



This review was conducted in compliance with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)

# Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight

Verto Education UK Limited

Review Report

April 2024

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## About this report

This is a report of a review under the Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Verto Education UK Limited. The review took place on 23 April 2024 and was conducted by a review team, as follows:

- Nina Cupric
- Brenda Eade
- Dr Barbara Howell.

The QAA Officer was Kevin Kendall.

The main purpose of the review was to:

- produce a commentary on how effectively the provider discharges its responsibilities for academic standards
- make judgements about the provider's delegated responsibilities for the management of quality and improvement of learning opportunities
- report on any features of good practice
- make recommendations for action.

A summary of the key findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. The context in which these findings should be interpreted is explained on page 4. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us) and its mission.<sup>1</sup> More information about this review method can be found in the [published handbook](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/rseo-handbook-for-providers.pdf).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us)

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/rseo-handbook-for-providers.pdf](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/rseo-handbook-for-providers.pdf)

## Key findings

The QAA team considered evidence relating to the educational provision at Verto Education UK Limited (Verto UK) - both information supplied in advance and evidence gathered during the visits of the review itself. The review has resulted in the key findings stated in this section.

## Judgements

The QAA team formed the following judgement about Verto Education UK Limited.

- **Confidence can be placed** in Verto UK's management of its responsibilities for the quality of learning opportunities.

The QAA review team also concluded that the provider **satisfactorily** manages its responsibilities for academic standards in accordance with the requirements of its awarding partners.

## Good practice

The QAA team identified the following **features of good practice** at Verto Education UK Limited.

- The embedding of experiential learning into the teaching, learning and assessment of courses which enables students to effectively link practice to theory.
- Students are mandated to have a determined number of meetings with their Care Team per semester, which enables Verto UK to assess any additional support needed.
- The creative use of technology and space to support students to engage in learning.

## Recommendations

The QAA team makes the following **essential recommendations** to Verto Education UK Limited.

- Formalise the complaints process and make it easily available to all students.
- Create a document that details the process for managing mitigating circumstances, is easily accessible by all students and ensures it appropriately supports students' success.

The QAA team makes the following **advisable recommendations** to Verto Education UK Limited.

- Formalise the procedure for partner visits to ensure that they are supportive of both staff and students and contribute effectively to the external monitoring and evaluation processes.
- Effectively analyse the feedback from students and classroom observations and use the outcomes to continually enhance the quality of the learning experience.

The QAA team makes the following **desirable recommendations** to Verto Education UK Limited.

- Consider the implementation of peer review of teaching to enable good practice to be shared.

- Include questions relating to learning resources in the course-specific surveys to students.

## Context

Verto Education (Verto Inc) operates globally and was established in 2019. It provides first-year college students from the United States (US) the opportunity to complete a study abroad experience as their first semester. Verto Education UK Limited (Verto UK), the UK based subsidiary of Verto Inc, has been operating since 2021 after a delayed start due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Verto Inc and Verto UK have been accredited by the University of New Haven (UNewHaven) in the US since 2022. Prior to that, accreditation was by the Richard Bland College of William and Mary, also in the US. UNewHaven is accredited by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE). Verto Inc and Verto UK are not authorised to offer complete credentials and no Verto Inc participant may complete more than 50% of their degree through the organisation's programming as per the established requirements between Verto Inc and UNewHaven.

UNewHaven retains academic oversight and is responsible for quality assurance, as well as all matters related to admissions, assessments, faculty appointments, learning outcomes and course content for all Verto Inc sites. All reporting to UNewHaven is conducted through an annual report that encompasses the whole of Verto Inc. As part of the agreement with UNewHaven and its accreditation with NECHE, all Verto Inc sites are also subject to rotating site-specific visits, with the first visit having been conducted in Florence, Italy in spring 2023. The next review visit to Verto UK will be conducted in the fall of 2024.

Verto Inc has partnered with over 50 different colleges within the US. Students gain access to the programme through two possible channels: either as direct transfers or as channel applicants. Direct transfers offer a path for Verto participants to earn guaranteed admission to their university if they successfully complete the Verto programme. Channel partners may offer Verto to some first-year applicants in order for them to gain international experience, before continuing at their main campus in the US. Students can complete their two semesters at different Verto Inc locations.

The Verto UK Programme Director has oversight for all core Verto UK Operations, and is supported by an Academic Director, a Manager for Student Life, and a Manager for Academics. They gained a dedicated space in 2022, located in Bloomsbury, Central London. Verto UK offers a mixture of courses in Language Arts, Art and Humanities, Social Sciences and Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), with some courses, like Introduction to the Theatre only being offered by Verto UK. Verto UK has recently gained access to additional laboratory space which will be utilised to expand and enhance the current STEM offer.

# Detailed findings about Verto Education Limited

## 1 Academic standards

### How effectively does Verto Education UK Limited fulfil its responsibilities for the management of academic standards?

1.1 Verto UK, as a subsidiary of Verto Inc, is required to adhere to the standards articulated by departments at UNewHaven. UNewHaven, as an accredited US University by the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE), is the academic provider for Verto Inc. The academic provider matriculates the enrolled participants of those study abroad programmes through Verto Inc programme locations. UNewHaven provides academic oversight and quality assurance for all non-degree granting institutions of Verto Inc in the delivery of their study abroad programmes. These comprise all matters related to admissions, marketing, academic programming, approval of instructors, assessments, participant educational records, grades and transcripts, participant services, tuition and financial aid.

1.2 UNewHaven and Verto Inc have categorised quality assurance through three primary sources and their corresponding documents: the substantive change proposal/NECHE accreditation of UNewHaven; the Verto Inc-UNewHaven service agreement; and the academic review protocols. The substantive change proposal/NECHE accreditation document, as presented to the NECHE board for approval, articulates the change to the University's contractual arrangement with Verto Inc. The application extends the current one-year agreement to a continued study with Verto Inc, with an effective start date of spring 2024. The amended contract describes the updated terms for the collaboration and makes explicit the roles of the parties concerning student recruitment and enrolment, and the processes for the University's approvals and controls regarding Verto's activities.

1.3 The UNewHaven service and amended service agreements, effective from 1 August 2023 for five years, provide for Verto Inc to offer study abroad experiences to participants to earn credits transferable to consortium institutions. The agreement sets out the obligations of the two parties including the recruitment and training of faculty, participant admissions requirements, execution of the study abroad experience, monitoring of student performance and participation in quality reviews.

1.4 The service agreement requirements for an onsite or virtual review of Verto Inc, Verto study abroad programme locations and applicable courses, are in line with university academic requirements. Verto study abroad programme locations entering a subsequent academic performance review (APR) issue a comprehensive follow-up response to the initial self-study and visit, providing information on new developments, actions implemented because of the initial Academic Performance Review (APR) report issued by the University, and any general updates. Verto UK was not subject to an APR in spring 2023; however, Verto Inc evaluated the review team's feedback in the context of the global organisation and adjusted processes in ways that influenced Verto UK operations. Examples were also provided to the team of the annual performance review of the Verto Inc Florence site, which are comprehensive.

1.5 Subsequent periodic reviews of the study abroad location which follow the established protocol of the initial APR are yet to take place for Verto UK with the UNewHaven scheduling a review for fall 2024. The team confirmed that preparations for this review are underway.

1.6 The academic review protocols dictate the role of the academic affairs department (Verto Inc headquarters) as the main liaison and point of communication between UNewHaven and Verto Inc for relationship management. Those include the production of an

annual review for UNewHaven of all Verto Inc locations; the protocols provide a more detailed description of the content of the annual reports. The reports include updates to programme locations, staffing, enrolments, student retention and withdrawals, approved syllabi, changes to policies or operational procedures, programme evaluations and overall academic activities. The department will further provide interim reports to UNewHaven throughout the academic year as appropriate, to notice staff departures, new staff hires, new programme or policy developments, planned location changes, requests for new or discontinued location designations, elevated student or faculty issues, and/or emergencies. The department is also responsible for establishing academic standards and providing training for all Verto staff regarding the minimum standards.

1.7 Verto UK's primary responsibility is the deliverer of courses reviewed and approved by the UNewHaven, with all students gaining their qualifications from UNewHaven. The Verto UK Programme Director has oversight for all core Verto UK operations and the Director of Academics, along with the Manager for Academics, has oversight for the core academic activity and programming of the study centre. To support this responsibility, the Programme Director and Academic Director meet monthly with the executive leadership team to discuss, for example, the review of mid-term grades, course registrations, faculty training, cross-cultural experiences between the centres, and the review of operational dates and deadlines. The Programme Director and Academic Director work closely with Verto Inc's Vice-President of Global Operations and Programming and Vice-President of Academic Affairs respectively, who ensure through weekly meetings that Verto UK is meeting the programme requirements of Verto Inc and UNewHaven quality protocols. Further meetings take place every two or three weeks with respective Verto Inc colleagues to discuss, for example, the work commitments of the students, operational procedures for custom programmes, housing arrangements and self-discovery laboratories for team learning.

1.8 To support course delivery, Verto UK faculty and support staff have constant communication with the other Verto centres and hold faculty meetings with those centres once a semester. Faculty are further supported by ongoing training through videos, classroom observations by the Academic Director and attending conferences.

1.9 Verto UK host regular visits from academic partners who conduct classroom observations, meet Verto UK staff and faculty, and conduct programme evaluations. Little evidence was found of partners conducting systematic evaluations of teaching; however, the team heard that there is an expectation that these will be formalised in the future (see also paragraph 2.14).

1.10 The review team found that Verto Inc maintains academic standards through the adoption of protocols, procedures and policies of UNewHaven. Verto UK's primary responsibility is to deliver the UNewHaven courses, with oversight from Verto Inc executive leadership team.

### **How effectively are external reference points used in the management of academic standards?**

1.11 Verto UK's course catalogue is created from and approved by UNewHaven. As a non-UK degree institution, they do not use the Subject Benchmark Statements to design their programmes; however, they are subject to NECHE's accreditation requirements. The standards most directly associated with programme design are Standard 2: Planning and Evaluation; Standard 4: the Academic Programme; and Standard 8: Educational Effectiveness. The standards emphasise the use of outcome-based frameworks in degree programmes that provide appropriate challenge, depth and breadth in a course of study as necessitated by the degree level and field.

1.12 Verto UK faculty are responsible for designing programmes and determining the appropriate standards based on their experience, knowledge of the field and best practices, and the use of template syllabi. New programme development requires significant collaboration with UNewHaven and their final approval. Faculty experience is verified by the submission of their curriculum vitae (CV) to UNewHaven for review and authorisation by department chairs.

1.13 The review team is satisfied that although Verto UK is not required to use Subject Benchmark Statements, effective use is made of the NECHE standards as reference points.

**How effectively does Verto Education UK Limited use external scrutiny of assessment processes to assure academic standards (where applicable)?**

1.14 Verto UK does not use external examiners from universities in the UK currently as they align with UNewHaven and its accreditation body, the New England Commission of Higher Education (NECHE). Verto Inc and its subsidiaries are subject to external examinations by the NECHE. The first NECHE evaluation visit was conducted virtually on 14-15 November 2022 and included Verto Inc HQ, Verto UK, and four other Verto Inc programme locations and staff meetings. The NECHE review team submitted a report to UNewHaven on 15 December 2022 with a positive evaluation outcome.

1.15 The review team found that the use of external examiners is not relevant; however, external scrutiny does take place by UNewHaven via Verto Inc.

1.16 The team has concluded that Verto Education UK Limited **satisfactorily** manages its responsibilities for academic standards in accordance with the requirements of its awarding partner(s).

## 2 Quality of learning opportunities

### How effectively does Verto Education UK Limited fulfil its responsibilities for managing and improving the quality of learning opportunities?

2.1 Verto UK effectively fulfils its responsibilities for managing and improving the quality of learning opportunities through the implementation of the protocols and policies set out in the service agreement between Verto Inc - the parent organisation, and UNewHaven - the academic provider. These protocols have been adopted by Verto Inc which has oversight of the management and improvement of quality for all Verto centres. The protocols include procedures for course development, approving teaching faculty, setting minimum standards for academic leaders, regular monitoring and review, evaluation of the quality of teaching through student feedback and class observations, the provision of learning resources, and the admission and tracking of students.

2.2 All courses follow the approved syllabi provided by UNewHaven. Verto UK faculty customise the courses into 'working syllabi', following the protocols set out in the syllabi checklist. This enables faculty to embed significant aspects of experiential learning into the delivery of their courses. Students and staff confirm that the use of experiential learning, through external visits to relevant organisations such as museums, theatres, and other cities in the UK, effectively contributes to the achievement of the learning outcomes. Students are required to complete assessments which are specifically designed to test the experiential learning aspects of their courses, enabling them to demonstrate their understanding of both practice and theory. The team considers that the embedding of experiential learning into the teaching, learning and assessment of courses, which enables students to effectively link practice to theory, to be **good practice**.

2.3 The relevant departments at UNewHaven are responsible for liaising with Verto Inc faculty regarding the delivery and development of courses in their subject areas. Faculty in London liaise with other Verto centres regarding the courses, at the beginning of each semester to ensure consistency across sites. Assessments are set and marked by Verto UK faculty. They are approved and signed off by UNewHaven which is responsible for ensuring that they effectively test the learning outcomes. Faculty at Verto UK indicate that, in response to feedback from UNewHaven, they have broadened the type of assessment set to ensure accessibility for all students.

2.4 All members of faculty employed by Verto Inc are required to have a minimum qualification at master's level and 15 of the 19 members of academic staff employed in London for fall 2023 had a PhD. The employment of faculty is seasonal, depending on recruitment, and, at the time of the review visit in April 2024, there are only six members of academic staff teaching 16 students. Verto UK maintains consistency in the quality of teaching across the semesters through staff breakfast meetings, staff training (see paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6), student feedback (see paragraphs 2.16 and 2.17) and classroom observations (see paragraph 2.18). New members of staff co-teach with established faculty to ensure continuity of delivery.

2.5 Verto Inc, as part of the agreement with UNewHaven, undertakes a rigorous process of Academic Performance Review (APR) with each centre every five years after the initial APR. The APR requires each Verto centre to undertake a self-evaluation of its adherence to the protocols which include course delivery and assessment, the performance of academic staff, student evaluations, resources and student support. Verto UK will be reviewed for the first time in fall 2024.

2.6 The protocols also require Verto Inc to undertake a holistic programme review every year through the annual reporting process to UNewHaven. The first annual report for the

academic year 2022-23 provides a detailed evaluation of the initial delivery of the approved courses at Verto Inc centres, including Verto UK. The response to the annual report from the Provost at UNewHaven, dated November 2023, identifies areas of good practice which include student support and the expansion of the onboarding process for new faculty. The response also includes several recommendations.

2.7 The main recommendation from UNewHaven relates to assessment and possible concerns about grade inflation across all Verto Inc centres. This is being addressed through a draft collaborative assessment plan requiring staff to reflect on the grades and assessment tools used and to indicate whether the standards achieved meet or exceed expectations. This will be fully implemented later in 2024.

2.8 UNewHaven also recommends making more effective use of their resources and providing subject-specific tutoring services particularly around STEM. Verto Inc has addressed these recommendations through an increased focus on local and global access to tutoring services, such as maths, and, in spring 2023, it launched an online writing lab (OWL) which provides support to all Verto students by peer-writing coaches. The students who met the review team indicated that they had taken advantage of the extra maths classes but had not yet made use of OWL.

2.9 The team concludes from the evidence provided relating to the oversight of quality by Verto Inc and the implementation of the protocols set out in the service agreement between Verto Inc and the UNewHaven, that Verto UK is effectively fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and improving the quality of learning opportunities.

### **How effectively are external reference points used in monitoring and evaluation processes?**

2.10 Verto UK effectively uses Verto Inc and the academic provider (UNewHaven) as the main external reference points for monitoring and evaluation.

2.11 UNewHaven maintains academic oversight of Verto Inc to ensure the agreed protocols for quality and standards are being met. This includes the appointment and approval of faculty and the delivery of courses. The University is responsible for all matters relating to the admission of students, including marketing literature and other course information. It maintains participant educational records, including grades and transcripts. The University carries out monitoring visits to Verto Inc centres and Verto UK will be the subject of a monitoring visit in fall 2024. As discussed in paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6, the protocols for academic review require all Verto centres to participate in the rigorous review of the quality of the learning experience.

2.12 The accrediting body for UNewHaven, NECHE, provides a further external reference point for the monitoring and evaluation of quality. It approved the partnership between UNewHaven and Verto Inc through the substantive change accreditation process and undertakes annual monitoring and site visits. The first monitoring visit for UNewHaven which included Verto Inc headquarters and Verto UK, was carried out virtually in 2022. The evaluation report is positive, and comments that *'faculty and students with whom we spoke were uniformly happy with the programme and services being provided on the ground. Faculty, in particular, appreciated their connection to UNewHaven'*. The next monitoring visit is scheduled for later in 2024 and may require Verto UK staff to meet independently with the NECHE evaluation team.

2.13 Verto Inc has over 50 partners which provide further external reference points for monitoring and evaluation purposes at Verto UK. In November 2023, Verto UK hosted the Verto Partner Consortium Summit which was attended by over 20 representatives from partner institutions. The programme for the event, included opportunities to review the

experiential learning process, meet with students and faculty, and to discuss academic integrity. Feedback from the summit was positive.

2.14 Partner universities make regular visits to Verto UK for evaluation and monitoring purposes. These visits are currently informal and include class observations and student evaluation meetings. Visiting partners are not required to provide formal feedback reports, which could be a further mechanism for evaluating the quality of the learning experience. Faculty and the management team indicated that the presence in class, of sometimes large numbers of representatives from partner colleges, can be disruptive for staff and students. The team therefore **recommends** that it is advisable to formalise the procedure for partner visits to ensure that they are supportive of both staff and students, and contribute effectively to the external monitoring and evaluation processes.

### **How effectively does Verto Education UK Limited assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?**

2.15 Verto UK follows the agreed protocols of UNewHaven and Verto Inc to effectively monitor the quality of teaching. This includes student feedback, course evaluation and teaching observations which contribute to the formal academic review process required by the University.

2.16 Students complete evaluations for each of their courses at mid-term and at the end of the term. The mid-term evaluation survey enables Verto UK to review the quality of the student experience while students are participating in their courses. The end-of-term evaluation survey is a requirement of UNewHaven. For both surveys, students are requested to indicate their agreement/disagreement with statements about 10 key aspects of their courses on a Likert scale of 1-5 - one indicating low satisfaction and five, high satisfaction. Students are also able to provide qualitative feedback through the evaluation process. The survey questions cover most aspects of teaching and learning, but the review team noted that there are no specific questions about the suitability and effectiveness of the resources provided by Verto UK. This is discussed further in paragraph 2.10 and is the subject of a desirable recommendation.

2.17 Completion rates for the surveys at Verto UK are high and in fall 2023, these were 68.49% for mid-term evaluations and 73.9% for end-of-term evaluations. Satisfaction rates are also high, with each aspect of the evaluation scoring above 4 out of 5. The results of the surveys are discussed at the monthly meetings with the Vice-Principal of Verto Inc and comparisons are made across the various Verto Inc centres. The results for Verto UK compare favourably with the overall results for Verto Inc. The students who met the review team indicated that they also provide feedback about their learning experience through regular one-to-one meetings with their academic support advisers. The students confirmed that Verto UK discusses the outcomes of their feedback with them. In particular, they had been able to express their concerns about the high volume of information contained in the spring 2024 three-day orientation programme which is being reviewed in preparation for spring 2025.

2.18 Teaching observations monitor the quality of teaching by faculty. This is a requirement of Verto Inc and UNewHaven. Academic leaders (or the Vice-Principal Academic Affairs approved alternatives) undertake the observations in accordance with a prescribed template and the outcomes are shared with staff and recorded on a spreadsheet. New faculty are observed during their first year of teaching and continuing faculty every three years thereafter. Staff who met the review team indicated that their teaching had recently been observed by a senior member of staff. However, at present, there are no opportunities for peer review, which faculty believe could effectively facilitate the sharing of good practice.

The team therefore **recommends** that it is desirable for Verto UK to consider the implementation of peer review of teaching to enable good practice to be shared.

2.19 The team concludes that Verto UK has a range of processes for maintaining and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, which align with the requirements of the agreed protocols. However, the outcomes of student evaluation and the observation of faculty are not summarised into an overall action plan which could be shared with faculty, regularly monitored, and which would contribute to the continuous enhancement of the quality of the learning experience. The team **recommends** that it is advisable for Verto UK to effectively analyse the feedback from students and classroom observations, and use the outcomes to continually enhance the quality of the learning experience.

### **How effectively does Verto Education UK Limited assure itself that students are appropriately supported?**

2.20 There are effective mechanisms to assure students are appropriately supported to achieve their intended learning outcomes. Comprehensive information is available to students on the website to assist them in the admissions process. Students are supported by the central Verto Inc College Counselling, Advising and Transfer Services team to navigate the application process as well as the transfers following completion of the programme.

2.21 Each student is part of a group of 35 other students who are assigned a Student Life Coordinator (SLC) and an Academic and Success Coordinator (ASC). The group is referred to as a Care Team. The Care Team works with the students to establish whether the necessary resources and support are in place to enable students to succeed. The ASCs also provide one-on-one support for the participants, delivering workshops designed to help participants with areas identified as weaknesses. Students are mandated to have a determined number of meetings with their Care Team per semester, which enables Verto UK to assess any additional support needed. This was identified by the team as **good practice**.

2.22 Upon arrival, students receive a week of induction, which includes meeting their SLC and ASC. All student-facing policies can be found on the [Verto Inc website](#). This includes the grade appeal process which details in what cases students are able to appeal their grades. The code of responsibility details students responsibilities and rights while on the programme. The code establishes the procedure on how to respond to behaviour which is alleged to have violated the code. Students are supported by their SLC through the complaints process, or can alternatively email the Dean of Students at Verto Inc. This process is only applicable to cases where a breach of the code has been alleged. There is limited information on how students can complain about their experience at Verto UK. The team therefore **recommends** that it is essential that Verto UK formalise the complaints process and make it easily available to all students.

2.23 In cases where students are struggling to achieve and succeed, ASC and faculty work with students to establish an academic success plan. The creation of this plan is triggered by failure to attend, missing assignments or lack of engagement or understanding. Students who fail to engage with their plan may be failed or dismissed from the programme.

2.24 Verto UK also provide additional types of tutoring services for students. Peer-to-peer tutor support is provided through the OWL which is established across all Verto Inc sites. This programme is run by English faculty members who recruit current Verto Inc participants from all centres. Verto UK also hires faculty members from UK institutions to provide tutoring in select areas. This has included specific tutoring in maths, as this had been identified as an area for improvement.

2.25 Students have access to additional mental health support through a local counselling service. In cases of students not being able to attend sessions for specific reasons, students

work with their Care Team and faculty members to enable them to engage and catch up. All rooms onsite are enabled with audio visual equipment so that students can join remotely if needed. Students can find information on what constitutes an excused absence within the academic policies document. As a last step, Verto UK is in the process of developing and implementing a new Medical Withdrawal Policy to enable students who report ongoing medical concerns to withdraw from the programme with minimal penalties. The team, however, recognised that Verto UK at present does not have a formalised approach to support students managing mitigating circumstances that is accessible to students, beyond information on what constitutes a medical absence and before the point of requiring withdrawal. The team therefore **recommends** that it is essential that Verto UK creates a document that details the process for managing mitigating circumstances, is easily accessible by all students and ensures it appropriately supports students' success.

### **How effective are Verto Education UK Limited's arrangements for staff development in relation to maintaining and/or improving the quality of learning opportunities?**

2.5 Verto UK provides an extensive range of staff development opportunities, through Verto Inc for its faculty and support staff. Verto faculty are considered to be adjunct faculty of UNewHaven, and new members of staff undertake a rigorous 'onboarding' programme which is a shared responsibility between UNewHaven and Verto Inc.

2.6 All faculty members are required to complete 10-15 hours of training prior to teaching in each semester. A training schedule is provided on the virtual learning environment (Canvas), together with online training resources which include 30-minute videos with an assessment at the end. Staff are encouraged to attend ongoing monthly training which is available to faculty across the Verto Inc sites. The faculty who met the review team confirmed that this training supported their teaching and assessment. They also attend meetings with other Verto colleagues where they can discuss topics in breakout rooms, and this provides a further opportunity for staff development. Faculty are supported to attend conferences. They complete a staff training survey which is designed to identify further training needs. As a result of this survey, Verto Inc has implemented a 'train the trainer' model and has facilitated training on major topics, ideas and semester priorities that local staff are then responsible for adapting for training their own staff. These sessions include active experiential learning and the use of artificial intelligence technology in the classroom.

2.7 The Review team concludes from the evidence provided and the meetings with faculty and other members of staff, that the provider's arrangements for staff development in relation to maintaining and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities are rigorous and effective.

### **How effectively does Verto Education UK Limited ensure that students have access to learning resources that are sufficient to enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes of their programmes?**

2.6 There are effective mechanisms to review and ensure that students have access to learning resources that allow them to meet the intended learning outcomes of their programme. Verto UK moved into its current space in 2022, located in central London. All classrooms onsite are fully modular and adaptable to the needs of the session, and include screens and cameras that enable participants and staff to join remotely if needed. There are two conference rooms that participants are able to book to use as a study space to meet with academic and Verto UK staff as required. Students also have access to a student lounge with crafts and comfortable seating where they are able to relax if needed. The team considered the creative use of technology and space to support students to engage in learning as **good practice**.

2.7 Participants are given a tutorial on how to use Canvas during their academic orientation and this information is also discussed during the participants' first one-on-one meetings with their ASC. Audits are regularly conducted for continuity across Canvas sites. Verto UK also provides instructors and students with full access to Cengage Unlimited, which is an online textbook provider that provides instructional materials for faculty beyond standard textbooks and is included at no additional cost for participants. There is information for staff on what to do if appropriate texts are not on Cengage.

2.8 Students are provided with accommodation as part of their programme and are provided with associate membership of Imperial College Students' Union that allows them to join clubs and societies, and access facilities.

2.9 The academic review protocols, require a rotating schedule of site visits, known as Academic Performance Reviews (APRs), which began in spring 2023. Verto UK will have its visit in the fall of 2024. Recommended areas to improve upon from the spring 2023 Performance Review made reference to the utilisation of UNewHaven resources including online library access. To address the recommendations from the APR, Verto Inc increased its focus on local and global access to tutoring services, and launched a global initiative known as online writing lab (OWL) and provides training to qualified participants who serve as peer-writing coaches.

2.10 Verto UK offers participants the chance to provide course-specific feedback through a survey twice a semester. Once at the mid-point of the semester, that is distributed through an online, in-house evaluation process. Participants are given the opportunity to provide feedback at the end of the semester which is completed through UNewHaven. Participants are asked both quantitative and qualitative information about their experience. There is, however, no question in the survey related to learning resources. The team therefore **recommends** that it would be desirable for Verto UK to include questions relating to learning resources in the course-specific surveys to students.

The team has **confidence** that the provider is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and improving the quality of the learning opportunities it provides for students.

#### QAA2851 - R14659 - Jul 24

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