



# **Anglia Ruskin University**

Institutional Review  
by the Quality Assurance Agency  
for Higher Education

November 2012

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## About this review

This is a report of an Institutional Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Anglia Ruskin University. The review took place on 26-30 November 2012 and was conducted by a team of six reviewers, as follows:

- Professor Elizabeth Barnes
- Dr Phil Cardew
- Mrs Rosemary Evans
- Professor Anne Peat
- Mr Nizam Uddin (student reviewer)
- Mr Stephen Murphy (review secretary).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Anglia Ruskin University and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. In this report the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - threshold academic standards<sup>1</sup>
  - the quality of learning opportunities
  - the quality of the information produced by the institution about its learning opportunities
  - the enhancement of learning opportunities
- identifies features of good practice
- makes recommendations
- affirms action that the institution is taking or plans to take
- provides commentaries on public information and the theme topic.

A summary of the [key findings](#) can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 6.

In reviewing Anglia Ruskin University the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The [theme](#) for this review is 'student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement'.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.<sup>2</sup> Background information about Anglia Ruskin University is given at the end of this report. A dedicated page of the website explains the method for [Institutional Review](#) of higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland<sup>3</sup> and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents.

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<sup>1</sup> For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus)

<sup>3</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/IRENI/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/IRENI/Pages/default.aspx)

## Key findings

This section summarises the QAA review team's key findings about Anglia Ruskin University.

### QAA's judgements about Anglia Ruskin University

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Anglia Ruskin University.

- Academic standards at the University **meet UK expectations** for threshold standards.
- Academic standards of the University's awards made under collaborative arrangements **do not meet UK expectations** for threshold standards.
- The quality of student learning opportunities at the University **meets UK expectations**.
- The quality of information produced by the University about its learning opportunities **meets UK expectations**.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities at the University **meets UK expectations**.

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following **features of good practice** at Anglia Ruskin University.

- The strategic support for the development of a research culture (paragraph 2.2).
- The effective engagement with campus-based students in quality processes and across all areas of operation (paragraph 2.92.9).
- The targeted, responsive and inclusive approach to supporting the diverse student body through the early stages of study (paragraph 2.17).
- The high-quality provision of inclusive student services (paragraph 2.24).
- The responsive and supportive programme of staff development across collaborative partnerships (paragraph 2.4).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team **recommends** Anglia Ruskin University, by the end of the 2012-13 academic year (unless otherwise specified), to:

- ensure that those students at the validated Associate College who enrolled after the initial transfer and before the start of the re-approved programmes will fully meet the University's standards for its awards (paragraph 2.35)
- secure increased oversight of the management of academic standards and quality within validated Associate Colleges during the early stages of the partnerships' operations (paragraph 2.36)
- review and revise the criteria and processes for the approval of new partners applying for designation as a validated Associate College, before the next approval of such a partner (paragraph 2.36)
- strengthen its mechanisms for the deliberative oversight of all collaborative provision (paragraph 2.38)
- develop and implement appropriate support and monitoring arrangements to underpin the projected growth of distance learning students (paragraph 2.39)

- ensure that an up-to-date, authoritative record of collaborative partnerships and programmes is publicly available (paragraph 2.37).

## Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms the following actions** that Anglia Ruskin University is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- The actions to develop the virtual learning environment to support all sites and modes of delivery (paragraph 2.7).
- The further development of mechanisms to capture and respond to student views across all sites and modes of delivery (paragraph 2.13).
- The project to make sophisticated management information available to all staff (paragraph 2.15).
- The continuation of the approach to embed employability within the curriculum (paragraph 2.22).
- The publication of course specification forms online (paragraph 3.3).
- The further development of the Corporate Plan as a strategic platform for enhancement (paragraph 4.1).

## Student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement

The University engages students as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the operational description and handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining [Institutional Review for England and Northern Ireland](#).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/IRENI/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/IRENI/Pages/default.aspx)

## About Anglia Ruskin University

The University was granted university title in 1992 and changed its name to Anglia Ruskin University in 2005. The University's main locations are in Cambridge and Chelmsford. The University employs around 2,200 members of staff.

In 2011-12 there were 28,629 students on taught courses and 474 students on research degree programmes. Of these, 2,074 were international students; 1,930 students were registered on distance learning programmes; and 8,390 students were studying for the University's awards through partner institutions - 18 partners overseas and 23 partners in the UK.

The University sets out the following vision.

- We are passionate about the advancement of knowledge and the education of students.
- We take university education in imaginative new directions.
- We are important to the region and want to be viewed in the UK and internationally as exceptional.
- Our key contribution is to the enhancement of social, cultural and economic wellbeing.

Since its last review by QAA in 2007, a number of major changes have taken place, including:

- a new vision and values statement, adopted in 2008, followed by new Corporate Plans for 2009-11 and then 2012-14
- investments in the learning environments, research and scholarly activity of its academic staff, the research infrastructure, and new management information tools
- achievement of Customer Service Excellence accreditation in 2011 and re-accreditation in 2012
- an increase in the international student population from 548 in 2008-09 to 2,074 in 2011-12
- introduction of Student Charters and a Student Satisfaction Improvement Group
- rationalisation of the undergraduate curriculum with reduction in the total number of courses and modules
- a new timetabling system.

Among its key challenges for the future, the University identified the following:

- changes to higher education policy and its ability to meet and manage the increased expectations of students
- engaging its entire academic community in research, scholarly activity or professional practice
- maintaining a positive student experience as the growth in on-campus student numbers continues
- continuing to ensure an equivalent student experience and association with Anglia Ruskin for the increasing number of off-campus students
- a greater use of emerging technologies by students and staff
- the embedding of employability and entrepreneurial skills across the range of its taught and research provision, in response to the changing skills needs

- continuing improvement in retention of students
- improving its performance in student satisfaction and in external performance indicators.

## Explanation of the findings about Anglia Ruskin University

This section explains the key findings of the review in more detail.<sup>5</sup>

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a [brief glossary](#) at the end of this report. A fuller [glossary of terms](#)<sup>6</sup> is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the [review method](#), also on the QAA website.<sup>7</sup>

### 1 Academic standards

#### Outcome

The academic standards at Anglia Ruskin University **meet UK expectations** for threshold standards. The team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

The academic standards of the University's awards made under collaborative arrangements **do not meet UK expectations** for threshold standards. The team's reasons for this judgement are given in Section 2: Quality of learning opportunities.

#### Meeting external qualifications benchmarks

1.1 The University's qualifications are allocated to the appropriate level in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). Reference is made to the FHEQ in the University's policies and procedural documentation for the approval and review of courses, and within course and module information for students. Levels of awards are clearly identified within the generic award descriptors in Academic Regulations and Research Degree Regulations. Guidance on the application of levels within the FHEQ is provided for staff in assessment regulations and generic marking criteria and generic marking standards.

#### Use of external examiners

1.2 The University makes scrupulous use of external examiners to ensure that academic standards are maintained. The role of external examiner is clearly defined and the processes for the nomination, appointment and induction of examiners operate effectively. External examiners' reports are considered and responded to appropriately by the University. The reports are now shared with students through the student portal, though this was a very recent innovation.

#### Assessment and standards

1.3 The University's design, approval, monitoring and review of assessment is effective in ensuring that students have the opportunity to demonstrate the learning outcomes of their awards. There is a clear policy for establishing assessment strategies at course level. Programme approval and review processes consider the effectiveness of assessment strategies in delivering module and programme learning outcomes. Research degree topics

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<sup>5</sup> The full body of evidence used to compile the report is not published. However it is available on request for inspection. Please contact QAA Reviews Group.

<sup>6</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary/pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary/pages/default.aspx)

<sup>7</sup> See note 4.



and proposals are managed through the Research Degree Regulations, which include generic assessment criteria related to the level of the award being made.

### **Setting and maintaining programme standards**

1.4 The University's policies and procedures for the design, approval, monitoring and review of programmes enable standards to be set and maintained and allow students to demonstrate learning outcomes of the award. The University has clear descriptions of its quality assurance processes.

1.5 Approval panels include the participation of members external to the University as well as members external to the faculty proposing the programmes. There is appropriate coordination with the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. There are clearly defined responsibilities for the sign-off of any conditions resulting from approval events.

1.6 The University has introduced changes to its annual monitoring process, placing greater emphasis on the use of management information. The process now involves a data-led meeting between heads of department, their senior staff and senior institutional colleagues. Institutional-level reporting from the process now occurs earlier in the academic year than had previously been possible. Feedback from staff involved in the new process has been positive. Senate maintains oversight of annual monitoring through a summary report of the outcomes.

1.7 The University's process for periodically reviewing the validity and relevance of programmes operates effectively. Panels include a student representative from the Students' Union as well as members external to the University. Reports of periodic review events and summaries contained within the minutes of major committees demonstrate that the process is effective, and is focused both on the maintenance of academic standards and the enhancement of student learning opportunities.

1.8 Modifications to programmes are managed through defined processes that differentiate between minor and major revisions. In addition to its standard quality assurance processes, the University also operates a Quality Enhancement Audit process, which is thematic in nature and can be triggered by issues raised through quality assurance processes or through discussions at faculty or University level committees.

### **Subject benchmarks**

1.9 Subject benchmark and qualification statements are used effectively in the University's processes for programme design, approval, delivery and review to inform the academic standards of awards. Reference is made to subject benchmark statements in the University's policies, in procedural documentation that relates to the approval and review of courses, and also in course and module information. Over 40 professional, statutory and regulatory bodies accredit or recognise the University's programmes.

## 2 Quality of learning opportunities

### Outcome

The quality of learning opportunities at Anglia Ruskin University **meets UK expectations**. The team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

### Professional standards for teaching and learning

2.1 The University's Corporate Plan includes goals, strategies and milestones in support of professional standards for teaching and support of learning. Relevant strategies in the Corporate Plan include the review of the staff appraisal system, implementation of workload allocation models, and the new teaching review scheme. Many of the strategies were quite recent in their implementation so it was too early to evaluate their success.

2.2 There has been a substantial investment in the research infrastructure to inform and enhance teaching. Research and scholarship is strongly embedded in the culture of the institution and is embraced by staff. The number of teaching staff with doctorates has increased beyond the target set. Over 70 per cent of academic staff are now research active. The University's strategic support for the development of a research culture is a **feature of good practice**.

2.3 New staff are well supported through a one-year probationary period, during which time their workload is adjusted, and they have a mentor. University staff without a teaching qualification are required to undertake a Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.

2.4 The curricula vitae of staff at associate colleges are reviewed by the University to ensure that they have the appropriate qualifications and expertise. The University's support for staff development is extended to staff at its associate colleges. The responsive and supportive programme of staff development across collaborative partnerships is a **feature of good practice**.

2.5 Postgraduate research students who undertake teaching are required to undertake a three-day preparatory course.

### Learning resources

2.6 The University's learning resources are appropriate and allow students to achieve the learning outcomes of their programmes. Significant investment has been made in the learning resources available to students. These resources include a well established Student Advisory Service, which continues to receive a high level of satisfaction from students. Each faculty has a student advisor and each student is allocated a personal tutor. Students speak highly of the support received; in particular, the support provided to students with disabilities.

2.7 The virtual learning environment continues to be developed following identification of inconsistencies in its use. It was recently revised and significant investment has been made to train staff in its use. The review team **affirms** the actions to develop the virtual learning environment to support all sites and modes of delivery.

2.8 The University has made significant capital investments in recent years, particularly in the Chelmsford and Cambridge campuses, the University Centre Peterborough and the

University Centre Harlow, improving the learning environment for students. A number of initiatives have been introduced to assist students to make effective use of the library service. Students speak highly of the service.

## **Student voice**

2.9 Students are enabled to make an effective contribution to the University's quality assurance processes. Students are well represented on institutional decision-making bodies, at both University and faculty levels. A culture of promoting the student voice is embedded at the institutional level, with representation also extended to working groups. There is student involvement in the academic appeals and assessment offences processes, as well as on ad hoc groups including the Student Charter, Student Retention, Good Academic Practice and Distance Learning working groups. The effective engagement with campus-based students in quality processes and across all areas of operation is a **feature of good practice**.

2.10 There is a mature relationship between the Students' Union and the University's senior management. Close and regular links exist, beyond representation on governance structures. The Vice-Chancellor meets annually with student course representatives and there are regular meetings between institutional staff and Students' Union staff and sabbatical officers. The University and the Students' Union jointly manage the student representatives system. Training and support is provided through two Student Representative Coordinators.

2.11 The University adopts a number of surveys to gather feedback from students about their learning experience. To address a downturn in response rates after a move to an online module evaluation survey, the University implemented a hybrid approach where students complete paper surveys which are then scanned immediately, enabling swift production and dissemination of evaluation reports.

2.12 The University acts on student feedback collected through analysis via its central committees as well as through action plans at local and departmental level. There is good use of the National Student Survey (NSS) results for the purposes of improving the student experience. NSS results play an important role and are disseminated at all levels across the institution. Programmes that perform relatively poorly in NSS are given particular attention. The Student Satisfaction Improvement Group meets monthly and exists to ensure that all student matters are taken forward.

2.13 The University has recognised that it needs to do more to hear the voice of student groups that are harder to reach, such as those studying through distance learning and collaborative partnerships. The review team **affirms** the further development of mechanisms to capture and respond to student views across all sites and modes of delivery.

## **Management information is used to improve quality and standards**

2.14 There is effective use of management information by the University to safeguard quality and standards and to promote the enhancement of student learning opportunities.

2.15 The University's investment in new management information systems is leading to improvements in the analysis of data relevant to the management of quality and standards. Training on how to use the system is being provided for staff. The data informs decision-making and leads to improvements being made. The system has proved particularly useful in providing analysis of the results from the National Student Survey. Not all management information is currently available to all staff across all delivery sites but

there are plans for this information to be rolled out. The review team **affirms** the project to make sophisticated management information available to all staff.

### **Admission to the University**

2.16 The University's policies and procedures for the admission of students are effective. Training for admissions staff has recently been revised. Staff involved in interviewing are expected to attend training on equal opportunities in recruitment and selection. All applicants to the University are asked to complete a survey. In 2011, the survey showed that the majority of applicants were satisfied or very satisfied with the admissions process, with 94 per cent of students receiving a student ID card and welcome pack two weeks before they started.

2.17 Students report that the admissions information received is informative and accurate. The University operates an extended induction approach for students so as to avoid information overload at the beginning of the course. The targeted, responsive and inclusive approach to supporting the diverse student body through the early stages of study is a **feature of good practice**.

### **Complaints and appeals**

2.18 The University has effective complaints and appeals procedures set out in the Rules, Regulations and Procedures for Students. There has been a slight increase in the number of complaints. All staff have undertaken the Customer Service Excellence training to help reduce the number of formal complaints. The Academic Appeals procedure revised in 2010-11 covers all taught programmes, including those at associate colleges. The intention is to achieve a greater level of consistency and a speeding up of the process. The revised procedure includes an internal resolution process within faculties and a filtering of academic appeals by the Academic Office.

2.19 Despite information being publicised at induction and via handbooks, a student experience survey showed that just under 50 per cent of respondents knew where to go if they wanted to make an academic appeal. Academic appeals are monitored annually and reported to a standing committee of Senate. A formal process has been put in place for research students to request a review of an examination decision.

### **Career advice and guidance**

2.20 The University's approach to career education, information, advice and guidance is quality assured through periodic external verification and through internal monitoring. The University has shown a commitment to the employability of its students. Following an external review in 2009, the Employability Service was transformed to support the Employability Strategy, and the commitment is further embedded in the Corporate Plan.

2.21 A Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey showed good results, demonstrating a rise in both the number of full and part-time students gaining employment or beginning further study within the first six months of leaving.

2.22 There is evidence of enterprise developments and the 'degrees at work' scheme showing how employers are engaged in providing opportunities for students. Significant developments regarding enterprise were noted. However, there is limited evidence to date of employability being embedded into the curriculum, other than where some departments involve industrial partners and where a programme incorporates placements. Although a very recent development, the launch of online course specifications now means that each

course provides an employability statement. The review team **affirms** the continuation of the approach to embed employability within the curriculum.

### **Supporting disabled students**

2.23 The University actively manages and enhances the quality of learning opportunities to enable the entitlements of disabled students to be met.

2.24 The University aims to ensure early intervention and to provide students with individually designed support packages. Students who met the review team confirmed that this happens in practice and that they felt very well supported by the University, commenting that where they had flagged up disabilities in their applications this information was acted upon swiftly. The University provides a wide network of support for students with disabilities. The high-quality provision of inclusive student services is a **feature of good practice**.

2.25 There are good mechanisms in place to support students with disabilities, starting as early as the pre-application process, through to the point of completion of the students' studies. Students appear to be aware of the support and where to go to receive it. All documentation relating to the availability of related services and support was thorough and clear.

### **Supporting international students**

2.26 The University offers an appropriate quality of learning opportunities to international students. The needs of international students appear to be well recognised and catered for within the University, with a wide range of supportive documentation and guidance made available to them, along with good and appropriate support mechanisms in place operationally. The University is monitoring and evaluating the ongoing need for improvements in this area, and is looking at ways of enhancing the good foundations already in place. With an increased focus on the recruitment of international students, the University is right to focus attention on how to further improve inclusiveness and the support of these students, and has a clear agenda to do so.

### **Supporting postgraduate research students**

2.27 Appropriate support and guidance is provided to enable postgraduate research students to complete their programmes of study and to enable staff involved in research programmes to fulfil their responsibilities. The number of postgraduate students has grown considerably during the last three years and the University is meeting the challenge of providing sufficient numbers of research supervisors.

2.28 The experience of the postgraduate research students appears to be good. The research environment within the University is similarly strong, and is being swiftly bolstered and developed, and there is evidence of sound practice. There is still a degree of ongoing work required in this area to ensure that these students feel as valued as others within the University community.

### **Learning delivered through collaborative arrangements**

2.29 The University has plans for a growth in the number of students studying for its awards through collaborative arrangements. Partnerships are in place with over 40 institutions, known as associate colleges. Three main models of collaboration are in operation: dual awards, franchised and validated.

2.30 Dual awards are collaborations between the University and another awarding body, where courses are jointly delivered and lead to a separate award from each institution. Associate colleges operating under a franchise agreement deliver the whole or part of one or more of the University's approved courses leading to an Anglia Ruskin University award. Those operating under a validation agreement design and deliver one or more courses approved by the University and are delegated responsibility for the management of the curriculum and academic governance.

2.31 Senate sets out the University's approach to collaborative activity in a Code of Practice and delegates responsibility for overseeing the management of collaborative arrangements to the Quality, Enhancement and Standards Committee (QESC), chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic). The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) oversees the operation of collaborative provision with support from the Academic Office. Day-to-day responsibilities for the management of collaborative provision are carried out by a range of staff at course, department and faculty levels, and are integrated - for franchised provision - within the same systems and processes used for on-campus provision.

2.32 The review team identified several weaknesses in the University's management of its collaborative provision. Of foremost concern were weaknesses in the recent management of associate colleges within the validated model of collaboration. More generally, the team had doubts about the effectiveness of the University's oversight of the management of all collaborative arrangements.

2.33 In respect of its management of validated associate colleges, the review team noted a recent example where the University's approval of a new arrangement demonstrated serious flaws. This centred on the approval of an existing franchised partner, together with the transfer of 18 distance-learning programmes that were previously validated by another UK university. Here the team found that a process to formally approve this arrangement, agreed by Senate, was insufficiently robust in that it:

- lacked the externality required to provide confidence that the academic standards and quality of those programmes transferring from another UK university were matched to Anglia Ruskin University's requirements
- reduced the usual level of scrutiny given to the academic standards of the proposed programmes and to the learning opportunities available to students
- did not confirm the validity, relevance or academic level of the programmes, nor the appropriateness of their curricula and assessment strategies.

2.34 At the time of the review visit, the University was implementing a plan to fully re-approve the programmes within 15 months of the initial transfer, but the re-approved programmes are not due to begin until 2013. By then, several quarterly student intakes to the transferred programmes will have taken place; at the time of the review there were already 670 students on these programmes. The review team noted that the University was apparently unaware of the potential risks to the maintenance of the standards of its academic credit and awards arising from students enrolling and being assessed on programmes that had not been fully scrutinised at module and programme levels.

2.35 Although the review team acknowledges that potential threats to academic standards within this interim arrangement are likely to be short-term, the team was concerned about the University's apparent lack of recognition, or mitigation, of the specific risks. By the end of the academic year 2012-13, the University is **recommended** to ensure that those students at the validated associate college who enrolled after the initial transfer and before the start of the re-approved programmes will fully meet the University's standards for its awards.

2.36 In this same partnership, the University approved, for the first time, the delegation of responsibilities for the management of the curriculum and academic governance. Since then, two other partner institutions have been approved to operate as validated associate colleges. Associate colleges are permitted to manage assessment processes at modular level, leading to a reduction in the direct oversight performed by the University. Quite apart from the risks created by the initial programme transfer process noted above, the University delegated these responsibilities for assessment to partners who had little or no experience of assessing students according to Anglia Ruskin's requirements. Since the review visit, the University informed QAA that senior staff from the Academic Office were assigned to provide additional support to each of the validated partners. Nevertheless, by the end of the academic year 2012-13, the University is **recommended** to secure increased oversight of the management of academic standards and quality within validated associate colleges during the early stages of the partnerships' operations. The University is also **recommended** to review and revise the criteria and processes for the approval of new partners applying for designation as a validated associate college, before the next approval of such a partner.

2.37 The review team found that the summary information published by the University about its collaborative partnerships and programmes was incomplete and inaccurate. On this basis, it was difficult to see how the University could maintain effective oversight of the activity through its deliberative structures. By the end of the 2012-13 academic year, the University is **recommended** to ensure that an up-to-date, authoritative record of collaborative partnerships and programmes is publicly available.

2.38 The review team found that the University's oversight through the committee structure of its collaborative activity, especially in respect of levels of risk, requires strengthening. This oversight would include, for example, partnerships that involve more than one faculty; new or recently changed partnerships; and partnerships that are in the process of closing. By the end of the 2012-13 academic year, the University is **recommended** to strengthen its mechanisms for the deliberative oversight of all collaborative provision.

### **Flexible, distributed and e-learning**

2.39 The University is expanding the range of flexible learning opportunities to its students. It has a programme for the development of online resources to facilitate study at a distance, and is pursuing an active implementation plan for rolling out the programme and ensuring that staff and students fully engage. A Distance Learning Working Group was established in May 2011 and has provided a valuable focus for the University in this area of provision. Given the stated intention of the University to expand to more than 10,000 students studying on distance learning or flexible off-campus provision by 2014, the University is **recommended**, by the end of the 2012-13 academic year, to develop and implement appropriate support and monitoring arrangements to underpin the projected growth of distance learning students.

### **Work-based and placement learning**

2.40 The University manages the quality of learning opportunities delivered through work-based and placement learning reasonably effectively, though student satisfaction data suggests that there is room for further development by the University in this area. There is clear documentation in place to support students, and training and guidance for staff in managing and supporting work-based learning and placements. There is also good work being undertaken by staff to develop meaningful and substantial links with employers.

## Student charter

2.41 The University publishes clear and comprehensive student charters setting out the mutual expectations of the institution and its students. The charters are specifically tailored to the various groups of the student community, thereby recognising their different needs. Students are introduced to the relevant charter through the induction process and have been represented in the processes for developing and reviewing them.

## 3 Information about learning opportunities

### Outcome

The information about learning opportunities produced by Anglia Ruskin University **meets UK expectations**. The intended audience finds the information about the learning opportunities offered is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The team's reasons for this conclusion are given below.

### Findings

3.1 The University publishes its key institutional strategies, policies and framework for managing academic quality and standards on its website. There are generally clear lines of responsibility for the production and sign-off of published information. Information on the Unistats website complies with HEFCE 2011/18 and there is an up-to-date and accessible Key Information Set. Students regard the information provided by the University as accurate.

3.2 Information for prospective students is fit for purpose and there is a high level of satisfaction with the University's handling of applications. Current students are provided with a broad range of useful and accessible information, including student charters, handbooks and module guides. Information is made available to students in a variety of formats and through various channels, such as the iCentre, campus information screens and the virtual learning environment.

3.3 At the time of the review visit, programme specifications, which the University calls course specification forms, were not yet publicly available though the review team was assured that, once technical issues were rectified, publication was imminent. The team **affirms** the publication of course specification forms online.

3.4 External examiners' reports have been shared with student representatives through course management committees and report summaries in students' module guides. The University now makes the full reports available to students online, though having been put in place only very recently, students were mostly unaware of this new facility.

3.5 Graduates are issued with an award certificate and a transcript of their academic performance in the form of a European Diploma Supplement. In 2012-13 the University is participating in the national project to develop the Higher Education Achievement Report, for implementation in 2013.

## 4 Enhancement of learning opportunities

### Outcome

The enhancement of learning opportunities at Anglia Ruskin University **meets UK expectations**. The team's reasons for this judgement are given below.



## Findings

4.1 The University's Corporate Plan, supported by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy; the Research and Scholarship Strategy; and the Employability Strategy, guides the enhancement of learning opportunities. There is evidence that the Corporate Plan is working very effectively as a tool for the deliberate development of the institution, and it is clear that its goals have permeated all levels of the institution, and in that sense it offers a foundation for embedding a strategic approach to enhancement. The review team saw some indications, such as the teacher review scheme, of a strategic approach. The team **affirms** the further development of the Corporate Plan as a strategic platform for enhancement.

4.2 There is a strong emphasis on the use of data as management information, and on its systematic integration with the setting and monitoring of strategic targets and into the functions of annual planning and appraisal.

4.3 The University recognises the important role staff play in delivering enhancement. New academic staff are required to undertake the Postgraduate Certificate in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education, and membership of the Higher Education Academy is promoted strongly. All staff are also required to undertake the Customer Service Excellence training, to help improve the student experience. The reward and recognition schemes available to academic and non-academic staff through the Vice-Chancellor's Award and the Students' Union's 'Made A Difference' awards also promotes a culture of enhancement.

4.4 The University has a number of mechanisms through which good practice is identified, supported and disseminated. The Anglia Learning and Teaching unit coordinates various activities. Leaders of courses scoring highly in the National Student Survey share their practice through papers given to institutional-level committees, which in turn share the information across the institution. There is a well attended annual Learning and Teaching Conference. Learning and Teaching grants are also made available to staff for enhancement projects.

4.5 Quality assurance procedures are used to identify opportunities for enhancement.

## 5 Theme: Student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement

Each academic year, specific themes relating to higher education provision in England and Northern Ireland are chosen for especial attention by QAA's Institutional Review teams. In the review of Anglia Ruskin University in 2012-13 the theme is Student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement.

### Innovations in student involvement in quality assurance and enhancement

5.1 The two Students' Union Student Representative Coordinators play an important role in the training and briefing of student representatives. All student representatives are expected to record the key points from the meetings they attend and these are subsequently fed into Students' Union quality monitoring reports.

5.2 Since 2010-11, a Students' Union sabbatical officer has been included on the panels carrying out periodic reviews. The feasibility of widening the pool of students eligible to sit on periodic review panels is being explored. The University has also proposed that a student representative should be included on programme approval panels. Students continue to be included as panel members in quality enhancement audits.

### **Staff experience of/participation in student involvement in quality**

5.3 As part of the University's 'Customer Service Excellence' approach, senior staff have engaged in 'Back to the Floor' visits to a variety of student-facing services and functions. One senior manager attended programme sub-committees as part of the process and as a result suggested changes to the committee to ensure better effectiveness of student representative input, including slimming down the agenda to make it more student-focused.

5.4 As part of a National Union of Students' project, the Students' Union hosted its first annual 'Made A Difference' Awards in May 2012. The awards recognised and awarded staff, for both academic and professional service, who have significantly improved the student experience. In advance of the last event, 1,095 nominations for the awards were submitted.

5.5 The Anglia Ruskin Initiative for Student Engagement (ARISE) is embedded within the Corporate Plan to ensure that staff understand what is required to improve the student experience. ARISE highlights and promotes student engagement with quality processes, including curriculum design. It has thus far prioritised the student representatives system, with the institution increasing funding for the 2012-13 academic year and changing the name of programme sub-committees to Course Management Committees (CMCs). Training has also been offered to chairs of CMCs to ensure that students are better engaged by making the meetings more 'student-centred'.

5.6 The Student Satisfaction Improvement Group helps to drive forward student matters and incorporates student representation. It meets on a monthly basis and works closely with the Student Experience Committee.

### **Acting on student contributions and 'closing the feedback loop'**

5.7 The University has been working to improve its communication with students about actions taken in response to their feedback. A number of initiatives have been taken to address this issue in recent years, including the introduction of the 'You said, we did' and 'Tell us' schemes, which were operated by Student Services. The University has also utilised information screens and kiosks to display important information to students, but has modified this approach in response to students' feedback that suggested these media were over-used.

5.8 Through a healthy presence on the University's deliberative structures, the student voice is heard and feedback is given through reporting back on actions from previous meetings. Many committees' agendas include a standing item in relation to student matters. Feedback from students led to the development of separate charters for distance learning and research degree students.

## Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to key terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Most terms also have formal 'operational' definitions. For example, pages 18-19 of the handbook for this review method give formal definitions of: threshold academic standards; learning opportunities; enhancement; and public information.

The handbook can be found on the QAA website at:

[www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/ireni-handbook.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/ireni-handbook.aspx).

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality:

[www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/pages/default.aspx).

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **Glossary** on the QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary/pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary/pages/default.aspx).

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

**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.

**credit(s)** A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education programmes of study, expressed as 'numbers of credits' at a specific level.

**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: *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland*.

**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.

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

**Quality Code** Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is being developed from 2011 to replace the **Academic Infrastructure** and will incorporate all its key elements, along with additional topics and overarching themes.

**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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**The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education**

Southgate House  
Southgate Street  
Gloucester  
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000  
Fax 01452 557070  
Email [comms@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:comms@qaa.ac.uk)  
Web [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)

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