EThames Graduate School

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

March 2012

Key findings about EThames Graduate School

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 the Universities of Bradford, Greenwich and Sunderland, Edexcel and the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality.

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

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**:

- software designed to aid assessment and eliminate plagiarism is effectively applied on the virtual learning environment as a teaching and learning tool for students (paragraph 2.14)
- the website facility for 'automatic translation' of English into more than 30 major languages is effective and helpful to international applicants (paragraph 3.2).

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:

- review the effectiveness of emerging structures, processes and procedures to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality (paragraph 1.3)
- review the effectiveness of staff development procedures (paragraph 2.12)
- review the provision of public information on fees by adopting a more structured method of quoting fees on the website (paragraph 3.7).

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

- continue to develop programme specifications for the Higher National programmes to clearly articulate how programmes will be managed, delivered and assessed (paragraph 1.5)
- map emerging policies and procedures against sections of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*) and emerging chapters of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 1.6)
- encourage course managers to respond formally to all external examiners' reports, in line with guidance in the Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External examining* (paragraph 1.11)
- formalise policies to underpin existing practice on student support (paragraph 2.11)

- provide hyperlinks to the websites of the awarding partners on the College's website (paragraph 3.1)
- formalise existing arrangements for assuring the style, accuracy and currency of the website and the virtual learning environment (paragraph 3.6).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the Review for Educational Oversight[1] (REO) conducted by QAA at EThames Graduate 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 Universities of Bradford, Greenwich and Sunderland, Edexcel and the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality. The review was carried out by Ms Camilla Bunt, Mr Paul Monroe and Mr Robert Wilkinson (reviewers) and Mr Ian Fleming (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 provider and the awarding bodies and organisation, and meetings with staff and students.

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

- *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*)
- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)
- subject benchmark statements.

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

EThames Graduate College (the College) was established in 2004 and opened premises in Ilford early in 2005. Within three years, growth of student numbers necessitated a move to larger premises at Gants Hill. In both cases, considerable investment was made to ensure a quality learning environment for students. A move to the College's current premises at South Quay near Canary Wharf was made in January 2011, but the Gants Hill premises were retained for possible future use. The College had over 2,900 students when it moved to Canary Wharf and there were 1,416 students at the time of the review.

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

Edexcel
- BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Business (NQF)
- BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Business
- BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Computing (NQF)
- BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Computing and System Development
- BTEC Level 5 Higher National Diploma in Hospitality Management
- BTEC Level 7 Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership

Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality
- CTH Level 4 Diploma in Hotel Management
- CTH Level 5 Advanced Diploma in Hotel Management

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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.

University of Bradford
- BSc (Hons) Health, Wellbeing and Social Care
- MSc Health and Social Care

University of Greenwich
- BSc (Hons) Computing (top up)
- BSc (Hons) Computing and Information Systems

University of Sunderland
- BSc (Hons) International Tourism and Hospitality Management (top up)
- BA (Hons) Accounting and Financial Management (top up)
- MBA
- MSc Tourism and Hospitality

The provider's stated responsibilities

The College works with three universities which validate its programmes at levels 6 and 7, and responsibilities are defined in the respective partnership agreements. Edexcel has approved the College to offer its programmes at levels 4, 5 and 7, and their internal assessment is managed by the College. In the case of the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality, the College's two remaining programmes are assessed externally by the awarding organisation.

Recent developments

The College aims to become a leading independent provider of higher education, both in the UK and globally. During the visit the team was informed that the College intended to conclude an agreement with one of its current university partners. In late April 2012 an agreement between the College and the University of Sunderland was reached with the Canary Wharf campus becoming the University of Sunderland London Campus. Remaining College provision will move to Gants Hill during summer 2012 and the College aims to seek taught degree awarding powers in the longer term. Internationally, the College opened a campus in Hyderabad in India early in 2011 and has plans for further overseas developments in Sri Lanka and Nigeria.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team and a written submission was prepared, which provided useful evidence for the team. In addition, a total of 18 students attended two meetings with the team during the review visit.

Detailed findings about EThames Graduate College

1　Academic standards

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

1.1　The College is a significant independent provider of full-time higher education programmes for international students. It was accredited by the British Accreditation Council (BAC) in 2005 and 2011, and currently holds highly trusted sponsor status under Tier 4 of the UK Border Agency arrangements. It offers a wide range of programmes validated by Edexcel and the Universities of Bradford, Greenwich and Sunderland, together with approval by the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality (CTH), although it is no longer recruiting to CTH programmes. The roles and responsibilities of the College in relation to its awarding bodies and organisation are clearly specified in the respective partnership agreements. For all programmes, the College is responsible for programme delivery, day-to-day management and student support. For its Edexcel provision, the College is also responsible for teaching materials, assessment and internal monitoring. For all university-validated programmes, the university partners are responsible for the provision of teaching materials, student assessment and monitoring of quality and standards, although for programmes validated by the Universities of Bradford and Greenwich, responsibility for first marking is devolved to the College, with samples at all levels being moderated by the Universities. The College has excellent relationships with its awarding bodies and reports are positive.

1.2　The College is effectively managed and has appropriate systems and processes in place for managing academic standards. Strategic responsibility for management of higher education resides with the Principal and the senior management team, with the Director of Studies and Academic Quality Manager having delegated responsibility for the development and implementation of policies and procedures. The College is organised on a school-based model, with provision offered over four academic terms through the School of Business and Finance, the School of Computing, the School of Health and Social Care, and the School of Tourism and Hospitality. Day-to-day responsibility for programmes rests with individual course managers and teaching teams who report to the Director of Studies. The College acknowledges that previous processes and procedures for the maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality have been somewhat informal and, in autumn 2011, introduced a more formal committee structure. An Academic Board has now assumed responsibility for development and implementation of academic strategy, and receives termly reports from course boards and the student progression board.The Academic Board, which is chaired by the Principal, and includes the Academic Registrar, course managers, elected staff and student representatives; meets termly. Course boards, chaired by individual course managers, include teaching staff and student representatives and meet at the start and end of each term, with course managers meeting with their course administrator weekly.

1.3　One of the goals within the College`s strategic plan is to continue to develop the academic framework within which its higher education provision is offered. The recently introduced committee structure has not yet been through a full academic cycle and it is recommended as advisable that the College continually reviews the effectiveness of its emerging structures, processes and procedures to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality.

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

1.4   All programmes delivered by the College align with the Academic Infrastructure. Programmes meet the expectations of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) at levels 4, 5, 6 and 7, and other external reference points. Programmes validated by the university partners are clearly articulated, use programme specifications and reflect appropriate subject benchmark statements, with award outcomes being appropriate to both the subject discipline and level of the award. For example, the BSc (Hons) Health, Wellbeing and Social Care programme offered by the University of Bradford is mapped against the Health Studies, Social Policy and Administration subject benchmark statement. Similarly, programmes in computing offered by the University of Greenwich reflect the Computing subject benchmark statement. The university partners make programme specifications available to all staff delivering on the programmes. External examiners confirm that the standards set by awards are appropriate to the level and effectively address subject benchmark statements.

1.5   Staff demonstrated awareness of FHEQ, subject benchmark statements and the *Code of practice.* For its Edexcel provision, the College is developing programme specifications which include appropriate award outcomes and make reference to subject benchmark statements. At this stage, these are incomplete and more detail on teaching, learning and assessment strategies would be appropriate. It is recommended as desirable that the College continues to develop programme specifications for its HNC/D provision to clearly articulate how they will be managed, delivered and assessed.

1.6   The College is in the process of redeveloping its quality assurance system for management of higher education provision and has clear policies for unfair academic practice and for the accreditation of prior learning. However, as policies and procedures are developed, the College has recognised that there is a need to engage more fully with the expectations of the *Code of practice*. It is recommended as desirable that emerging policies and procedures are mapped against relevant sections of the *Code of practice* and the emerging chapters of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

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

1.7   The College has effective relationships with its awarding bodies, with processes for programme approval varying between its university partners. The College liaises with its university partners in a variety of ways. University of Sunderland staff visit the College at least twice a year to meet with staff and students, whereas the University of Bradford appoints a Course Coordinator and the University of Greenwich appoints link tutors, who visit the College regularly to ensure that staff and students are aware of the awarding body's requirements, and that routine processes to meet the requirements of the partnership agreements are effective. At a strategic level, academic standards are monitored through regular meetings between senior managers of the College, and the production of annual monitoring reports in the format required by each university partner. All module descriptors and assessments include appropriate intended learning outcomes, which are clearly linked to assessment criteria.

1.8   The College adheres to the policies and procedures of its awarding bodies and organisation concerning internal verification and moderation. For all university programmes, the university partners are responsible for internal verification and moderation of student assessments. For Edexcel programmes, the College processes are based on those of the University of Sunderland. All assessments use a standardised College-wide format. They are internally verified by the course manager to ensure that assessment task and learning

outcomes are appropriate. A 10 per cent sample of assessed student work is internally moderated. External examiners' reports confirm the rigour of the process. All assessment is based on clear criteria and all assignments are submitted through the virtual learning environment and checked for plagiarism.

1.9   Details of the annual monitoring arrangements are set out in the quality assurance handbook. Course board meetings and student evaluations are conducted at the beginning and end of each term, with both student and staff views also being collected through council meetings. Course managers are expected to produce termly and annual synoptic reports, detailing emerging themes and issues and how they have been addressed to improve both standards and quality. These reports are reviewed by the Director of Studies who produces an overview report for the Academic Board. Feedback is provided by course managers and through the Student Council. Until recently, student evaluations were made available through the virtual learning environment, but response rates were disappointing. However, these have improved following a decision to undertake paper-based surveys during teaching time. The College recognises that the annual monitoring process has not always been consistently undertaken in all course areas and needs to be more formalised and strengthened.

1.10   Although the College undertakes annual reviews for its awarding bodies and organisation, until recently it has not undertaken its own internal review. The last BAC report 2011 recommended establishing key performance indicators and an internal review to inform action planning at a strategic level. The College intends to produce an overall synoptic academic report to inform the senior management team, with input from all stakeholders.

1.11   External examiners are appointed by the university partners and Edexcel respectively. All external examiners are complimentary about the standards and quality of the provision, and verify that student performance is comparable with that of similar provision elsewhere. External examiners' reports are forwarded to the College and used to inform annual course monitoring. For university-validated programmes, the universities are responsible for responding to external examiners' reports. For Edexcel programmes, the College responds only if an issue is identified, but the team considers that it would be desirable for course managers to respond formally to all Edexcel external examiners' reports, in line with guidance in the Quality Code, *Chapter B7: External examining*.

1.12   The College meets the requirements of its awarding bodies and organisation and has effective quality assurance arrangements for internal verification and moderation, and for annual course monitoring. A variety of informal mechanisms operate for the identification and dissemination of good practice. The recently introduced Academic Board may provide an opportunity to formalise arrangements in this context. The College has well defined quality assurance processes and procedures, a number of which have recently been strengthened and formalised, although they are not yet all clearly articulated in the quality assurance handbook.

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 bodies and organisation.

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2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 The arrangements described in paragraphs 1.1-1.6 also apply to the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.

2.2 The College has developed teaching and learning strategies within the framework set by its awarding bodies and organisation. A discrete strategy is currently under development for Edexcel programmes, which will clarify the way programmes are delivered and assessed. Programme management, assessment policies and the adoption of a new annual monitoring system demonstrate the College's commitment to the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning.

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

2.3 The arrangements described in paragraphs 1.4-1.6 also apply to the quality of learning opportunities. Despite not yet having received applications from students with disabilities, the College is aware of the guidance set out in the *Code of practice, Section 3*: *Disabled students*. The development of a formal protocol related to special learning needs would be a significant move towards the enhancement of learning opportunities.

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

2.4 The College data on student achievement is analysed by an individual student, rather than on a programme-by-programme basis. This is due to the frequency with which students move between programmes, many of which have four intakes per year. A satisfactory level of student achievement, demonstrated through examination board data, shows that the College is maintaining the quality of teaching and learning.

2.5 The College expects staff to be appropriately qualified and those teaching on university-validated programmes must be approved by the university partner. However, there is no requirement for staff to have a recognised teaching qualification. Staff are expected to remain up to date in their subject area, with requests for staff development being dealt with on an individual basis. The staff handbook recommends student-centred and interactive teaching, which should be adopted to ensure that learning is taking place. Students confirm that the quality of teaching and learning at the College is of a high quality and that teachers demonstrate a satisfactory level of pedagogical skills. Since 2011, teaching observation for all staff has been undertaken and issues raised are approached on an individual basis. End-of-programme tutors' reports effectively evaluate the teaching and learning taking place within programmes, and any issues raised are included in Course Board agendas.

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

2.6 The College induction programme is comprehensive and establishes a sound foundation for student learning. It includes an introduction to student handbooks, course resources, welfare provision, the tutorial system, assessment and protocols for assignment submission. Induction information is reinforced by reminders at the commencement of each programme. The College's virtual learning environment is introduced, with links to collaborative partners' online resources. As well as providing the structure, content and assessment strategies of each programme, the virtual learning environment gives students

a personal link to their tutor and access to plagiarism software. Course managers introduce programmes and programme content is included in online course handbooks. Rules for assessment and assignment submission are reinforced throughout the duration of programmes.

2.7   Edexcel external examiners confirm that students receive a satisfactory level of support and the College is committed to resolving the problems raised by students as they arise. Students are positive about the level of both academic and pastoral support they receive and state that a principal source of support is from course managers. Personal development plans are included in some programmes at undergraduate level and study skills support is provided at critical points in the learning process, such as at the start of each programme and when students move between programme levels.

2.8   The College has noted a rise in English language proficiency among applicants, although cases have occurred in which low levels of fluency in English have impinged on student achievement. The establishment of a School of English, together with a language support system currently in place, demonstrates a clear commitment to addressing this issue.

2.9   Feedback on assessment is comprehensive and the College has produced well designed feedback forms. Course managers monitor feedback to students and arising issues are incorporated into course synoptic reports. A summary of feedback evaluation from students is incorporated into end-of-programme tutors' reports. Student representatives from each programme attend both Course Boards and the Academic Board, and express satisfaction with the College's responses to issues raised. Student representatives form a Student Council, which meets termly, using facilities provided by the College. Students set the Council's terms of reference, and these relate to teaching and learning, resources and welfare. Social support is coordinated by the Student Council, which also arranges sporting, cultural and social events.

2.10   Student services provide a well structured system for guidance on welfare and other non-academic issues, although student satisfaction with this service is not universal. The College arranged additional training for student services staff following adverse comments in the student submission.

2.11   The welfare and academic support programme is comprehensive and sensitive to the College's culturally diverse student body. Support for employability and careers guidance is provided through both the library service and on an individual basis from tutors. Further enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities could be achieved through the development of formal policies to underpin existing practice on student support and the team considers it desirable that the College undertakes this.

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

2.12   There is currently no policy on staff development. The College has a well developed system for classroom observation, which has been used to identify staff development opportunities, but has no arrangements in place for staff appraisal, or the identification of individual staff development needs. A process for peer classroom observation is currently under discussion. New staff appointments are dependent upon the satisfactory results of teaching observation and a comprehensive staff induction process includes a mentoring system. There is no formal process for the dissemination of good teaching practice, although it was confirmed that this does take place on an informal basis, following course meetings at which good teaching practice has been identified. It is recommended as advisable that the

College develops a staff development policy that links lesson observations to staff appraisals and the identification of both individual and College-wide staff 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?

2.13   The College's premises provide a teaching environment which fully promotes student learning. Equipment in lecture rooms, computer provision and technical support are all accessible and are considered satisfactory by students. Students are satisfied with the facilities in computer laboratories and the associated networking infrastructure, as well as the level of technical support they receive. Although collaborative partners provide student access to their libraries and online resources, full use is not made of these facilities, despite a link being provided through the virtual learning environment. The College is currently addressing this issue.

2.14   The College gathers student feedback on resources and end-of-course tutors' reports include an evaluation of learning resource provision. The College's virtual learning environment is an effective teaching and learning tool and is used extensively by both teachers and students. The virtual learning environment provides access to assessment and plagiarism detection software, which is intended to manage assessment and to identify and control plagiarism. These are effective teaching and learning tools, particularly for international students, and the inventive way in which they have been applied is considered good practice. Overall, the College's teaching facilities, library and information technology provision are of a high standard and reflect the value the College places on the quality of its learning resources.

> 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's website is the main channel for communicating public information. It includes information relating to the College, its awarding bodies and organisation, individual Colleges, and programmes available in each of these Colleges. Programme details include programme structure, entry requirements, fees and admission procedures. There is an online application form and a 'latest news' section. This information is regularly updated to ensure accuracy, completeness and currency. There are currently no hypertext links to the awarding bodies and organisation's websites and the team recommends that it is desirable for the College to consider this as a future development.

3.2   The website is informative, colourful and user-friendly, and complies with the agreements made with university awarding partners and Edexcel in an effective manner. There are separate sections for postgraduate studies, undergraduate studies, English courses and international students. A facility for 'automatic translation' into more than thirty different major languages has recently been made available. This is very effective, will be of considerable help to potential international students, and is considered by the team to represent good practice.

3.3   The College publishes a number of information leaflets in hard copy. These are available to visitors and are sent to prospective students on application, generally through the website. The College produces hard copies of the prospectus, which is updated at regular intervals to maintain accuracy and currency. The information leaflets and the prospectus are clear, accurate and informative documents that support the website in providing effective communication with potential students, current students, staff, potential employers and other stakeholders.

3.4   Hard copies of information leaflets and the College's prospectus are provided to recruitment agencies in countries that have historically provided the majority of students registering with the College. The agencies act as educational consultants to the College and are required to have accreditation, where applicable, from the British Council, or other recognised forms of accreditation where not. The College assesses them annually against the completions of the students who were introduced by recruitment agencies.

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

3.5   The College effectively complies with its delegated responsibilities as set out in the agreements made with the awarding bodies and organisation. The information published is accurate, and reflects the nature and quality of the educational experience that students can expect if they enrol for a specific course.

3.6   Responsibility for programme and module information and public information provision is shared between the awarding bodies and the College. Details of responsibilities are represented to varying degrees in the partnership agreements with each awarding body and organisation. The delegated responsibilities sometimes require the College to produce the public information associated with a specific programme or partner, and sometimes require the College to use material provided by the awarding partner. In some cases, such as the University of Sunderland Master's in Business Administration, public information provided by the awarding partner is customised by the centre delivering the programme. The information provided is accurate and complete but, apart from auditing the prospectus and the website twice a year, there is no clearly defined policy to support what is done. It is recommended as desirable that a formal policy is introduced to support the effective procedures currently in use.

3.7   Fees are quoted for all programmes but the system used is not coherent and is sometimes open to misinterpretation. In some cases a fee is quoted only for international students and in other cases fees are quoted for one year or for the full three years of a programme. The last appears to contradict the claims made for the advantages of the flexibility gained by studying at the College. The team recommends as advisable that the College clarifies the situation by using a more structured method to quote fees on the website.

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]

EThames Graduate 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 review team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
• software designed to aid assessment and eliminate plagiarism is effectively applied on the virtual learning environment as a teaching and learning tool for students (paragraph 2.14)	Further refine the use of anti-plagiarism software and focus on its use as a developmental tool within teaching and learning rather than as a punitive tool Ensure that cases of unfair academic practice are reported to collaborative partners as appropriate Continue to monitor the incidence of suspected cases of plagiarism and other forms of unfair academic practice	August 2012 and ongoing	Director of Studies, Registrar and course managers	A decline in the incidence of cases of alleged plagiarism/unfair academic practice as reported by course managers and administrators	Academic Board and newly formed Operations Management Group	External examiner visits and Course Manager termly reports

[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 bodies and organisation.

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
• the website facility for 'automatic translation' of English into more than 30 major languages is effective and helpful to international applicants (paragraph 3.2).	Monitor the use of the 'automatic translation' facility Refine the facility as appropriate to meet the needs of stakeholders including prospective students, their parents and agents	August 2012 and ongoing	Director of Marketing	A measureable increase in the use of the facility	Senior Management Team and Operations Management Group	The extent to which this service is being used via access data and feedback from applications and stakeholders Registrar responsible
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:						
• review the effectiveness of emerging structures, processes and procedures to ensure the maintenance and enhancement of standards and quality (paragraph 1.3)	Develop and refine the existing structures, processes and procedures with a view to establishing revised versions by August 2012 Monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these during the 2012-13 academic year and adjust as required for the 2013-14 academic year This will be undertaken in parallel	August 2012 and ongoing	Director of Studies Registrar	A more robust and responsive set of structures, processes and procedures Student and staff feedback via annual monitoring processes both internally and via awarding bodies	Academic Board, Senior Management Team and Operations Management Group	Student feedback and Course Manager feedback will provide evidence that structures and procedures are operating effectively

	with developing the College's response to issues relating to the *Code of Ppractice/*the UK Quality Code					
• review the effectiveness of staff development procedures (paragraph 2.12)	Develop a more robust policy for staff development with an increased focus on scholarly activity and the encouragement of staff to complete a Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education (or equivalent) Adopt a peer-based system of classroom observation The College will move towards adopting a formal method of academic staff appraisals	August 2012 January 2013 for academic staff appraisal policy	Principal Director of Studies and course managers	Evidence of scholarly activity in the form of research work, case study development, continuing professional development activity and research degree registrations Enrolment for Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education and applications to join the Higher Education Academy Positive feedback from peer observation of teaching	Academic Board Senior Management Team	Annual staff development report to the Academic Board and Senior Management Team will provide an evaluation of the policy Student feedback should reflect the enhanced quality of teaching and learning as a result of peer observation Human Resources will provide an annual summative report of the effectiveness and outcomes of the appraisal process for academic staff

				Implementation of an academic staff appraisal policy during the 2012-13 academic year		
• review the provision of public information on fees by adopting a more structured method of quoting fees on the website (paragraph 3.7).	This has already been addressed (April 2012) and the information on the website has been restructured to improve the clarity of the fee information provided	Completed April 2012	Director of Marketing Principal	Improved feedback from prospective students, agents and other stakeholders reflecting the greater clarity of the revised website	Operations Management Group and Senior Management Team	
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:						
• continue to develop programme specifications for the Higher National programmes to clearly articulate how programmes will be managed, delivered and assessed (paragraph 1.5)	Revised and fully developed programmes specifications will be completed for all Higher National programmes and additionally for the Edexcel Level 7 Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership award	August 2012	Course managers and Director of Studies	Feedback from teaching staff regarding the value of enhanced specifications

Also feedback from students and external examiners | Operations Management Group and course boards | Feedback from course boards, student evaluations and external examiner reports

Analysis by Director of Studies as part of annual synoptic report for Academic Board |

• map emerging policies and procedures against sections of the *Code of practice* and emerging chapters of the UK Quality Code (paragraph 1.6)	Inclusion of the *Code of practice*/the UK Quality Code into revised policies and procedures which will be produced as a result of the QAA visit outcomes Consider the implications of the *Code of practice*/the UK Quality Code as it impacts on an independent provider of higher education	August 2012 and ongoing	Director of Studies, course managers and Principal	Successful implementation of the *Code of practice,* evidenced through improved staff and student feedback, comments from external examiners/ verifiers and general enhancement of the student learning experience Monitor that the *Code of practice*/ the UK Quality Code are being adhered to as part of annual synoptic report presented to the Academic Board	Operations Management Group, Senior Management Team and Academic Board	Annual synoptic report on quality and standards across all College provision Assessment by an independent external academic representative/ consultant at the end of the 2012-13 academic year
• encourage course managers to respond formally to all external examiners' reports, in line with guidance in the UK Quality Code, *Chapter B7:*	Course managers/ Director of Studies will respond to all Edexcel external examiner reports within six weeks of receipt	June 2012/ immediate	Course managers and Director of Studies	Responses to external examiners' reports will be received by both Operations Management Group and	Operations Management Group and Academic Board	Formal responses by Academic Board and Operations Management Group to course managers

External examining (paragraph 1.11)	This will also apply to any external examiner report received from any other awarding body			Academic Board Comment on the reports and responses will form part of the annual synoptic report		Edexcel regional quality office will receive copies of all responses and will be asked for comment
• formalise policies to underpin existing practice on student support (paragraph 2.11)	Develop a set of policies to formalise the system of student support provided to students These policies will be included in a revised Student Handbook Support staff training will be undertaken to ensure that all staff understand the policies so that they can be effectively implemented	August 2012	Principal Registrar Operations Manager	Feedback from students and student services staff on the implementation of these policies Records of dealing with issues relating to student support	Operations Management Group and Academic Board	Evaluation by the Director of Studies: Student feedback will provide evidence of the effectiveness of the more formalised approach to student support. course boards will also consider the effectiveness of the student support system An independent external evaluation of the revised set of policies will be undertaken after one year of operation

• provide hyperlinks to the websites of the awarding partners on the College's website (paragraph 3.1)	The appropriate hyperlinks will be provided	May/June 2012	Registrar and Director of Marketing	Hyperlinks have been added to the website on the awarding bodies page	Senior Management Team and Operations Management Group	Ensure the currency of hyperlinks is maintained This will be the responsibility of the Director of Marketing
• formalise existing arrangements for assuring the style, accuracy and currency of the website and the virtual learning environment (paragraph 3.6).	A formal policy to ensure the accuracy and currency of the website and the virtual learning environment will be developed	August 2012	Director of Marketing for the website; Registrar for the virtual learning environment	A continuously updated website and virtual learning environment with redundant material removed at the earliest opportunity	Senior Management Team and Operations Management Group	Implementation of this policy should lead to an enhanced and more consistent website and virtual learning environment which should improve the quality of the learning experience for existing students and the information available for prospective students and other stakeholders This will be evidenced by feedback from

						current students and other stakeholders
						Evaluation of the virtual learning environment carried out by each course manager, and for the website by the Registrar

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 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:

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[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.