created student welfare officer, programme support officer, and quality assurance officer roles. The job description for the student welfare officer highlights the requirement for 'experience in a welfare, pastoral, or support role' and a 'strong understanding of mental health issues, crisis intervention, and safeguarding procedures'. However, this level of experience was not clearly demonstrated to the review team during meetings with new staff members, and the team was told that presently much of the work in this area involved signposting students to places of support.
109. During the meeting with professional services and support staff, the review team asked whether comprehensive training or a CPD package were in place to support the development of new staff members such as the student welfare officer and quality assurance officer. Ming-Ai stated that a programme of formal training was being planned but had not happened yet. Staff described how they would attend sessions at other universities (including the validating

partner) that have similar roles and policies, to help them learn best policy from them. They also stated that they were planning to use resources and attend training provided by a UK charity for mental health professionals working in higher education. Senior leadership staff were not able to articulate whether formal training and resources will be integrated to support the development of the new student support roles, beyond the use of free training resources and encouraging staff to engage with these resources.

110. The review team examined the academic tutoring system in place. The programme leader formally acts as the academic support tutor but, because of the small student cohorts, there is not a formal system in place to regularly schedule and document academic support meetings. Instead, students approach the programme leader or dean primarily, or any member of staff they feel is appropriate, to request support or raise issues. Students expressed the availability of, and frequency of interaction with, staff as a positive feature of the experience at Ming-Ai. Students emphasised that they feel comfortable in seeking advice and support from both teaching and professional services staff, and feel supported within their study environment.
111. As some of the resources for the Chinese culture and heritage subject area are in the Chinese language, and as Ming-Ai delivers courses in the language at non-higher education level, students are offered free Mandarin lessons. English language support is provided via free English language lessons provided by Ming-Ai, one-to-one support from a tutor, and links on the VLE to open access English-language webinars offered by other higher education providers. Ad hoc support is provided by staff members should a student struggle with teaching materials in English. Support is also embedded into the Research, Oral History and Employability Skills in Cultural Heritage module, where students can learn and practice interview skills and techniques in English.
112. Students and alumni emphasised to the review team how much they value the optional site visits and field trips offered to all postgraduate students at Ming-Ai. They highlighted in particular the ten-day trip to various key UNESCO world heritage sites and museums in Xi'an and Dunhuang in China. Through the support of local research academies and education providers, students engage with Chinese heritage preservation in practice.
113. The review team considered Ming-Ai's class attendance requirements and student absence policy. Student attendance is recorded manually on hard-copy registers. This could potentially mean that patterns of non-attendance may be missed, but staff confirmed that attendance is monitored by the lecturer and the programme leader. The programme handbook confirms that there is an 80 per cent in-class attendance requirement and students falling below this will receive an informal warning, followed if poor attendance persists by a formal meeting with the programme leader to explore the issue and its possible causes. The student absence policy states that students are required to contact their programme leader if they have 'difficulty attending classes due to personal, financial, or academic issues.' The policy does not outline processes in place to support students if they have difficulty attending. The policy also states that students who 'fail to meet the minimum required to meet the learning outcomes of the module (as published in the module and programme handbooks) may be excluded from the programme.' Students who cannot attend in person are able to join classes virtually and are asked to contact their programme leader for advice as a first point of call if they miss sessions.

Conclusions

114. The review team considered that Ming-Ai has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high quality academic experience. The team noted that the current largely informal academic tutoring system works effectively. Ming-Ai offers a range of study-related language skills sessions and also supports students well on an informal, ad hoc basis. It monitors student attendance to enforce an 80 per cent attendance requirement to promote positive student participation. The facilities, all located on a single campus, include classrooms, a library, and social spaces, which helps to foster a strong community among students and staff. Ming-Ai has a virtual learning environment, providing access to study materials, learning resources, IT support and online conferences. The VLE is used reasonably well for educational purposes, and students find it efficient and beneficial to their learning.
115. The review team advises that this core practice is met because of the extensive informal student support and combination of physical and online resources available to students. The team advises that the level of confidence is moderate. This is because the team considered that the limited number of recent publications in the on-campus library, the reliance on academic resources from third parties, limits to the accessibility of the campus and limited structured tutorial support system could impact on the delivery a high quality academic experience.

Core practice Q5

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

What the evidence shows

116. To understand whether Ming-Ai engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience, the review team assessed the quality enhancement strategy, educational monitoring and enhancement reports, programme voice group minutes, learning, teaching and quality committee minutes, module evaluation forms, student written submission and assessment feedback. Additionally, it held meetings with the senior leadership team, teaching staff, professional services and support staff, students and alumni.
117. The team reviewed the mechanisms for formal student feedback. Ming-Ai has a programme voice group to capture student feedback. This is attended by the student representative for the cohort, who is elected by students during the first two weeks of the academic year and attends a training session delivered by the validating partner's student union. Senior leaders, teaching and academic support staff, and the validating partner's link tutor complete the membership of the group. The group has a standing agenda including a student representative-led item for the raising and discussion of student issues; an update on learning resources; and an update on any proposed changes to the courses or modules. Minutes show that the student representative actively engages in the meetings, issues are raised and discussed, and action points and responses to these actions are formally recorded. A student representative also sits on the learning, teaching and quality committee, whose membership also includes the programme leader and teaching staff. This group meets twice a year and minutes show that the student representative is given the opportunity to give feedback on academic matters. As the MA course is one year long, some issues are resolved for the next cohort. Students told the review team that they were satisfied that Ming-Ai responds to their feedback in a thorough and timely manner, and recognised that some changes can only be implemented for future cohorts.
118. The review team reviewed a sample of module evaluation forms given to students at the end of each module. Ming-Ai asks students to rate and give feedback on module content and teaching, the knowledge and expertise of their teacher, facilities and learning resources, and their satisfaction with academic and administrative services provided. The quality assurance officer is responsible for collating and compiling this feedback and presenting any relevant matters to the senior leadership team to resolve. The Ming-Ai governance framework states that module evaluations are considered at the learning, teaching and quality committee, but the minutes reviewed by the team did not include discussion of this. The team noted that feedback from students was overwhelmingly and consistently positive across all these metrics.
119. As student cohorts are small, Ming-Ai also invites and collects much feedback from students informally. Staff noted that this is a successful way of drawing out issues from students who may for cultural reasons not be familiar with raising concerns more formally or publicly. Students stated that they approach the MA programme leader in the first instance for most

issues, and that this person is available whenever they need to speak to them. The team noted that the module evaluation forms include a section for students to include their name, and in all the forms reviewed students had added their name. This, along with the small size of the cohort and the mainly informal feedback processes in place, suggests that there is a limited mechanism for students to deliver feedback anonymously, other than by raising matters through class representatives to feed back through the programme voice group.

120. The review team asked the professional services and support staff for examples of recent issues impacting students' educational experience that they had considered and responded to. They gave the following examples:

- a. Ming-Ai recruited two programme support officers in response to students' request for improved help with the VLE and online resources.
- b. It had introduced more field trips and cultural events in response to students' requests (see paragraph 112).
- c. It boosted the reliability of the Wi-Fi connection in response to students' feedback.
- d. It provided additional heating when students noted that heating was not working.

Minutes of the learning, teaching and quality committee note enhancements made in response to student feedback, such as an expansion of e-library resources and physical improvements to the campus and expansion of facilities.

121. Based on the evidence available, the review team found that when students raised issues, Ming-Ai would address them appropriately and promptly. Students highlighted several ways, both formal and informal, for them to engage with Ming-Ai throughout their studies. This is made easier by the small size of the cohorts and the close staff-student relationship. The review team noted that most student feedback given and issues raised were brought forward in an informal way with staff, rather than waiting for the next programme voice group meeting or for the formal end of module evaluation process. Ming-Ai confirmed that no formal complaints had been received from its students during the past five years.

Conclusions

122. Based on the team's review of documentary evidence and discussion with Ming-Ai staff and students, there is evidence that Ming-Ai actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience. Ming-Ai captures student feedback formally through mechanisms like the programme voice group, learning, teaching and quality committee and module evaluation forms, and informally, where staff engage with students to identify issues, and there are many informal engagement opportunities. Despite the informal nature of some mechanisms, the consistent positive outcomes, positive feedback received from students, and absence of formal complaints over the previous five years demonstrate a robust approach. Ming-Ai staff were able to give examples of their responsiveness to feedback from students. During observed teaching sessions students were actively engaged, contributing to a good quality educational experience in the classroom.

123. Based on its assessment of the evidence provided, the review team concludes that this core practice is met, and the level of confidence is moderate. This is because the team observed

processes that were successful in enabling both effective student engagement and a high level of responsiveness from staff to feedback received. There was, however, limited opportunity for feedback to be given or issues to be raised anonymously, other than via the student voice representative. The team also noted that many of the student engagement mechanisms were informal, which is currently effective given the small size of the cohorts, but may need reviewing if cohorts increase.

Core practice Q9

The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.

What the evidence shows

124. To assess whether Ming-Ai supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes, the review team reviewed documents including the programme handbook, module handbooks, teaching materials, learning, teaching and quality committee minutes, student written submission and teaching and learning strategy policy. They also reviewed materials from academic support workshops; held meetings with the senior management team, teaching staff, current students and alumni, and student support staff; and undertook teaching observations.
125. As part of new student induction processes, Ming-Ai delivers a range of icebreaking sessions, an academic and campus introduction, and a signposted welcome to the courses and their objectives. Students are shown how to use the VLE and where to access information, and are introduced to teaching staff. The programme handbook is the key source of academic and administrative information for students to help them understand their courses. Discussions with students revealed that they recognised the value of the induction and the importance of the handbook and the information within.
126. The programme handbook sets out and highlights the importance of skills development in the curriculum. The teaching and learning strategy policy details that academic support is available to students through tutoring, study skills workshops, and writing assistance, and personal support through counselling, career advice, and mentoring. Academic support is delivered in practice chiefly through academic support workshops, where sessions included academic writing and presentations skills (see paragraph 107); via sessions embedded into the Research, Oral History and Employability Skills in Cultural Heritage and Work-Based Culture Project modules (see paragraph 128); and informally, via personalised ad hoc support (see paragraph 110).
127. The senior leadership team, teaching staff and professional services and support staff emphasised that a core component of Ming-Ai's educational philosophy is the development of social skills. This is embedded throughout the courses to support students' transition to, and enhance their experience of living in, the UK; to boost their academic and social confidence; and to enhance their career prospects in a constantly evolving job market, as evidenced by the relevant module study guides and the skills development statement. Ming-Ai staff stated that over the course of a year students undergo a transformative process, acquiring essential skills such as employability competencies, which are particularly valuable for students returning to their careers after time away. The review team saw during its teaching observations that the style of delivery within the course facilitates the development of these skills, with an emphasis on academic English, and supports students in achieving successful academic and professional outcomes.

128. Professional development skills and careers guidance are embedded into the courses through two modules. The Research, Oral History and Employability Skills in Cultural Heritage (compulsory on all courses) and Work-Based Culture Project (compulsory on the MA and PG Dip) modules help support skill development and build a level of career support into the curriculum. Sessions included developing an employability profile, developing personal statements, identifying transferrable skills and communication skills. The review team met with a group of current students and alumni, all of whom gave positive feedback on both these modules and on how Ming-Ai prepares them in general for future careers. The student written submission supported this and also stated that informal and personalised career support is available and is 'highly effective'. Students and alumni outlined to the review team that they had received informal career guidance from module leaders or a member of the senior leadership team, including on potential career paths, how to apply skills to the job market, developing CVs, and interview practice. Training in producing presentations was also seen by many of the students as a valuable part of the employability skills embedded in the course.
129. Formal graduate destination data is not recorded. However, the review team noted that Ming-Ai collected informal destination information at the end of the previous courses' validation period in 2021, which reported that alumni from the previous five cohorts had either progressed to various roles in the culture and heritage sector; established new businesses; were considering further doctoral study; or had joined the staff at Ming-Ai.
130. The team reviewed data provided by Ming-Ai to establish whether students on the courses had achieved successful academic outcomes and found that rates of achievement are very high. Since academic year 2016-17, 54 students had been awarded an MA, three students a PG Dip and one student a PG Cert. Over this time three students either failed or withdrew from the courses.
131. The courses include a variety of coursework, including presentations, written essays, case studies, research proposals and dissertations. The presentations are instrumental in fostering teamwork and active engagement among students. These tasks also require the use of IT skills, further enhancing the students' technical competencies. Additionally, the Industrial Placement module requires students to reach out to external organisations to arrange their placements and form effective working relationships with others; provides practical experience and the opportunity for building networks; and allows them to experience workplace group dynamics and leadership in industry. This approach ensures that students are equipped with the skills and connections needed for successful professional outcomes.
132. Small student cohorts ensure Ming-Ai can tailor the experience individually to each student to ensure that they remain actively engaged, with limited opportunity to remain passive. Professional services and support staff stated that this approach helps ensure that each student receives the attention and resources necessary to maximise their educational experience, thereby supporting them in achieving both academic and professional success.
133. English language proficiency is assessed during recruitment to ensure that students receive tailored language support if appropriate from the beginning of their studies (see paragraph 111). Ming-Ai's MA curriculum includes eight modules, each featuring group and individual presentations that contribute to language improvement. The Industrial Placement module on

the MA course focuses on developing interview skills, which further enhances English proficiency.

134. Small class sizes allow teachers to closely monitor students' language progress and comprehension and can provide personalised attention to each student's language development needs. There are no requirements for students applying to the courses to have proficiency in any Chinese language as part of the formal entry requirements. Some learning materials for the courses are in Mandarin, which could potentially hinder a student who is not proficient in Mandarin. Senior leadership and teaching staff stated to the team that a working level of Chinese language proficiency can be beneficial when dealing with Chinese artefacts, but that modern online translation technology enables students to manage this aspect effectively. However, it was emphasised by staff that all teaching is delivered, and assessments are required, in English.
135. The meeting with current students and alumni and the student written submission provided the review team with detailed feedback on students' overall experience. This highlighted a large range of positive support for students. Students consider the programme leader and dean as key to fostering and driving a supported academic environment. The student written submission also made clear that students felt that their voice was heard by staff and that there were sufficient and appropriate mechanisms in place for students to suggest enhancements.
136. Attendance requirements are detailed in paragraph 113. The handbook specifies that the programme leader is the first point of contact for students who are experiencing academic issues. The VLE includes audio recordings of sessions to support students who cannot attend. Ming-Ai teaching staff shared an example of a student needing English support; they arranged after-class tutorials and provided resources like newspapers, audio, and video to help improve the student's reading and writing skills. Students described a close-knit community where they support each other if they struggle. Ming-Ai also offers separate sessions focused on academic writing (see paragraphs 107 and 128).

Conclusions

137. The review team noted that Ming-Ai's courses emphasise the development of social skills, particularly benefiting students from outside of the UK. Students and alumni highlighted career guidance and practical skills development as key benefits of their education. Ming-Ai gives students a comprehensive induction to introduce them to the course and to studying at Ming-Ai. Small cohort sizes mean students benefit from a personalised approach to support. Assessment, award and graduate destination data gives evidence of successful academic and professional outcomes achieved by students.
138. Based on its scrutiny of the evidence provided, the review team concludes that this core practice is met because Ming-Ai effectively supports students in achieving successful academic and professional outcomes through personalised attention and robust support mechanisms. The review team's level of confidence is moderate because the current informal support structures may not be sustainable with larger cohorts.



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