



Organisational Learning Centre

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

February 2012

Key findings about Organisational Learning Centre

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

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

- the Centre has a systematic approach to staff development, which includes opportunities to study for higher qualifications and is directly linked to staff appraisal (paragraphs 2.4, 2.10, 2.11).

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:

- develop a more systematic, integrated monitoring and reporting structure for academic standards and quality (paragraphs 1.1 to 1.3)
- update its understanding and application of current Edexcel regulations and guidelines relating to academic standards and quality (paragraphs 1.6, 3.3)
- strengthen the role of the Programme Assessment Board in the annual quality monitoring cycle (paragraphs 1.7, 1.8)
- introduce an overarching learning and teaching strategy (paragraph 2.3).

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

- extend the pool of external advisers to provide additional independent external scrutiny within the annual audit/review process (paragraph 2.1)
- provide Higher National students with a single, more coherent set of published information about their programme (paragraph 3.3)
- develop a formal policy, with appropriate protocols, for the use of electronic media (paragraph 3.7)
- strengthen procedures for checking details, including the accuracy of English, within internally published information (paragraph 3.8).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at the Organisational Learning Centre (the provider). 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 Edexcel and the Institute of Credit Management. The review was carried out by Ms Claire Blanchard, Professor Geoffrey Elliott, Ms Deborah Trayhurn (reviewers) and Mr David Lewis (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 a range of internal documentation, such as: key policy, procedure and strategy statements, administrative procedures, committee terms of reference and records, teaching plans and schedules, assessed student work, student survey questionnaires, student records, statistical data, role descriptions and staff profiles. The team looked at physical resources and held meetings with staff and current students. External reports, including those of external examiners and the most recent British Accreditation Council inspection, were scrutinised.

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

- the Academic Infrastructure, with particular reference to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*) and *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)
- Qualifications and Credit Framework for England and Northern Ireland: level indicators and descriptors
- Institute of Credit Management: published unit syllabuses, assignment regulations and assessment criteria.

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

The Organisational Learning Centre (the Centre) is located in a listed former county police station near the centre of Bolton, Greater Manchester. Since 1998, the Centre has developed from a consulting and training organisation to being a provider of further and higher education. It offers a range of business and engineering courses, which are open to students from the UK and overseas. The provision includes Edexcel and City and Guilds awards, including Higher National Certificates and Diplomas, as well as a range of professional awards and short courses. English courses are also offered for overseas students wishing to improve their language skills.

The provision is organised within two academic faculties: business and management, and science and engineering. At the time of the review, there were 204 students on higher education programmes. Students on the Edexcel Higher National awards are full-time and currently recruited predominantly from India and Pakistan. Those on the Institute of Credit Management Diploma are in employment, studying part-time in the evenings and mostly from the north-west of England. These students are taught at the premises of a local university. There is a total of 20 teaching staff contributing regularly to the provision,

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

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

comprising six full-time and 14 part-time. A further 11 associate staff make occasional inputs to the teaching.

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

Edexcel

- HNC/HND Mechanical Engineering (3 students)
- HNC/HND Operations Engineering (Instrumentation and Control) (1 student)
- HNC/HND Electrical and Electronic Engineering (10 students)
- HNC/HND Business (54 students)
- BTEC Level 7 Award/Diploma/Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership (QCF level 7) (21 students)

Institute of Credit Management

- Diploma in Credit Management (QCF level 5) (15 students)

The provider's stated responsibilities

The Centre identifies significant differences in the responsibilities it has with its awarding body and organisation. In relation to Edexcel provision, the Centre has responsibility for teaching and assessment, as well as student recruitment, monitoring and support. It also undertakes quality assurance and staff development. The Centre has additional responsibilities, shared with Edexcel, for regulatory matters, staff scholarship, the monitoring of teaching quality, employer engagement, responding to student opinion and public information. In relation to the Institute of Credit Management Diploma, the Centre states that its responsibilities are significantly fewer. The awarding organisation is responsible for all summative assessments, library and learning resources and guidance on progression. The Centre retains responsibility for annual quality monitoring, academic support and staff development.

Recent developments

Although the Centre has capacity for growth, the number of overseas Tier 4 students has been restricted by recent UK Border Agency policies. During 2010-11, the civil disruption in Libya led to a significant loss of sponsored student numbers on the accelerated Higher National awards. At present, the Centre is exploring accommodation options with a view to opening a campus in central Manchester. This is seen as being attractive to overseas students, including a new European market. The BTEC Level 7 Award in Strategic Management and Leadership is a new programme introduced in 2011. A major short-term planning initiative is focused on the development of progression links with a number of publicly funded institutions in the region. This has resulted in negotiations with sixth form colleges for progression on to Centre awards, as well as with higher education institutions for onward progression to degree study. A formal, general memorandum of understanding has recently been signed with a major public university. Internally, continuous improvement programmes are targeted at student facilities and teacher professional development.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team, but were unable to do so. During the visit, the team held separate meetings with full and part-time students. These meetings provided the team with a range of useful insights into the provision and the students' experiences at the Centre.

Detailed findings about Organisational Learning Centre

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The arrangements for managing academic standards are straightforward and reflect the scale of the current provision and the history of the Centre. The Director of Academic Affairs has overall strategic and executive responsibility, and is supported in this by the Managing Director in his role as Quality Management Representative. A separate programme manager is appointed for the Institute of Credit Management provision. The Director of Academic Affairs and the Quality Management Representative share responsibility for implementing the quality management system that is part of the Centre's overall business system model. An external adviser carries out an annual review, which is focused on specific themes or topics.

1.2 The Centre has mechanisms for following up issues that are identified through its quality management procedures, for example by external examiners, students or arising from the annual reviews. Major improvement projects are initiated for substantive actions, while other matters are dealt with through the weekly operations meetings, which are open to all staff. The 2011 external examiner for the business programmes raised a number of operational issues, including the need to revise systems for recording the internal verification of assignments and assessment decisions. The minutes confirm that these matters are being followed up in the weekly operational meetings, although with little significant differentiation from more routine administrative items. Substantial academic issues, such as those raised by external examiners, should be given more prominence and detail in the records of the meetings. As a minimum, targets, achievement dates and detailed progress reports should be recorded as a basis for ensuring that progress can be tracked through internal or external monitoring procedures.

1.3 The arrangements for the monitoring and reporting of academic standards and quality require further development. The functions of the Quality Management Representative, annual reviews, assessment boards, external examiners and students' inputs, improvement projects and operations meetings are all of value, but are not executed with consistent rigour. They are generally reactive and the operational links between them is not always transparent or capable of being tracked. Collectively, the arrangements give limited attention to overall programmes and to reporting formally on the academic provision overall. There is a clear need to implement a systematic monitoring and reporting structure that strengthens and integrates the current component parts, introduces a more reflective strategic annual review component and ensures full reporting to the Board of Directors.

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

1.4 The Centre's use of external reference points is largely determined by the two awarding partners, who provide the standard academic units that make up the programmes on offer. This ensures that award levels are appropriately mapped to *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and the Qualifications and Credit Framework for England and Northern Ireland. The websites of the awarding partners are used as the authoritative sources of information for checking up to date requirements. The Centre is inspected by the British Accreditation Council and was reapproved in August 2011.

1.5 The Centre has enhanced premier standing with the Institute of Credit Management and its staff play an active part in the Institute's subject updating and scholarship development activities. Student achievement is regularly considered against national benchmark statements maintained by the awarding organisation.

1.6 The Centre has long-standing and successful experience of providing and managing Edexcel Higher National awards. There is a need now to update its understanding and implementation of current Edexcel regulations and guidelines, for example in relation to programme specifications, the operation of external examiners and assessment. There is a lack of clarity in some areas of assessment activity, including assessment methods, such as the use of examinations, reassessments and referrals, and the independence of the appeals process. Recent external examiner reports for business signal the need to maintain engagement with the awarding body, update staff on the Quality Credit Framework reference points for level 7 awards and redesign auditing and recording systems. The Centre should now ensure that its staff have a full understanding of and are able to implement current Edexcel regulations and guidelines relating to academic standards and quality, including the production and use of programme specifications. Higher National students are confident and well informed about individual taught units, but do not have a clear view of their overall awards.

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

1.7 Assessments on the Diploma in Credit Management programme are marked by the awarding organisation. The scrutiny of assessed student work from the Higher National awards shows that the verification procedures are being carried out consistently. All assignments are verified prior to issue and a sample of assessments is second-marked. Staff acknowledge that there is a need to extend the use of second marking to support academic standards. The external examiners appointed by the awarding organisation undertake external verification through a process of unit sampling. All of the reports available for the review confirm that internal assessment grades are secure. The documentation provided by the Centre indicates that there is no standard procedure for responding to external examiners' reports.

1.8 Unit assessment boards and programme assessment boards are the formal meetings for ratifying the achievements of students on the Edexcel awards. They also offer an opportunity for teaching and administrative staff to discuss and identify opportunities for improving teaching and learning practice. The external examiners' feedback on the sampling of an assessed student is considered as part of the Unit Assessment Board meetings. However, no records of external examiners' scrutiny or attendance at the programme level board were in the assessment documentation made available by the Centre. Nor is it clear that the board undertakes regular systematic analysis of trends in student achievement and progression. The Centre should strengthen the role of its Programme Assessment Board by ensuring that these matters are formally recorded in future minutes. It should also liaise with the awarding body with a view to having the external examiner present at board meetings. This would offer an important safeguard for ensuring regular external oversight and compliance with the awarding body's regulations.

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 body and awarding organisation.

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 for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities are as described in paragraph 1.1. The extensive and detailed quality management system is designed to ensure compliance with the requirements of the International Organization for Standardization ISO 9001. The major improvement projects, which have included teaching and learning and student facilities, are clearly scheduled and appropriately monitored. The Centre should consider strengthening the external adviser's role, which has already provided valuable inputs to quality assurance and enhancement. This might be helped by expanding its pool of advisers to give additional independent scrutiny to the annual review process.

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

2.2 The use of external reference points is as described in paragraph 1.4. An internal code of practice, based on that published by Edexcel, is used as a basis for assuring the quality of the Higher National awards. The Centre asserts that it has mapped the provision and its delivery against the relevant sections of the Academic Infrastructure and the *Code of practice*, but no formal evidence for this was available for the review.

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

2.3 The Centre has a clear and consistently promoted vision of its approach to learning and teaching, which can be summarised as learning by doing. This approach is understood and supported by staff and students, but is not currently embodied in a published learning and teaching strategy. Priority should be given to producing such a strategy, through which the Centre can articulate its approaches as a reference for all participants. The policy might draw upon nationally available guidelines and should incorporate related aspects of delivery, such as assessment and feedback, peer observation, staff development and the use of learning resources, including technological learning platforms.

2.4 There are ample opportunities for academic staff to develop learning and teaching skills through peer observations and staff development. Most units are taught by one member of staff, but full-time staff interact regularly by observing each other teaching. Senior staff undertake more formal observations of the teaching of new and junior colleagues, providing written feedback on a standard form. These formal observations are used to support improvement and identify development needs. Two members of the academic staff provide learning and teaching support for students and staff.

2.5 Students from across all awards attest to the quality of the teaching they receive, including the knowledge, expertise and commitment of the academic staff. This evaluation is echoed in the reports of external examiners for the Higher National programmes.

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

2.6 The responsibility for student support resides with the Centre. Overall responsibility rests with the Student Welfare Officer, but two Student Support Officers and the Administration Officer also contribute to the overall arrangements for academic and welfare support. All are able to contribute English language support to students. In addition to these

designated roles, unit tutors, particularly younger staff, are the first point of contact for resolving most student concerns. Where matters require more general consideration, they can be dealt with promptly at the weekly operations meetings. Students confirm that they feel well supported in their studies and on welfare matters. They are able to approach any member of academic or administrative staff, formally or informally, when they need advice or information.

2.7 Students receive a thorough induction and are well informed about most aspects of their studies, including unit descriptions and assessment schedules. They are less aware of the arrangements for representation and the twice-yearly student forums.

2.8 The Centre maintains a weekly check on the academic progress of students, a process commended in external examiners' reports. This allows staff to intervene promptly with support when it is needed. There is a clear system for the submission of assignments and recording, with receipts being issued. There is a challenge in overcoming the tendency for some overseas students not to submit their assignments for assessment, even when they have been completed.

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

2.9 Professional staff development is a clear priority for the Centre and has been strengthened through one of the key improvement projects. A formal staff development plan provides encouragement for academic staff to obtain teaching and level 7 qualifications. A staff development form is used to ensure that developments are directly linked to staff appraisal and reflect training needs' analyses. A range of valuable development activities has taken place for academic and administrative staff, with detailed records being maintained in central personnel files. For example, a number of staff are studying for additional qualifications for teaching in the lifelong learning sector with a local publicly-funded university. A teaching and learning group acts as a vehicle for sharing good practice.

2.10 Staff development is further enhanced by colleagues from the local university teaching at the Centre as part of their postgraduate teaching certificate course. This brings new ideas and an external perspective to staff discussion about learning and teaching. One recent initiative has resulted in a postgraduate student teacher using a social networking site to support delivery, including interactive group learning. With further analysis and technical support, this development has the potential to inform future learning and teaching across the provision.

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

2.11 The strategy for appointing staff, plus the support for continuous professional development, has ensured a well balanced academic staff base. Staff are well qualified and experienced, with a good mix of full and part-time employees, some bringing valuable knowledge of industry and commerce. The staff development plan is helping to ensure that core full-time staff have suitable teaching qualifications.

2.12 The provision is located in a spacious but inflexible listed Victorian building. The Centre has a number of strategies for enhancing the learning environment, including the improvement project for student facilities. More modern premises are being rented in central Manchester to expand and complement the existing space. The Diploma in Credit

Management course is taught on the campus of a local university, which meets the needs of students and their employers.

2.13 Computing suites with internet access are provided for student use, including one drop-in facility, but the building prevents the installation of a wireless network. The Centre operates a small, modestly resourced library, which includes core texts for the Higher National awards. To supplement the library, students are given advice on the use of local public libraries, which many use. All required texts for the credit management diploma are provided by the awarding organisation as part of the course costs.

2.14 Students are generally appreciative of the learning resources, although they do note the lack of electronic media for teaching and communication, including a virtual learning environment. Recent initiatives by individual staff into the use of social networking media for learning and general communication might form the basis for future developments and policy.

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 Centre produces a range of clear and accurate information about its provision for potential and existing students, staff, overseas recruitment agents and the general public. It has responsibility for the prospectus, website, course brochures, student handbook, unit guides and all assignment and examination briefing materials for the Edexcel awards. Students confirm that study costs are made clear in advance documentation, with no unexpected charges being incurred after enrolment. Prior to joining the programmes, most students use the website for information on the Centre and the provision. The lack of a virtual learning environment means that, following enrolment, programme information, including the student handbook and extensive unit guides, is published in paper form only. Students are made aware of issues relating to academic misconduct, including plagiarism, at induction and subsequently in unit documentation. A range of useful information is published for staff, including a set of policies and procedures, and a staff handbook.

3.2 Communication with students operates within the context of a published communications policy. A student-Centre agreement is a long-established and important document for students. It is produced for each student at the time of enrolment and spells out the ethos of the Centre, the standard of education, an overview timetable and the Centre's expectations, including attendance and good behaviour. The agreement is reviewed annually to ensure its currency.

3.3 Students express satisfaction with the amount and clarity of the information they receive about their studies and the Centre. They are given a student handbook, called an information booklet, which includes helpful advice about living in the UK and the locality, as well as information on accommodation, libraries and equipment needs. They are also provided with clear and useful unit information, but are not well informed about their programmes overall. The Centre should consider ways to provide students with a single, coherent set of information about the academic arrangements and requirements for their programme. This should include the purpose of the programme specifications for their

Higher National awards and how to access them, as well as an explicit statement on appeals. The latter might usefully be developed with reference to the *Code of practice, Section 5: Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters*. Such information might sensibly be brought together in the student handbook. Students on the Diploma in Credit Management programme have access to a clear description of their appeals procedure.

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

3.4 The arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness are clear and generally effective. The Managing Director is also the Public Relations Officer and has overall responsibility for all external and internal communications relating to policies, procedures and statistical data. The clear prospectus is revised annually to ensure its currency. Higher National teaching teams draft the content of course brochures. This is then checked by the Managing Director before being uploaded to the website or produced in hard copy for distribution. The Operations Director approves the annually updated student handbook. The Centre ensures that credit management students are made aware of the formal information published directly by the awarding organisation.

3.5 The Centre is engaged in a variety of activities relating to overseas recruitment and takes care to ensure that the information being used is accurate. It attends educational events arranged by recruitment agents and talks directly to potential students when possible. The operation of agents is subject to clear contracts and guidance. Regular communication is maintained with agents through video conferencing and email, and all correspondence is recorded and quality controlled.

3.6 Students do not have a formal role in the production or monitoring of public information. However, they do feel able to approach staff to feed back on the information they receive and speak positively about the accuracy of materials in general.

3.7 The Centre publishes an informative termly newsletter on its website, reporting on recent and forthcoming activities. It has also begun to utilise online social networking sites to promote its courses and communicate with students. A potentially valuable teaching initiative is being tested for one unit, also using a major social networking site. The Centre should consider producing a formal policy, including appropriate protocols, for overseeing the use and content of these new media developments.

3.8 The procedures for ensuring the accuracy of the information provided internally, including that on the well used noticeboards, are generally effective. However, there is a need to strengthen the processes for checking details, including the accuracy of English. Such minor errors, including spelling mistakes, are evident in the assignment documentation provided for students.

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

Action plan³

Organisational Learning Centre action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight in February 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Centre has a systematic approach to staff development, which includes opportunities to study for higher qualifications and is directly linked to staff appraisal (paragraphs 2.4, 2.10, 2.11). 	Continue with the staff development already underway and push for completion of the level 7 units and Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector course which the staff are currently preparing	Next staff appraisals in June 2012	Director of Academic Affairs	100% completion of actions agreed at staff appraisal meetings	Director of Operations	Staff Appraisal Meetings Staff Development Logs
Advisable						
The team considers that it is advisable for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a more systematic, integrated monitoring and reporting structure for 	Consolidate academic actions – including those raised by external examiners/annual	First report June 2012	Tutors, academic and educational support staff, admin	Academic issues actioned and reported separately, including targets,	Board of Directors Quality	Self evaluation within the monthly meeting Six month rolling

³ The provider has been required to develop this action plan to follow up on good practice and address any recommendations arising from the review. QAA monitors progress against the action plan, in conjunction with the provider's awarding organisations.

academic standards and quality (paragraphs 1.1 to 1.3)	reviews / Unit Assessment Board/Programme Assessment Board/ student body meetings into a monthly Academic Meeting, minuted and actioned separately to weekly operations meetings		Led by Director of Academic Affairs	achievement dates and detailed progress reports	Management Representative	review at Board Meetings
• update its understanding and application of current Edexcel regulations and guidelines relating to academic standards and quality (paragraphs 1.6, 3.3)	Audit by Edexcel external examiner Attend a seminar hosted by Edexcel regarding regulations and academic standards Produce programme specifications for all students	20 April 2012 19 May 2012 End of June 2012	Director of Academic Affairs Tutors and academic staff	Staff are fully aware of Edexcel guidelines regarding: programme specifications, assessment and reassessment, and appeals All students have received and are fully aware of their programme specifications	Quality Management Representative Edexcel external examiner	Monthly Academic meetings Edexcel external audits Student body meetings
• strengthen the role of the Programme Assessment Board in the annual quality monitoring cycle (paragraphs 1.7, 1.8)	Include within Programme Assessment Board minutes a systematic analysis of trends in student progression and achievement, and include Programme	25 April 2012	Admin, tutors and academic staff Director of Academic Affairs	The role of the Programme Assessment Board is strengthened, covering in detail student progression and achievement	Chairman of Board of Programme Assessment	Retrospective review in each Programme Assessment Board Annual review at Board Meetings

	<p>Assessment Board issues within the monthly Academic Meetings</p> <p>Invite the Edexcel external examiner to attend Programme Assessment Board meetings</p>			<p>Actions and resulting progress from Programme Assessment Boards are integrated with the Monthly Academic Meetings</p>		
• introduce an overarching learning and teaching strategy (paragraph 2.3).	Introduce a new overarching Learning and Teaching Strategy which builds upon the College's vision of learning by doing and incorporating delivery, assessment and feedback, peer observation, staff development and learning resources and technological learning platforms	September 2012	Quality Management Representative Tutors and academic staff	Staff appraisals to demonstrate learning by doing is understood This feeds into staff development, including the Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector course and peer observations	Operations Director	Board of Directors review all strategy documents to ensure that all staff are following the new strategy, and to evaluate its impact upon teaching practice
The team considers that it is desirable for the provider to:						
• extend the pool of external advisers to provide additional independent external scrutiny within the annual audit/review process	Bring in a greater range of external advisers and hold review development meetings with college staff in regards to enhancing the quality	August 2012 (during academic summer break)	Quality Management Representative Director of Academic Affairs	New practices adopted each year Input into quality reviews from a wide range of	Board of Directors	Quarterly Teaching and Learning Meetings will cover the impact of bringing in and the advice of the

(paragraph 2.1)	of learning opportunities provided to students			external advisers		wider range of external advisers.
• provide Higher National students with a single, more coherent set of published information about their programme (paragraph 3.3)	Produce programme specifications for all students, to be included in a programme handbook which includes all student information, including information on complaints and appeals	End of June 2012	Educational support and academic staff	All students have received their student handbook and are fully aware of their programme specifications, including all student information	Quality Management Representative	Student Body Meeting
• develop a formal policy, with appropriate protocols, for the use of electronic media (paragraph 3.7)	Develop a formal policy, with appropriate protocols, for the College's use of electronic and internet-based learning media	End of June 2012	Quality Management Representative, educational support and academic staff	The new policy is disseminated throughout the College, and is used in practice for all electronic and internet-based learning media	Board of Directors	Policies are reviewed annually by Board of Directors
• strengthen procedures for checking details, including the accuracy of English, within internally published information (paragraph 3.8).	Introduce and publish internally a new process task for the proofing of internal documents	End of May 2012	Administrative staff	The process task is followed during the creation of internal documents, the error rate of these documents is reduced	Quality Management Representative	Quality Management Representative audited under ISO 9001 Quality Management Systems (International Standards Organisation)

About QAA

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

QAA's aims are to:

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

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

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

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

Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

framework for higher education qualifications A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

quality See **academic quality**.

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

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

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

RG 890 05/12

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

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