



SDS College

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

March 2012

Key findings about SDS College

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in March 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 on behalf of ATHE and the Institute of Administrative Management.

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

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 innovative and flexible use of four-hour teaching blocks (paragraph 2.1)
- the high level of pastoral support for students (paragraph 2.9)
- the rigour, and the clear reporting lines, with which the College monitors its published marketing materials (paragraph 3.6)
- the thorough and supportive induction programme (paragraph 3.8).

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:

- provide greater clarity on senior staff roles and responsibilities (paragraph 1.2)
- implement a programme to support and develop staff understanding of and engagement with external reference points (paragraph 1.7)
- consistently apply and monitor the marking and moderation of formative assessment (paragraph 1.10)
- further develop the processes for the evaluation of and response to external examiners' reports (paragraph 1.10)
- develop a comprehensive process for the collection, analysis and dissemination of cohort data (paragraph 2.4)
- introduce a more clearly articulated staff development system, to include a process of peer observation of teaching and sharing of good practice (paragraph 2.7)
- review the admissions policy to ensure a greater degree of consistency in the use of online interviews (paragraph 2.8)
- review the provision of learning resources, including library provision (paragraph 2.16).

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

- further develop the academic personal tutor system (paragraph 2.10)
- further develop the student representation system and encourage wider participation (paragraph 2.11)

- produce a set of dedicated programme handbooks to enhance the student learning experience (paragraph 3.2)
- further develop the portal to exploit its potential to enhance the student experience (paragraph 3.9).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at SDS College (the provider; the College). 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 on behalf of the Institute of Administrative Management and ATHE. The review was carried out by Mr Paul Chamberlain, Professor Chris Hudson, Mrs Ranjinder Willis (reviewers) and Dr Paul Hartley (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:

- meetings with staff and students
- examples of external validators' reports (and responses to those reports)
- minutes of committee meetings
- examples of marked formative assessments with feedback
- examples of classroom observation records
- syllabuses for the taught courses (from the awarding organisations)
- reports of inspections by the British Accreditation Council
- signed memoranda/agreements with the awarding organisations
- examples of information for students
- examples of marketing material
- the College website
- the student/staff portal
- the staff and student handbook
- student timetables.

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

- the Academic Infrastructure
- the awarding organisations' syllabuses and guidelines.

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

SDS College (the College) was established in 2005 in Whitechapel, London, and initially offered computing courses, including Cisco Systems, C and C++. It then expanded its provision to include business, health, and tourism and hospitality courses. It has recently discontinued its computing provision. It is a private education provider with a stated mission to provide a safe, secure, friendly and professional service to home and international students. It has a clear focus on vocationally orientated programmes.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath their awarding organisations:

Institute of Administrative Management

- Diploma in Business and Administrative Management (levels 4 and 6)

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4.

² www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx.

ATHE

- Postgraduate Diploma in Strategic Management (level 7)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Healthcare Management (level 7)

In academic year 2011-12, the College has 100 students following higher education courses: 79 on business programmes, and 21 following the Postgraduate Diploma in Healthcare Management.

The provider's stated responsibilities

The College confirmed that it applies the prescribed guidelines from the awarding organisations, which are responsible for the setting and marking of summative assessments. In its self-evaluation the College claims that it has a student-focussed approach to teaching and learning. Its educational goals include:

- the provision of quality education programmes
- vocational guidance and support
- the implementation of a learning methodology which incorporates quality assurance mechanisms and enables students to feed back to the College.

The College claims to have an internal quality framework, which provides timely and consistent information to inform academic planning, and well documented processes to ensure that standards are maintained. There is a published set of policies and procedures which support quality assurance, including the Quality Assurance Manual.

There is a stated commitment to the enhancement of the student experience, and the College has in place processes for annual staff appraisal and classroom observation.

Recent developments

The College management was aware that the previous premises were increasingly unsuited to student needs, and SDS College relocated in October 2011 to its current Docklands campus. It is in discussion with a large publicly-funded university with a view to delivering franchised courses in Computing and Business Information Technology. If such an agreement is reached, the current premises would not be suitable for the increased student numbers, and the College has an option to lease further premises in an adjoining building in Docklands.

The College has seen a downturn in student numbers over the past 12 months on account of changes to immigration regulations relating to study in the UK. It intends to address this issue in part by diversifying its provision further, and engaging more with the local market. Some of the proposed expansion will be in courses which are not at higher education level. The College is, for example, about to introduce a course in Door Supervision.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the team. The students did not make a written submission, but the College produced a filmed interview with a group of students, in which they gave their views on their educational experience. Student representatives could not be present for the preparatory meeting, but they were fully briefed by College staff about the review, and a group of students met the team as part of the two-day review visit. Their contribution to the review process was very helpful.

Detailed findings about SDS College

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The self-evaluation describes how the College has moved to a more focused and streamlined management structure in the past 12 months. Current higher education programmes are designed, accredited and assessed by the awarding organisations. Responsibilities of the College and its awarding organisations are clearly defined in formal agreements. The College provides teaching and learning to support the achievement of intended learning outcomes defined in the student handbook and uses course delivery content published by the awarding organisations. The College is responsible for the admission of students, appointment of staff, teaching, pastoral support and academic administration, including the security of summative assessment documents. It discharges these responsibilities effectively.

1.2 The College has a small management team sharing a variety of roles (with some overlap), who works well informally, as confirmed by students and staff. The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for College finances and strategy, and the Principal carries responsibility for academic planning. The Academic Manager takes day-to-day responsibility for course delivery, teaching staff, assessment and communication with the validating organisations. There is a total of 11 staff, four of whom are full-time appointments, and the staffing structure, although adequate to support the management of academic standards with current student numbers, would benefit from clearer definitions of responsibilities to support the envisaged future growth. The team considers it advisable that the College revises its published policies and committee structure in order to provide greater clarity on senior staff roles and responsibilities. This would also assist in ensuring that policies are more systematically applied and disseminated.

1.3 The College publishes a clear and comprehensive set of policy documents related to the management of academic standards. However, although comprehensive in scope they do not fully reflect the institution's current management practices and the team noted that several examples lacked consistency between written structures and processes and operational reality. For example, a list of committees and membership supplied for the review does not include the Academic Committee.

1.4 The Academic Services Group, comprising the Principal, Academic Manager and Registrar, deals with all matters relating to academic services. According to published policy, all matters relating to academic services are, in the first instance, dealt with by the Academic Manager, who liaises with the Principal and makes proposals to the Chief Executive Officer. Although the team was informed of this process in their meeting with staff, they found no written data trail of this process in operation.

1.5 The College does have an annual monitoring process in accordance with its published policy. Annual monitoring reports available to the team were, however, limited in scope. Some lacked analysis and were completed using duplicate material, irrespective of programme level.

1.6 The team saw written evidence, supported by staff in their meetings with the team, of rigorous processes for the appointment of well qualified staff. Teaching performance is monitored through review by management and structured student feedback.

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

1.7 The College states in its self-evaluation that its internal framework makes use of subject benchmark statements and the awarding organisations and accreditation agency criteria. Its internal quality management framework is clearly informed by the external reference points employed by the validating organisations. Course content, assessment and examinations are directly provided by the Institute of Administrative Management and ATHE. College staff have also attended events organised by the awarding organisations. However, the team found that although staff apply the rubric of validating body programme specifications, the College does not map its internal processes against the relevant elements of the Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points in a formal and explicit manner. The team considers that it is advisable for the College to implement a programme to support and develop staff understanding of and engagement with external reference points.

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

1.8 The system for monitoring student progression is mapped in the Quality Assurance Manual. The manual does not refer specifically to annual monitoring. It notes that coursework and final exam results are monitored according to external standards and that the course coordinator and senior tutor analyse College results alongside the published results from the awarding organisations. The manual states that a yearly review of the data and termly review of progress test results are then presented to senior management who use the results to form further strategies for raising achievement. The team did not see formal evidence of this process taking place.

1.9 The scope for direct College engagement with the awarding organisations in moderation, verification and examining is limited. The College receives individual module scores from the accrediting bodies. Raw score data available at the time of the visit demonstrated a consistently low level of student achievement in the Diploma in Business and Administrative Management programme. External validators' reports are provided by ATHE but the College does not receive qualitative or statistical feedback from the Institute of Administrative Management. The most recent external validator's report from ATHE contained helpful suggestions to improve formative feedback for students. This was formally noted at the Academic Committee, and teaching staff in their meeting with the team demonstrated awareness of the issues raised, but there was no formal record of the subsequent corrective action.

1.10 The College Strategic Plan states that the College will demonstrate 'a commitment to continual quality enhancement in all aspects of the learner experience'. Evidence available did not fully support this with regard to annual monitoring and the administration of formative assessment. The team found limited evidence of clearly documented oversight of internal verification of formative assignments and of formal written feedback to students. The formally documented response to a thorough review of the provision undertaken by ATHE in July 2011 could have been more detailed. The team considers it advisable that the College should consistently monitor the marking and moderation of formative assessment. It should also further develop the processes for the evaluation of and response to external examiners' reports.

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

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 For course delivery the College employs four-hour teaching blocks, comprising a variety of delivery modes and class activities, including short reinforcement exercises, to ensure that curriculum content and pace of delivery are carefully matched to student needs. College staff have carefully considered their approach to teaching and the enhancement of the student learning experience and students at all levels who met the team spoke very positively of the flexibility of course delivery, and of the innovative and stimulating nature of the teaching, particularly in the level 7 programmes. Staff also spoke enthusiastically of the teaching methodology outlined above, and the positive way in which students responded to it. The team considers the innovative and flexible use of four-hour teaching blocks to be a feature of good practice.

2.2 All summative assignments are set and marked by the awarding organisations. The teaching staff set a variety of formative assessments for students, such as multiple choice tests and short essays, and the College claims in its self-evaluation that it makes use of formative feedback to enhance learning. This was confirmed by students and staff in their meetings with the team. The team saw some evidence of this in operation, but the quality and quantity of the written feedback to students was very variable. The fact that the written feedback to students was handwritten also made some examples difficult to comprehend.

2.3 The Institute of Administrative Management does not automatically provide feedback on the level 4 course. College staff indicated that this was an issue for the students. Students confirmed in their meeting with the team that they could obtain more detailed information from the Institute on their assessment performance, but an additional fee was payable for this service and they were reluctant to incur the additional cost. Students acknowledged that this was an issue outside of the control of the College.

2.4 The statistical data of student achievement were made available to the team, but there is no evidence that their analysis has been undertaken to allow teaching staff to improve delivery and address any areas of student weakness. The College and its students would benefit from a more detailed analysis of student performance, and the team considers it advisable that the College develops a comprehensive process for the collection, analysis and dissemination of cohort data. This would assist in developing its monitoring and support of student performance.

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

2.5 Since all summative assessment is set by the awarding organisations, there is limited scope for staff to engage through formal summative assessment processes directly with *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). Teaching staff would benefit from greater formal awareness of FHEQ via a staff development programme to assist them in continuing to ensure that internally set formative assignments are at the appropriate level. That awareness of level differentiation could, in turn, be communicated to students.

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

2.6 The College has a system of teaching observation, and the team saw clear notes of the classroom observations undertaken by the Academic Manager and the Student Support Manager. This is a managerial system of observation and evaluation of staff performance as opposed to peer observation which is more common in higher education. Peer observation of teaching would have the advantage of encouraging academic staff to share good practice and the College is encouraged to move towards such a system.

2.7 The students in their meeting with the team spoke positively of teaching staff and of the variety of teaching methods, and gave several examples of the approachability of and support from staff, particularly in the postgraduate level programmes in management and healthcare. It is evident that, given the size of the College, there are helpful informal networks, but there is no formally documented method of sharing good practice among staff. The College stated that staff development courses run over the summer period, but no timetable was provided to support this. The team considers it advisable for the College to introduce a more clearly articulated staff development system, to include a process of peer observation of teaching and sharing of good practice.

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

2.8 The awarding organisations clearly state that the admission of students is the College's responsibility. The College has a clear admissions policy aimed at ensuring that students are appropriately qualified to undertake their chosen area of study. However, the team noted some inconsistency in the process of employing online interviews to establish suitability and language competence. The British Accreditation Council Accreditation Report from December 2010 stated that the College must be able to demonstrate continued strengthening in its quality assurance procedures and that it must make clear the English language prerequisites for study. Some ambiguity remains regarding language competence requirements and this should be resolved. The team also considers it advisable that the College reviews its admissions policy to ensure a greater degree of consistency in the use of online interviews.

2.9 Pastoral support for students is coordinated by the Student Support Manager, who takes responsibility for the very detailed and supportive induction programme as well as the ongoing support and advice. Students spoke very positively of this, especially in terms of preparing them for living in the UK. They gave examples of both full and part-time staff being readily available to offer advice and provide feedback on their work. In accordance with the College's published policy, the Academic Manager meets students, once their results are available, to discuss any issues. The team considers the high level of pastoral support for students to be an example of good practice.

2.10 Students stated that they can email academic staff if they have any concerns and these emails are usually replied to within two days. Students and staff also confirmed to the team that feedback was available to students whenever requested. Students have a timetabled tutorial period and indicated that staff are generally very helpful. The academic support given to students outside the classroom appears to be at an informal level, and the team considers it desirable that the College further develop the academic personal tutor system to enhance the student learning experience.

2.11 There is a system of student representation in the College, and the team met two such representatives in their discussion with students. However, the system operates currently on an informal self-nominating basis, and the team considers it desirable that the

College further develop the student representation system and encourage wider participation.

2.12 English classes are run as a separate award in the College, and where students are identified as being in need of further support in English, they are encouraged to join these classes. They operate on a self-referral basis, but it was not clear whether the students take advantage of them. The system would benefit from a greater degree of formalisation.

2.13 The College staff informed the team that study skills workshops are offered to students at the beginning of the semester, but there was no information as to how this was run, nor how students were selected to attend. The team was able to see a number of lesson plans for the courses taught in business and in healthcare, and these had a clear structure and were at the right level.

2.14 The issue of referencing and plagiarism is covered during induction and there is further information in the student handbook. The College states that all work is submitted through an electronic checking programme to detect any cases of plagiarism. However, some of the student work made available to the reviewers had cases of plagiarism and unreferenced work which had been undetected. It was unclear whether this work predated the policy on plagiarism detection.

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

2.15 Staff are encouraged to do research and take higher degrees, and a number of staff are doing this. Many of the part-time staff teach at other higher education institutions, which allows external referencing to take place. The College has stated that it is willing to offer a teaching qualification but it is not clear how this is to be pursued. There is no clear evidence that a formal staff development process is operating, and it is evident to the team that the College and the individual staff would benefit from such a development. The team considers it advisable for the College to introduce a more clearly articulated staff development system.

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 Students and external providers have identified that the library is insufficient to support the students, and the College's management acknowledges this shortcoming and is committed to improving and expanding the library provision. Students are encouraged to join a local, public library and confirmed to the team that it was possible to source course books from the local, and other libraries. This would not, however, be adequate if a large number of students wanted access to the same texts. The College subscribes to online library facilities but does not have a formal policy of evaluating and matching library stock to student demand. The team considers it advisable for the College to review the provision of learning resources, including library provision.

2.17 There are discussions at an early stage with a publicly funded university in the UK about the possibility of running a franchised three-year BSc in computing at the College, and a memorandum of understanding has been signed. The College acknowledges that the current premises could not meet the needs of significantly expanded student numbers, and already has an option on the rental of suitable space in a nearby building, should the above franchise come into operation.

2.18 The College has Wi-Fi available on each of the two floors, in addition to several computers available in the library. While this may be sufficient for the current students who

are mainly on business courses, it would not be sufficient if the student numbers increased, or for supporting computing courses, which is one of the College's intended developments. The College's senior managers are aware that it should keep the provision of IT facilities under active review.

2.19 The students informed the team that the current building is significantly better than the previous one occupied by the College. However, the current building is not adequate for students with mobility problems, although the new premises do have better access. There is no formal monitoring of students with learning difficulties, although the Student Support Manager does observe students and can deal with individual issues.

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.

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 publishes a range of publicity and marketing information about its higher education courses, including an e-prospectus, course factsheets and general information for prospective students, and students indicated to the team that they found the breadth and variety of information helpful and informative.

3.2 A general handbook produced by the College is given to students at induction, and course-specific information is contained in the awarding organisations' handbooks. These are detailed and provide important information for students. Module information and teaching timetables are made available for students but they are not collected in one dedicated course handbook. Students would benefit from such a collective set of course information and the team considers it desirable for the College to produce a set of dedicated programme handbooks to enhance the student learning experience.

3.3 The e-prospectus on the website contains individual course information and is largely accurate and up-to-date but lacks consistency in the information it provides: not all courses, for example, have explicit progression details. It would assist current and prospective students if the College made explicit the progression opportunities available in course literature on the website.

3.4 The website has been recently updated and has proved particularly useful to international students during their study, as the site includes a direct link to the UK Border Agency website providing the latest news on rules and regulations. The website also includes links to the College's accredited awarding organisations, which have been used by some students to check course material and level requirements.

3.5 Information on the website is usefully supplemented with other internally produced materials, such as the student and staff handbooks, academic timetables, induction presentations and a CD containing the awarding organisations' modules and assignments.

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

3.6 There are clear lines of responsibility in place for the production of public information, both in print and web-based, and for making changes to that information. Due to the small number of College staff, it is the responsibility of the Registrar and Quality Assurance Officer to produce public information, for example the e-prospectus and course factsheets. The Chief Executive Officer approves final versions of all public information. Course factsheet drafts are reviewed and discussed in liaison with the awarding organisations to ensure published course information meets the expectations for content and accuracy. The team concludes that the arrangements in place to ensure the accuracy and completeness of publicity and marketing material are sufficiently clear and robust. It considers that the rigour, and the clear reporting lines with which the College monitors its published material, are examples of good practice.

3.7 Pre-course information, such as the application form, guidance for students, and programme content, are placed on the website. As part of the application process, the College conducts interviews via online video interview, but the process is not consistently applied: only two of the level 7 students that the team met confirmed that they had undergone an online video interview. The level 4 students in the same meeting commented they had not received such an interview. The team recommends that the College provides a more consistent approach to carrying out interviews to better inform the selection process.

3.8 The College has an intake of students each semester. Each intake receives an induction presentation, general student handbook, academic calendar, reference to policies and procedures, and a course-specific CD. The induction and student handbook include information on College operational requirements, avoidance of plagiarism, assessment and appeals. The course-specific CD contains the awarding organisations' syllabus and modules, assignments, exam fees and dates, and resit information. Students confirmed the comprehensive nature of the induction process and felt that it had assisted their integration into the College. The team considers the thorough and supportive induction programme to be a feature of good practice. The support for students could be further enhanced through the production of course-specific handbooks to enhance their learning experience.

3.9 The College has recently started work on a pilot staff/student portal. It is hoped that the portal will include teaching and learning material for all lectures and courses. At the time of viewing the portal the team found limited information for students to access. The team concludes that the portal could be a very helpful resource, which is currently not fully exploited, and considers it desirable for the College to develop the portal further to exploit its potential to enhance the student experience. It could, for example, be used to make all policies and procedures available to staff and students.

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 plan³

SDS College action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight March 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the innovative and flexible use of four-hour teaching blocks (paragraph 2.1) 	<p>The College will continue to use four-hour teaching blocks effectively and flexibly for the maximum benefit of its students</p> <p>New tutors will be trained at induction on using four-hour teaching blocks</p> <p>At start and end of semester students' feedback will be taken to understand the students' need in the views on 4 hour teaching blocks</p>	Start of new academic year from September 2012	Academic Manager	<p>Student learning and engagement with tutors</p> <p>Positive student responses on their student feedback questionnaire</p> <p>Positive responses from tutors themselves and classroom observations</p>	Chief Executive Officer and Principal	<p>Student and tutor feedback questionnaire which will be taken twice at start and end of each semester</p> <p>Annual course evaluation</p>

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, in conjunction with the provider's awarding organisations.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the high level of pastoral support for students (paragraph 2.9) 	<p>The College will continue to develop its drop-in pastoral support in line with its own growth and development</p> <p>Students drop-in will be made available every Wednesday during the College working hours from September 2012 and every meeting will be logged</p> <p>Development and implementation of student course representative to liaise with Student Welfare Officer as and when necessary</p>	<p>Students/ staff meeting to be scheduled on fourth and ninth week of their semester</p> <p>Students' meeting feedback questionnaire will be reviewed at end of semester</p>	<p>Student Welfare Officer</p>	<p>Students/staff meeting to be scheduled on fourth and ninth week of their semester</p> <p>Changes in the College's management in accordance to collection of information from students</p> <p>Course representatives elected and will participate in course meetings</p>	<p>Chief Executive Officer/Principal/ Academic Manager</p>	<p>Minutes of meetings and student welfare log will be analysed for further evaluation</p> <p>Annual evaluation report</p> <p>Regular liaison between the two to share ideas and concerns</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the rigour, and the clear reporting lines, with which the College monitors its published marketing materials (paragraph 3.6) 	<p>Ensure the continuation of this rigorous approach to all public information is maintained and approve any changes with the department concerned</p> <p>More innovative ideas from students and staff will be encouraged</p>	<p>Monthly mandatory checks will be made from September 2012</p>	<p>Quality Assurance Officer</p>	<p>Clear, concise and accurate information</p>	<p>Chief Executive Officer/Principal Academic Manager</p>	<p>Ongoing regular reviews, changes and updates</p>

	and the accepted ideas and innovations will be rewarded accordingly					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the thorough and supportive induction programme (paragraph 3.8). 	Continue to develop in line with new courses and the merging of both national and international students	Each semester from September 2012	Student Welfare Officer, Academic Manager and Principal	Student induction pack continues to provide practical, pertinent and up-to-date course information, as well as general living advice and support for all our students	Chief Executive Officer/Principal	Student induction 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:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide greater clarity on senior staff roles and responsibilities (paragraph 1.2) 	<p>Staffing resources will be continually reviewed in accordance with the projected growth of the organisation</p> <p>With the proposed articulation with Leeds Metropolitan University (Validation Panel 28 June), we will be reviewing our current organogram and committee structure</p> <p>This will disseminate the responsibilities more specifically to the requirements</p>	<p>2 July</p> <p>Management meeting will discuss the staff resources required for new academic year starting from September 2012/each semester staff will be reviewed and staffing will be done accordingly</p> <p>September/October 2012 once courses are validated from the University</p>	<p>Principal, Human Resources and Quality Assurance Manager</p> <p>Academic Manager, SDS College/Leeds Metropolitan University coordinator</p>	<p>Improved structure with clearly defined disseminated roles</p> <p>Positive feedback and reports from validating and external reference points</p>	<p>Chief Executive Officer and Leeds Metropolitan University coordinator</p>	<p>Organisation structure</p> <p>Staff feedback each semester and annual course review</p> <p>Leeds Metropolitan annual review report/awarding organisations annual reports</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement a programme to support and develop staff understanding of 	<p>All staff will be expected to avail themselves of academic enhancement</p>	<p>Pilot work to start September 2012</p> <p>Will be done</p>	<p>Academic Manager/ Programme Coordinator</p>	<p>External awarding organisations reports and the College's annual evaluation</p>	<p>Chief Executive Officer and Principal</p>	<p>Staff internal workshop log, external training records and annual report from</p>

and engagement with external reference points (paragraph 1.7)	<p>opportunities available with the external awarding organisations, UK Border Agency, QAA, universities and share their understandings and good practices</p> <p>Staff internal workshops will be organised each semester</p>	<p>once a semester</p> <p>Staff good practices will be shared accordingly on the portal and in meetings</p>		<p>report</p> <p>Actions identified by external verifier in prior reports will have been addressed and will not appear in subsequent reports</p>		awarding organisations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consistently apply and monitor the marking and moderation of formative assessment (paragraph 1.10) 	<p>The College will develop formative assessments with clearly defined criteria which will be consistently monitored and applied</p> <p>Marking and moderation will continue to be conducted within the guidelines provided by the relevant awarding organisations and the College's own policy</p>	<p>Will be implementing from September 2012 Dates will be finalised by 29 June 2012</p> <p>Relevant formative and summative assessment dates will be included in course handbooks</p>	Academic Committee/ programme coordinators	<p>Implementation of formative assessment as planned, prior to start of the academic year</p> <p>Positive and constructive feedback given to students by tutors internal verifiers</p>	Chief Executive Officer and Principal	<p>Student progress and feedback</p> <p>Staff report/feedback on students' progress</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> further develop the processes for the evaluation of and response to external examiners' reports (paragraph 1.10) 	<p>College will actively request external verifier reports from awarding organisations</p> <p>External verifiers' feedback will be evaluated and action plans drawn up in conjunction with them</p>	<p>Implementing from September 2012, with ongoing reviews each semester</p>	<p>Academic Manager</p>	<p>Effective feedback to students enabling them to improve</p> <p>All the actions identified by external verifier will be addressed in timely fashion and will not appear on subsequent reports</p>	<p>Principal/ Academic Committee</p>	<p>External and internal verifiers, reports</p> <p>Student feedback</p> <p>Annual evaluation report</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a comprehensive process for the collection, analysis and dissemination of cohort data (paragraph 2.4) 	<p>College management information systems will be used to record all the assessment and progress data with analysed results disseminated according to cohort</p> <p>This has already been implemented and reports will be published in June 2012</p>	<p>Starting from June 2012, will be ongoing for each cohort</p>	<p>Academic Manager and Quality Assurance Manager</p>	<p>Analysed reports and trained staff who will be analysing the data for each cohort</p> <p>Accuracy of data will be success indicator</p>	<p>Chief Executive Officer/ Principal</p>	<p>Annual evaluation report</p> <p>Management meetings</p> <p>Minutes</p> <p>Generated data reports</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> introduce a more clearly articulated staff development system, to include a process of peer 	<p>Staff development policy will be reviewed and formal staff development programmes will be</p>	<p>Reviewed by August 2012</p>	<p>Academic Manager/ Programme Coordinator</p>	<p>Shared good teaching practise will offer greater learning</p>	<p>Chief Executive Officer/ Principal</p>	<p>Student Feedback/peer observation analysis</p>

<p>observation of teaching and sharing of good practice (paragraph 2.7)</p>	<p>developed in consultation with programme coordinators</p> <p>Staff seminars will be developed to create awareness among staff of the need to stay abreast of changes within the academic standards of QAA</p> <p>Formal peer observation schedule will be drafted early in each semester and good practice will be shared among the staff</p>			<p>opportunities to students</p> <p>Positive tutors, feedback on training and development</p> <p>Implementation of schedule</p> <p>Peer observation reports will be shared</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the admissions policy to ensure a greater degree of consistency in the use of online interviews (paragraph 2.8) 	<p>Secure English Language Test scores will be checked with the relevant awarding organisation</p> <p>All prospective students will be interviewed (online video link/ telephone/on campus)</p>	<p>From September 2012 intake</p>	<p>Quality Assurance Manager/ Principal/ Registrar/ Student Admissions</p>	<p>Verification of Secure English Language Test certificate with relevant awarding organisation</p> <p>International students with minimum English requirements 100% online</p>	<p>Chief Executive Officer</p>	<p>Annual evaluation report</p> <p>Student progress reports</p> <p>Awarding organisation feedback</p> <p>Application records</p>

	Admissions policy and procedure will be reviewed accordingly	Before every academic intake starting from September 2012		video interview or telephone interview New review dates on policy and procedures		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the provision of learning resources, including library provision (paragraph 2.16). 	<p>Information Technology students will have individual laptops</p> <p>E-library facility to be made available from September 2012</p> <p>Each course module will have two sets of reading and reference books</p>	<p>From September 2012 intake</p> <p>By December 2012</p>	Chief Executive Officer/ Academic Manager/ Quality Assurance Manager/ Principal/ awarding organisations	Student feedback with a positive student evaluation on learning resources	Chief Executive Officer	Annual evaluation report and student feedback
Desirable						
The team considers that it is desirable for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> further develop the academic personal tutor system (paragraph 2.10) 	Personal tutors will be allocated to all students, drop-in sessions on Wednesdays are for students to see their tutors as required	September 2012	Registrar and Academic Manager	List of each student who has seen their personal tutor	Chief Executive Officer/ Principal	Annual evaluation report and student feedback

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> further develop the student representation system and encourage wider participation (paragraph 2.11) 	<p>Student representation policy has already been developed and will be implemented for sessions starting from September 2012</p>	<p>December 2012 Students meeting twice every semester</p>	<p>Programme Coordinator and Student Welfare Officer</p>	<p>Staff/student meetings which will be twice every semester</p>	<p>Chief Executive Officer/ Principal</p>	<p>Annual evaluation report/ student feedback</p> <p>Staff/student meetings minutes</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produce a set of dedicated programme handbooks to enhance the student learning experience (paragraph 3.2) 	<p>Programme-specific handbooks for each awarding organisation are currently being developed from May 2012</p>	<p>Completed by September 2012</p>	<p>Registrar and Academic Manager</p>	<p>Programme-specific handbooks approved by awarding organisations and internal College management</p>	<p>Chief Executive Officer/ Principal</p>	<p>New course-specific handbooks</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> further develop the portal to exploit its potential to enhance the student experience (paragraph 3.9). 	<p>Student portal is developed for students and staff for each course</p> <p>Make portal common information sharing platform between staff and students</p> <p>All students' material will be made available to students a week in advance</p>	<p>To be completed by November 2012</p> <p>September 2012 academic session</p>	<p>Academic Manager and Information Technology Department</p>	<p>Easy access for students to common necessary documents</p> <p>Students will find all the required policies procedures and necessary help documents in their portal</p>	<p>Chief Executive Officer/ Principal</p>	<p>Student feedback/Annual evaluation report</p>

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: Handbook⁴](#)

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 1 to 8, with levels 4 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 providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks:

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

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

learning opportunities The provision made for students' learning, including planned **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.

provider An institution that offers courses of higher education, typically 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 providers for purposes of self-regulation; external ones are used and accepted throughout the higher education community for the checking of standards and quality.

quality See **academic quality**.

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

threshold academic 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.

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