QAA

College of Naturopathic Medicine

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

February 2012

Key findings about the College of Naturopathic Medicine

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in February 2012, the QAA review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers.

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

The team considers that **reliance can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the provider is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Good practice

The team has identified the following **good practice**:

- the very thorough and comprehensive Quality Assurance Manual is making a particularly effective contribution to the management of academic standards (paragraph 1.1)
- student membership of the Specialist Acupuncture Board facilitates direct communication by students of their experiences and views on the development of relevant professional skills and contributes much to the College's effective management of appropriate standards in this area (paragraph 1.4)
- the comprehensive and rigorous Acupuncture Course Review fully addresses the issues raised in external examiners' reports and student feedback, and enables the programme team to take swift and appropriate action to maintain and enhance academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 1.7)
- the College's emphasis on students' recognition of proper professional boundaries, safe practice and the need at times for referral to other professional and medical practitioners demonstrates that the College has a high regard for professional protocols and professional standards (paragraph 1.9)
- the effective facilitation of work-related and peer learning enables students to maximise their experience of live clinical situations, gaining full benefit from the resources available and making a strong contribution to the enhancement of learning opportunities (paragraph 2.16)
- the varied sources of information and means of communication fully meet the requirements for the range and content of the published information needed by students (paragraph 3.1).

Recommendations

The team has also identified a number of **recommendations** for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

The team considers that it is **advisable** for the provider to:

- introduce a standard format for recording action points in all meetings that includes, as a standing agenda item, an update on the outcomes of previous action taken (paragraph 2.1).

The team considers that it would be **desirable** for the provider to:

- encourage all programme teams to produce an Annual Course Review (paragraph 1.7)
- undertake a series of relevant staff development events to update all staff on the use of external reference points (paragraph 1.8)
- develop its own external examiner pro forma (paragraph 1.12)
- implement a formal and regular teaching observation scheme (paragraph 2.6)
- review arrangements for individual tutorial support (paragraph 2.8)
- give course directors greater access to student progression and achievement information (paragraph 2.13)
- publish programme specifications that set out programme aims, content, methods of delivery assessment and progression/career opportunities (paragraph 3.3)
- make it clearer on its website and elsewhere that it awards its own courses (paragraph 3.4).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the Review for Educational Oversight[1] (REO) conducted by QAA at the College of Naturopathic Medicine. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers and awards themselves. The review was carried out by Mrs Claire Blanchard, Ms Francine Norris and Mr Vinay Kanani (reviewers) and Mr Alan Nisbett (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the *Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook*.[2] Evidence in support of the review included documentation supplied by the College as listed below, and meetings with staff and students.

The review team also considered the provider's use of the relevant external reference points:

- the Academic Infrastructure
- Professional Associations' Frameworks and Benchmarks.

The College is one of the UK's dedicated centres of learning in natural medicine, providing specialist training in nutritional therapy, herbal medicine, acupuncture and homeopathy. The College's primary aim is to produce capable, professional graduates and to support the development of natural medicines in the UK. The College's main philosophy is 'to produce graduates who incorporate a patient-centred approach to healthcare, have in-depth knowledge of the relevant health sciences and their own specialism; can integrate the principles of naturopathy; are safe, competent and know the limitations of their practice; have excellent reflective, interpersonal, communication and practitioner skills; can identify their learning needs and act autonomously; can source, critically analyse and apply research to support best practice'.

The College is located in central London near Oxford Circus, though it has an administrative centre in East Grinstead in Sussex and other centres in the UK and Ireland. Short courses are taught in London, biomedicine and nutrition are taught at satellite colleges, which were not the subject of this review. In 2011-12, the total number of members of staff and students in London were as follows:

Total enrolments	594
Total higher education enrolments	488
Number of full-time students	81
Number of part time students	407
Number of teaching staff	36
Number of administrative staff	17

At the time of the review, the College offered and awarded the following higher education programmes (full time equivalent numbers in brackets)
:
- Diploma in Homeopathy (0)
- Diploma in Acupuncture (25)
- Diploma in Herbal Medicine (50)
- Diploma in Naturopathic Nutrition (254)

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[1] www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4.
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx.

The College's specialist training programmes are recognised by the following Professional Associations:

Homeopathy	Homeopathic Medical Association (HMA)
Acupuncture	Association of Traditional Chinese Medicine (ATCM)
Nutrition	Naturopathic Nutrition Association (NNA)
Naturopathy	Association of Naturopathic Practitioners (ANP)
Herbal Medicine	Association of Master Herbalists (AMH)

However, the team noted that neither the College nor any of these professional bodies are recognised by the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual).
The judgements made in this report are not an endorsement of the credibility or validity of the role of these bodies in recognising the courses at this or any other institution. Nor do the judgements made in this report imply any endorsement by the team or by QAA of the veracity or validity of any claims made for any of the complementary or alternative medicines which are included in the programmes reviewed.

The provider's stated responsibilities

The College is fully and solely responsible for the setting and maintenance of academic and professional standards for its awards, for the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities and for the publication of information about its awards.
However, in the development and delivery of the curricula and the benchmarking of professional standards, the College takes full account of the guidance and, where appropriate, the requirements of the professional bodies named above.

Recent developments

There have been no significant developments in respect of new programmes or changes to the existing portfolio of courses. The College has sought to gain external validation for its awards from various UK universities in recent years but has yet to achieve this.
Extensive work was completed to fulfil the quality management requirements of the University of Bedfordshire and, although validation did not go ahead, the process has led to the development of effective documentation and processes, particularly at unit level.
The College continues to pursue validation routes and is also now looking to explore other avenues of accreditation, including the Office of Qualifications and Examinations Regulation (Ofqual) recognition.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. In order to engage and involve as many students as possible, the College prepared a questionnaire which was sent to all current London students. The resulting feedback was evaluated and commented on by experienced third year student representatives. Because the student representatives attend the College on different days, they communicated through email. The information was synthesised by the College's Deputy Academic Director to produce the Student Submission, which has been approved and endorsed by the student representatives involved. The team met a number of students during the review itself and their contribution was invaluable.

Detailed findings about the College of Naturopathic Medicine

1   Academic standards

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

1.1   The College manages academic standards effectively through a number of bodies and processes of recent origin. The responsibilities for managing and delivering higher educational standards are set out clearly in the College's Quality Assurance Manual. The College has an Advisory Board and a Management Board, the latter having responsibilities for strategic planning, budgetary planning and resources. The Quality Assurance Manual is very comprehensive and thorough, and is making a particularly effective contribution to the management of academic standards and as such is good practice.

1.2   The College's Academic Board has responsibility for managing and delivering higher education standards, academic development, curriculum development and for evaluation of courses, with clearly defined roles and lines of responsibility. The Board meets twice a year. In addition, each specialist pathway has a twice-yearly specialist Academic Board.

1.3   Course directors attend both these forums, which ensures integration between the Specialist and overall Academic Boards. Minutes for both meetings, including action points that identify those persons responsible for carrying out actions, are recorded, distributed to attendees and held at Head Office. The team believes these processes provide effective management of academic standards.

1.4   Students are also involved in academic decision-making processes through the attendance of elected student representatives at Staff Student Liaison Committees and Academic Boards. The roles and responsibilities of representatives are to facilitate communication between the student body and academic staff. Students confirmed that they saw the external examiners' reports at these meetings. The Acupuncture Student Representative is invited to the Specialist and Academic Boards. The team considers that this is good practice as it facilitates the direct communication by students of their experiences and views on the development of relevant professional skills and contributes much to the College's effective management of appropriate standards in this area.

1.5   The College's evaluation systems assess its overall effectiveness as a training college in relation to educational aims and policy, quality assurance procedures and continuing regulatory developments. Evaluation is also critical to the process of continuous improvement at unit, course, staff and institutional levels. Evaluation methods, and the planned developments that emerge from them, serve as input to further evaluation tools in a continuous cycle of improvements to course delivery, facilities, institutional policies and procedures. This helps to improve the articulation and management of standards.

1.6   At the end of each unit students give their feedback on a range of criteria, including teaching quality, provision of support and resources. Unit leaders use the information as input for preparing unit leader evaluations, which in turn inform annual critical course reviews. These student unit evaluations are read by unit leaders who complete a unit leader evaluation consisting of a summary with action points. These are reviewed by the Course Director for the specialism to be fed into the course review process.

1.7   The College has made good progress recently in the continuing evaluation of academic standards and course delivery. The Acupuncture Course Director has recently completed an Annual Course Review which will be circulated to all course directors as a model for rolling out the process across all specialisms in the next academic cycle. The Acupuncture Course Review is a comprehensive working document that fully addresses the issues raised in external examiners' reports and student feedback, and enables the programme team to take swift and appropriate action to maintain and enhance standards and quality of learning opportunities. The team considers this to be good practice and considers it desirable that the College encourages all course teams to produce an Annual Course Review in order to provide similar opportunities for the monitoring and enhancement of academic standards.

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

1.8   External reference points have been carefully identified and are effectively used. Courses have been appropriately designed and delivered according to recognised higher education standards for UK universities and professional accreditation bodies. For example, the College has used *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) to benchmark its awards and has used external reference points through recent accreditation processes in homeopathy, herbal medicine, acupuncture and nutrition. Significant progress has been achieved through extensive dialogue and consultation at each stage of the College's academic and professional development. The College strives to adhere to the requirements for recognition by professional bodies, which take account of both the subject benchmark statements for health care programmes and the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*) in their course recognition processes. However, there is scope for further utilisation of other aspects of the Academic Infrastructure. The team considers it desirable that the College undertakes a series of relevant staff development events to update all staff on the requirements of the Academic Infrastructure and the developing UK Quality Code for higher education to familiarise themselves with quality assurance processes and procedures.

1.9   Professional codes of practice are fundamental within the context of health care training, with professional codes of ethics and practice integrated into the curricula and provision of clinical training according to the requirements of professional associations. An Ethics Committee has been established to consider issues relating to dissertation proposals and overall staff and student conduct. The team notes as good practice the emphasis on students' recognition of proper professional boundaries, safe practice and the need at times for referral to other professional and medical practitioners. This demonstrates the College's high regard for professional protocols and professional standards.

1.10   Unit guides have been developed for all specialisms. These are published on the student website and circulated to staff who are expected to contribute to and gain ownership of the course materials through an annual review process. Key information contained in the guides includes: aims, objectives, intended learning outcomes, assessment criteria, assessment details, learning hours, unit topics and reading lists.

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

1.11   The College's use of external moderation and external examining, though generally sound, would benefit from further refinement. Existing professional recognition and the continuing dialogue implicit in accreditation of the courses provide opportunities for detailed

external feedback, with the College making every effort to map the course and supporting infrastructure according to the requirements of relevant bodies.

1.12   In addition, external examiners, who have experience of working within other recognised courses, provide feedback on the College's assessments, judgements on whether these satisfy the requirements for meeting the core curriculum and suggestions for improvement. External examiners are approved by the appropriate accreditation body and undergo a College induction. The quality of external examiners' reports was variable and lacked consistency. The team considers it desirable for the College to adopt its own external examiner pro forma in order to ensure a more consistent approach*.*

> The review team has **confidence** in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers.

2   Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1   As noted in paragraphs 1.1-1.3, the College operates an overall Academic Board and four specialist subject boards, each meeting formally twice a year. The Boards are responsible for managing the provision in terms of standards of teaching and learning, and are responsible for enhancement through oversight of the course monitoring and curriculum development. Meetings are minuted but follow-up on actions are not recorded consistently, making it difficult to identify measures taken. It is advisable for the College to introduce a standard format for recording action points and include a progress update on this as a standing agenda item at each meeting.

How effectively are external reference points used in the management and enhancement of learning opportunities?

2.2   The College's Diploma award is aligned with the FHEQ. A common level 4 biomedicine programme aims to give all students grounding in biomedicine before embarking on the specialist programmes at levels 4, 5 and 6. Appropriate intended learning outcomes for units have been developed to align with each level and ensure consistency across the provision.

2.3   The development, enhancement and review of the curriculum content of awards is undertaken largely in response to the demands of external professional organisations and is the delegated responsibility of the Course Director for each subject area. The requirements of the British Acupuncture Accreditation Board (BAAB) have been significant to the whole provision as the College has been required to develop a range of processes and procedures related to quality assurance and enhancement in order to attain full accreditation. Currently, the College has attained Stage 2 accreditation and is seeking to achieve final Stage 3 in summer 2012. The Course Director for Acupuncture has initiated processes such as annual course review.

How does the provider assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?

2.4   There are a number of mechanisms through which the College is able to assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced. The College's clearly articulated educational policy underpins its teaching and learning

strategy. The College aims to produce graduates who are 'autonomous, reflective, competent, ethical, research-minded and safe through a balance of theory and clinical practice'. Typically, 50 per cent of learning hours in Stages 5 and 6 are spent in the College's clinic. The theoretical components of the units are delivered through lectures. The College has centrally developed lecture plans that ensure consistency in curriculum delivery despite a high number of part-time staff.

2.5   Teaching staff are expected to be professional practitioners in their field and are held responsible for maintaining the currency of their knowledge and their membership of professional bodies. Staff are not routinely required to have teaching qualifications, although teaching experience is valued. Comprehensive Teaching Instructions and a Staff Induction Manual are issued to all staff at the commencement of their employment, setting out standards expected by the College.

2.6   Observation of teaching is undertaken by the Principal prior to appointment of new staff and, following this, at periodic intervals. The ability to communicate effectively is assessed through a sample lecture. A Teaching Staff Appraisal Form has been developed in order to support this process. The team considers it to be desirable that a formal and regular teaching observation scheme is implemented and that a format is developed that allows observers to assess competencies against the expectations of teaching at higher education level.

2.7   Students are asked to complete feedback forms at the point of examination for each unit, ensuring a high completion rate. This means that students have the opportunity to provide formal feedback twice a year. The form includes the opportunity to comment on teaching quality and the provision of support and resources. Completed forms are seen by the Unit Leader and the Director of Studies and are used to inform the evaluation of units and their continuing review. The Principal has regular oversight of all feedback forms. During the visit the students said that they felt that the quality of teaching was variable but that, generally, the College was responsive to student feedback on this issue.

How does the provider assure itself that students are supported effectively?

2.8   The College's procedures for assuring that students are supported effectively are generally sound but need to be improved, as student support is variable across the provision. Procedures for admission and induction are comprehensive but vary in format depending upon the timing of enrolment. Arrangements for tutorial support on specialist pathways also vary. Acupuncture students are allocated to small tutorial groups, which provide pastoral, academic and peer support. Students said that a particular benefit of these groups was to provide an opportunity to discuss assessment feedback, enabling them to better understand how to improve their work. Students from other pathways indicated that they would like a similar level of support. The team considers it to be desirable that the College review current arrangements for tutorial support to promote greater equity.

2.9   The College takes account of different learning styles. Students are asked to complete a declaration form indicating any specific support needs at the beginning of their studies. In the design of courses a wide variety of assessment types is employed to test students' attainment of intended learning outcomes. Typically, they include written essays, projects, unseen examinations and practical clinical tasks. The final dissertation unit has been personalised by course teams to include professionally relevant tasks such as journal articles.

2.10   A grievance and complaints procedure for students is set out in the Student Handbook. Students are able to raise concerns internally at local level and also with Head Office if local resolution cannot be reached. As a final resort, students are advised

to take complaints to the professional organisations with whom the College has accreditation/recognition.

2.11   The role of student representatives is variable across the provision. Acupuncture representatives are members of the Specialist Board and Academic Board in line with the requirements of the BAAB. Students from other specialisms indicated differing levels of awareness of the role of student representatives and suggested that student representatives should be elected for each class rather than each course.

2.12   Students have benefited from the opportunity to come together to discuss their experiences on different courses and at different stages of the course. Students were active in creating informal social media groups but it was evident that in preparing the student written submission, differences in the students' experiences had been revealed, which encouraged students to be more vocal and demanding of their course teams.

2.13   The progress of students is monitored. Student attendance is recorded by course lecturers and absence reported to the on-campus office. Student records, including attendance and assessment, are kept at the Head Office but course directors do not have easy access to this information and hence can lack an overview of student performance. During the visit staff explained that additional study advice and pastoral support was available from full-time staff on campus if a student was identified as struggling or having concerns. It is considered desirable that course directors have access to sufficient information on student progression and achievement to help them provide appropriate support and advice.

What are the provider's arrangements for staff development to maintain and/or enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

2.14   As mentioned in paragraph 2.4, teaching staff are predominantly part-time and are contractually obliged to maintain the currency of their professional practice and membership of professional organisations. The Staff Induction Handbook stipulates that a minimum of 30 hours per year of continued professional development activity is required, which aligns with the requirements of the professional organisations.

2.15   The College has additionally introduced a policy and process for educational professional development planning based on peer support and review. The policy defines clearly the difference between professional development in healthcare and the requirements of the College in relation to educational development. Staff are required to pair with another member of teaching staff to engage in peer observation of teaching and to identify development needs.

How effectively does the provider ensure that learning resources are accessible to students and sufficient to enable them to achieve the learning outcomes?

2.16   The London campus has a range of classrooms and clinical rooms. A particularly strong aspect of the provision is the way in which a live video feed is broadcast into classrooms from the clinic, allowing students to observe their peers and critique consultation/treatments. The team notes as good practice the effective facilitation of work-related and peer learning that enables students to maximise their experience of live clinical situations, gaining full benefit from the resources available and making a strong contribution to the enhancement of learning opportunities.

2.17   The provision of information technology, including printing and photocopying facilities, does not meet students' expectations. Through discussion with the team it was

explained that these concerns were to do with the technical efficiency of the facilities rather than the range of the provision, which was felt to be adequate for most of students' needs.

2.18   The College provides a small on-site library at the London campus, which is limited and which the student feedback suggests lacks currency and recent key publications. However, the College directs students to the nearby British and Wellcome Libraries for access to research databases and reference collections. During the visit the students confirmed that this was the case but that it was mainly the students engaged in the final stage of dissertation who took up this option.

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

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3   Public information

How effectively does the provider's public information communicate to students and other stakeholders about the higher education it provides?

3.1   The College communicates public information to stakeholders effectively. The College is responsible for providing course and accreditation information to prospective students, current students, staff, employers and other stakeholders. The College has a dedicated website for public information for stakeholders and a specific micro-site for students. The College undertakes this effectively and communicates with students and stakeholders through the College's main website and, for purely student matters, the student website. The main website contains information relevant to prospective students and stakeholders, and further information is available from Directors of Studies. The website is available in a number of languages. The College uses other methods such as open days, leaflets and information brochures. There are also specific information leaflets for events and short courses the College offers in conjunction with their mainstream programmes. During the visit there were extensive signs, posters and information available throughout the College's premises. The team judges as good practice the varied sources of information and means of communication that fully meet the requirements for the range and content of the published information needed by students.

3.2   The College's student website contains information on timetables, assessment and marking schemes and course information with lesson plans and lesson content slides, as well as handouts and assignment information. Unit guides are provided for all specialisms. These are circulated to staff who are expected to contribute to and gain ownership of the course materials through an annual review process. Key information contained in the guides includes: aims, objectives, intended learning outcomes, assessment criteria, assessment details, learning hours, unit topics and reading lists.

3.3   The College does not use programme specifications that would provide an overview, an overarching content and coherence for each course. Programme specifications for each course would make it clear what is required to achieve certification. The team considers that programme specifications for students would be helpful in understanding the syllabuses. The team considers it to be desirable that programme specifications be developed and provided for all stakeholders to communicate programme aims, content, methods of delivery, assessment and progression/career opportunities.

3.4   The College awards its own programmes with certificates. It has a number of accreditations with professional bodies and associations, showing that it is part of the

national system in the particular area of alternative and complementary therapies. In the absence of an awarding organisation within the Ofqual database, the team feels that this may confuse potential students. It is desirable for the College to make it absolutely clear on its website and elsewhere that it awards its own courses.

3.5   The College's arrangement with Charles Stuart University in Australia allows students to progress to a degree. The College has clarified this arrangement 'as a per case basis' option for students who complete the College's courses. Current students who may have been under a different impression would benefit from clarification on this issue.

3.6   The College's induction system for new students and employees is a mix of interviews with Directors of Studies, formal welcome by email containing pre-induction information and preparation for the first day. A 30 minute on-site induction is delivered by a senior member of staff in conjunction with the course tutor. This has received mixed comments from past students. Students sign induction forms confirming having seen or received induction information such as complaints, appeals, health and safety, equal opportunities, behaviour and assessment policies.

How effective are the provider's arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information it has responsibility for publishing?

3.7   The College has an effective system of assuring the accuracy and completeness of information. The Operations Officer, who also works as a Personal Assistant to the Principal, drafts changes and checks with the Principal and each Course Director prior to sign-off before the updating of published information. The College has redeveloped a large part of its provision; for example new regulations have been implemented for acupuncture and are soon to be revised for herbal medicine. The information on the website is checked for content and accuracy on a regular basis by course directors as a result of the developing requirements. Staff who are current practitioners participate regularly in sector development meetings. Through their relationship with professional bodies they ensure that the information provided by the College is current.

The team concludes that **reliance can be placed** on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the provider is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Action plan[3]

College of Naturopathic Medicine action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight February 2012						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The review team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
• the very thorough and comprehensive Quality Assurance Manual is making a particularly effective contribution to the management of academic standards (paragraph 1.1)	Conduct a regular review of the Quality Assurance Manual, to ensure it meets legal, educational and industry developments	Ongoing	Quality Assurance coordinator	The Quality Assurance Manual's relevance and continued effective contribution to educational standards	Principal	Review process reported at Academic and Management Board levels
• student membership of the Specialist Acupuncture Board facilitates direct communication by	Student representatives for each year of each specialism to be consistently invited to Academic Board	Already actioned	Course directors/ meeting coordinators	Enhanced student perception of involvement in meetings and academic decision-	Academic Director	Student unit feedback evaluated as part of Annual Review Process; regulatory body

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[3] The provider has been required to develop this action plan to follow up on good practice and address any recommendations arising from the review. QAA monitors progress against the action plan.

students of their experiences and views on the development of relevant professional skills and contributes much to the College's effective management of appropriate standards in this area (paragraph 1.4)	meetings			making processes		feedback and reports
• the comprehensive and rigorous Acupuncture Course Review fully addresses the issues raised in external examiners' reports and student feedback, and enables the programme team to take swift and appropriate action to maintain and enhance academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 1.7)	Annual reviews to be completed by course directors for each specialism	All courses to undertake course review academic year 2012-13	Course directors	Achievement of coherent approach to Annual Review Process; enhancement of standards in response to internal and external feedback	Academic Director	Regulatory body feedback and reports

• the College's emphasis on students' recognition of proper professional boundaries, safe practice and the need at times for referral to other professional and medical practitioners demonstrates that the College has a high regard for professional protocols and professional standards (paragraph 1.9)	Clinic leaders to carry out annual evaluation of clinic documentation and handbooks and update as necessary with recent professional developments Develop a standard College referral pro forma for communication with general practitioners and other health professionals	Summer 2012, in order to publish updated documentation ready for the academic year 2012-13 May 2012	Clinic directors Quality Assurance Coordinator	Adherence to requirements of regulatory bodies Enhanced professionalism in communication with general practitioners and other health professionals	Course directors	Annual Course Reviews; regulatory body and external examiner feedback Annual Course Reviews, external feedback
• the effective facilitation of work-related and peer learning enables students to maximise their experience of live clinical situations, gaining full benefit from the resources available and making a strong contribution to the enhancement of	Annual Course Review will evaluate and implement ways to further strengthen the educational emphasis on practical and clinical applications of all taught material, as well as strengthening opportunities for group and peer learning	Ongoing Annual Course Review process	Course directors	Improved confidence among students in their communication and collaborative work within the context of clinical practice	Academic Director	Student unit feedback evaluated as part of Annual Course Review process; external examiner and regulatory body feedback; patient feedback

	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
learning opportunities (paragraph 2.16)						
• the varied sources of information and means of communication fully meet the requirements for the range and content of the published information needed by students (paragraph 3.1).	Further enhancement by publishing course specifications	Summer 2012, in order to publish documentation ready for the academic year 2012-13	Course directors	Greater student and applicant confidence and understanding of the overall aims and requirements for the courses	Academic Director	Student feedback evaluated as part of Annual Course Review process; regulatory body feedback
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is **advisable** for the provider to:						
• introduce a standard format for recording action points in all meetings that includes, as a standing agenda item, an update on the outcomes of previous action taken (paragraph 2.1).	Produce a standard form for recording action points, nominated persons, actions by, and sign off Forms to be used as appendices to all meeting minutes and checked as part of agenda	April 2012	Quality Assurance Coordinator	Improved management and consistency in the follow-up of action points from all meetings	Academic Director	Annual Course Review; part of quality assurance evaluation process

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is **desirable** for the provider to:						
• encourage all programme teams to produce an Annual Course Review (paragraph 1.7)	Annual Course Reviews to be completed by course directors for each specialism according to quality assurance guidelines Structure and format stipulated by relevant accrediting bodies taking precedence	All courses to undertake Annual Course Review academic year 2012-13	Course directors	Greater consistency of procedures and action in response to internal and external feedback	Academic Director	Academic Director evaluation of Annual Course Reviews across all programs
• undertake a series of relevant staff development events to update all staff on the use of external reference points (paragraph 1.8)	Continue to schedule staff development events focusing on the Academic Infrastructure and the *Code of practice* based on needs identified by the Academic Board	Ongoing	Head of Research and Practitioner development	Enhanced knowledge and application of external reference points across courses from Academic Board to lecturer level	Academic Director	Staff personal development plans; external examiner feedback
• develop its own external examiner pro forma (paragraph 1.12)	Develop pro forma based on the *Code of practice* guidelines Disseminate to course directors to	May 2012	Quality Assurance coordinator	Implementation of clear and transparent criteria and processes feeding into continuous	Academic Director; Principal	Regulatory body and external examiner feedback into Academic Board and Annual

				improvement		Course Review process
• implement a formal and regular teaching observation scheme (paragraph 2.6)	Instigate a formal process for peer observation and structured feedback for all lecturers	From May 2012	Head of Research and Practitioner Development	Enhanced teaching standards through transparent and structured feedback	Academic and course directors	Staff appraisals; personal development plans
• review arrangements for individual tutorial support (paragraph 2.8)	Tutorials automatically given to struggling students by course directors (academic issues) or directors of studies (pastoral issues) Appointment board with time slots placed outside office of Director of Study, on which any student may sign up for tutorial support	April 2012	Directors of study; course directors	Enhanced academic and personal support structures	Principal	Student unit evaluation forms; Annual Course Review
• give course directors greater access to student progression and achievement information (paragraph 2.13)	Course directors to be sent spreadsheets of exam results and attendance records twice yearly in time for evaluation at Academic Boards	September 2012	Head of Information Technology	Enhance ability of course directors to follow individual student and cohort progress, identify struggling students at the earliest possible stage and target appropriate academic or	Academic and course directors	Student assessment, retention and progression statistics

				pastoral support		
• publish programme specifications that set out programme aims, content, methods of delivery, assessment and progression/career opportunities (paragraph 3.3)	Course specifications will be produced for each specialism	Summer 2012, in order to publish ready for the academic year 2012-13	Course directors	Greater student confidence and understanding of the educational and practical aims and requirements for the courses they undertake	Academic Director	Student unit feedback; regulatory body feedback
• make explicitly clearer on its website and elsewhere that the provider awards its own courses (paragraph 3.4).	Evaluate website and prospectus copy and update information to clarify this point	May 2012	Head of Information Technology	More transparent public information on awarding arrangements	Principal	Student, public and regulatory body feedback

About QAA

QAA is the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. QAA's mission is to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education.

QAA's aims are to:

- meet students' needs and be valued by them
- safeguard standards in an increasingly diverse UK and international context
- drive improvements in UK higher education
- improve public understanding of higher education standards and quality.

QAA conducts reviews of higher education institutions and publishes reports on the findings. QAA also publishes a range of guidance documents to help safeguard standards and improve quality.

More information about the work of QAA is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk.

More detail about Review for Educational Oversight can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/tier-4.

Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary. Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the *Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook*[4]

Academic Infrastructure Guidance developed and agreed by the higher education community and published by QAA, which is used by institutions to ensure that their courses meet national expectations for academic standards and that students have access to a suitable environment for learning (academic quality). It consists of four groups of reference points: the **frameworks for higher education qualifications**, the **subject benchmark statements**, the **programme specifications** and the **Code of practice**. Work is underway (2011-12) to revise the Academic Infrastructure as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

academic quality A comprehensive term referring to how, and how well, institutions manage teaching and learning opportunities to help students progress and succeed.

academic standards The standards set and maintained by institutions for their courses and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

awarding body A body with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the **framework for higher education qualifications**, such as diplomas or degrees.

awarding organisation An organisation with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the Qualifications and Credit Framework for England and Northern Ireland (these qualifications are at levels one to eight, with levels four and above being classed as 'higher education').

Code of practice *The Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, published by QAA: a set of interrelated documents giving guidance for higher education institutions.

designated body An organisation that has been formally appointed to perform a particular function.

differentiated judgements In a Review for Educational Oversight, separate judgements respectively for the provision validated by separate awarding bodies.

enhancement Taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of **learning opportunities**. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

feature of good practice A positive aspect of the way a higher education institution manages quality and standards, which may be seen as exemplary to others.

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

framework for higher education qualifications A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education

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[4] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx.

Colleges in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland*.

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

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

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

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

programme (of study) An approved course of study which provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

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

College An institution that offers courses of higher education, tyPublic Informationcally on behalf of a separate **awarding body or organisation**. In the context of REO, the term means an independent college.

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

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

quality See **academic quality**.

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

threshold academic standard The minimum standard that a student should reach in order to gain a particular qualification or award, as set out in the **subject benchmark statements** and national qualifications frameworks. Threshold standards are distinct from the standards of performance that students need to achieve in order to gain any particular class of award, for example a first-class bachelor's degree. See also **academic standard**.

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