



## **College of IT & E-Commerce**

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

May 2012

## Key findings about College of IT & E-Commerce

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in May 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, the University of Bolton and Teesside University.

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

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 courses it delivers.

### Good practice

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

- the responsiveness of the College's managers in ensuring good access to learning materials (paragraph 2.15).

### 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:

- clearly identify responsibility for the management of academic standards within the Senior Management Team (paragraph 1.1)
- revise the operation of Academic Board to make it more responsive to issues encountered at programme and course level (paragraph 1.2)
- ensure that programme committees adhere to their terms of reference (paragraph 1.3)
- review the interpretation, presentation and analysis of student progression and withdrawal data so that the performance of students can be more effectively monitored (paragraph 1.5)
- review the communication protocols with Teesside University (paragraph 1.6)
- review the content and terms of reference of the Quality Manual to ensure that it functions as a central point of reference (paragraphs 2.2 and 3.4)
- clarify the procedures for detecting academic misconduct to ensure that they align with the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students* (paragraph 2.5)
- review the peer observation process to ensure a system which can deliver appropriate staff development (paragraph 2.7)
- ensure effective staff recruitment procedures so that staff meet specific course expertise requirements (paragraph 2.9)
- clarify the amount and expectations of feedback support to students in drafting assignments and apply these consistently (paragraph 2.12).

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

- produce more detailed minutes which record the closure of actions at meetings (paragraph 1.4)
- implement more detailed recording of individual student achievement in the Edexcel Assessment Board (paragraph 1.8)
- develop a teaching and learning strategy (paragraph 2.6)
- introduce opportunities for staff to obtain teaching qualifications (paragraph 2.14)
- improve procedures for version control management and publication of public documents (paragraph 3.3)
- clarify and bring to the attention of students the requirements for work placement in all its public information (paragraph 3.5).

## About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)<sup>1</sup> (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at the College of IT & E-Commerce (the provider; the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to courses of study that the provider delivers on behalf of Edexcel, the University of Bolton and Teesside University. The review was carried out by Dr Glenn Barr, Professor Hastings Mckenzie, Mr Charles Sanders, Ms Deborah Trayhurn (reviewers), and Mr Martin Hill (coordinator).

The review team (the team) conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).<sup>2</sup> Evidence in support of the review included documentation supplied by the provider and awarding bodies, meetings with staff and students, and reports of reviews by QAA.

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

- the Academic Infrastructure.

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

The College of IT & E-Commerce (the College) was founded in 2002 to teach information technology courses in east London before transferring in 2003 to larger premises and expanding its operations to teach a range of information technology, business, and computing courses to international students. In 2008-09, a significant rise in student numbers and staff led to the acquisition of further premises in south-east London. Following consultation and feedback with staff and students regarding location and facilities, a new study site in Acton was acquired in 2010. This has become the head office for the College and the Meridian Business School, and the principal study site for the College. The College is a separate legal entity, but is in common ownership with the Meridian Business School. They operate as a single organisation, with common management and staff, and shared operational and quality assurance processes.

There are 214 full-time students studying at the College, with 10 full-time and two part-time academic staff supported by five full-time and one part-time support staff.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following full-time higher education courses, listed beneath their awarding bodies:

### University of Bolton

- BA Business Management (3 students)
- MBA Management (2 students)

### Edexcel

- HND Business (106 students)
- HND Computing (37 students)
- HND Hospitality Management (34 students)
- HND Health and Social Care (15 students)
- Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership (3 students)

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<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4).

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx).

### **Teesside University**

- BSc Computer Science (14 students)

### **The provider's stated responsibilities**

The College has a common vision with the Meridian Business School, which is 'to be a gateway to affordable UK higher education'. The College is providing diploma and degree courses to international students. The threefold mission of the College is to provide affordable further and higher education opportunities for international students in the UK. It aims to work with its awarding bodies to provide qualifications which meet the appropriate standards and expectations. It strives to encourage students to achieve their full potential.

### **Recent developments**

The Off-Campus Delivery Collaboration Agreement with the University of Bolton began in May 2011, and was to be operative until 30 October 2015. The College recruited two cohorts of students to five of the courses covered by the agreement in June and October 2011. The agreement specifies a 'flying faculty' model whereby the University is fully responsible for academic standards and provides core teaching on the courses and controls all assessments. The University of Bolton wrote to the College in December 2011 stating that they are terminating the agreement. A 'teach out plan' for the five students remaining on the University of Bolton courses was drawn up with the University in January 2012.

From January 2012 the College decided not to offer the HND Hospitality or the HND Health and Social Care.

### **Students' contribution to the review**

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. In order to collect the opinions and views from the student body, a small group of students from the College and the Meridian Business School prepared a questionnaire under the auspices of an Internal Focus Group of students. The questions were discussed and devised by all the members of the focus group and further discussed with the student body of both the College and the School. The questionnaires were distributed by the class representatives to all the students in both the College and the School and 40 responses were received. The students collated these into a professionally presented report. They also produced a DVD of clips of comments from a number of their colleagues. The team was impressed with the quality of the report and found its contents very informative and helpful. The team also met two groups of students at the College, and was able to gather further views from these discussions.

## Detailed findings about the College of IT & E-Commerce

### 1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The Senior Management Team consists of the Managing Director supported by three advisers who are not permanent full-time employees. No specific individual within the Senior Management Team has effective oversight of the management of academic standards. The team was informed that the Director of Studies was deemed to hold primary responsibility for the maintenance of standards and quality, although he is not a member of the Senior Management Team. The team noted that the College was facing challenges that could potentially threaten the standards of awards. These would have benefitted from careful management and oversight at senior level. It is advisable that the College clearly identifies responsibility for the management of academic standards within the Senior Management Team.

1.2 With the help of its advisers, the College has recently implemented a revised committee structure. The Academic Board met for the first time in March 2011. It is chaired by the Academic Advisor and has three subordinate programme committees. Programme committees were stated to be chaired by the Director of Studies, but in practice this was devolved to programme leaders. The reporting structure requires quarterly reports and an annual report from each programme committee to be considered at the Academic Board. The team found the quarterly reports to be lacking in details. In particular, the use of management information systems data was poor and focused mainly on attendance but not achievement. The Academic Board's consideration of the reports was at times cursory. Issues occurring at course level can fail to reach, and be responded to by, the Academic Board and the Senior Management Team in a timely manner. It is advisable that the College revises the operation of Academic Board to make it more responsive to issues encountered at programme and course level.

1.3 The three programme committees oversee groups of courses, and are separately responsible for adherence to the respective quality frameworks of the awarding bodies. Consequently, each programme team has unspecified autonomy to determine aspects of local academic policy without reference to the Academic Board. The University of Bolton and the Teesside University programme committees were infrequently convened and had only met twice. The College states in its self-evaluation, and confirmed in a staff meeting, that formal responsibility for academic standards rests with Academic Board. It is advisable that programme committees adhere to their terms of reference, meet frequently enough for the effective conduct of business, and identify what actions require approval from the Academic Board.

1.4 Minute-taking at committees is insufficient in detail and thoroughness. The recording and closure of actions at committees is unreliable. For example, the termination of the University of Bolton collaboration, which was notified to the College in December 2011, did not feature at the Academic Board until three months later. The team noted that some students were still unaware of the termination of the collaboration. The University of Bolton Programme Committee ceased to meet after the expiration of the agreement and the College could not evidence how students studying on those courses would be supported. The team received a document outlining options that were available for the teach-out of continuing students. This had been negotiated with the University of Bolton, although an agreement had yet to be reached over which specific course of action to take. It is desirable

that the College produces more detailed minutes, which record and, where appropriate, ensure the closure of actions at meetings.

1.5 The College was unable to demonstrate to the team that they could produce meaningful data regarding student progression and withdrawal. Definitions of progression and completion were confusing and, in certain circumstances, either term could mean withdrawal. The College does not make effective use of management information as part of this reporting process and there is no use of higher education sector data as a comparative measure of student achievement. Academic Board does monitor attendance data and similar discussions were also evident at programme level. However, Academic Board and programme teams were unable to consider student data that might enable proactive management of emerging issues affecting academic standards. It is advisable that the College reviews the interpretation, presentation and analysis of student progression and withdrawal data.

1.6 The College has not received an annual report or an external examiner's report for the BSc Computer Science collaboration with Teesside University. The College's internal audit in July 2011 noted that the Teesside documentation was incomplete. Academic Board also recorded that the matter required addressing as soon as possible. At the time of the review, the College had still not received the paperwork. It is advisable that the College reviews the communication protocols with Teesside University.

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

1.7 The College had recently trained its staff in the Academic Infrastructure, although it was acknowledged that formal engagement was in its early days. Consequently, the College is reliant on the quality assurance systems of its university partners to provide an appropriate framework for standards. For Edexcel courses, the team is reliant upon the generic Edexcel guidance. The Edexcel Programme Leader regularly attends training sessions, and leads the HND courses team effectively in this respect. The College is encouraging further training of staff regarding the Academic Infrastructure.

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

1.8 The three programme teams each operate differing systems of moderation and verification. The Edexcel course tutors meet regularly with the Programme Leader at the Programme Committee. This committee convenes periodically as an Assessment Board to formally consider students' marks and awards. When conducting Edexcel Assessment Boards, the award information was available and key issues were considered. However, the specific grades achieved, and the details of students who had failed to achieve an award but left, were not formally recorded. It is desirable that there is more detailed recording of individual student achievement in the Edexcel Assessment Board.

1.9 In collaboration with Teesside University, the College staff deliver course content and perform the first marking of all assessments. The assessments are then sent to the University for second marking and moderation. While there is dialogue between the College and the Teesside University course team, the feedback received is informal. Communication protocols could be improved to ensure a two-way discussion between the partners. The University of Bolton collaboration operates on a 'flying faculty' basis. The College staff are responsible for the tutoring of students outside of the two-day intensive delivery by the University staff. Moderation and verification of work is evident and the team was able to determine that the University of Bolton's quality framework is being effectively operated.

The College is effective in designing assessment, first marking and the verification of assessed work on the Edexcel courses.

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

## 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 memoranda of understanding with Teesside and Bolton Universities detail the responsibilities and partnership arrangements for managing the quality of learning opportunities. The delivery of courses is explained in paragraph 1.9. As stated in paragraph 1.3, most decisions on the quality of learning opportunities are taken at programme level. Retrospective and partial consideration is often given to quality matters at the Academic Board and programme committees meetings. Formal consideration of the learning experience is fragmented and under-developed. The team was informed that the emerging role of the Director of Studies will assist in developing quality assurance practices. As stated in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.3, the College may wish to develop this role and strengthen its practices to enhance the quality of learning opportunities.

2.2 The Quality Manual contains elements of the quality assurance process but is incomplete and lacks coherence. For example, it does not include reference to the annual quality assurance cycle, although this is included in the Academic Planner. It is unclear why certain procedures, such as course development and validation and policies, are included while others are not. It is advisable that the College reviews the content and terms of reference of the Quality Manual to ensure that it provides a comprehensive reference document.

2.3 The consideration by programme committees of statistics other than attendance data is variable. Student achievement statistics is little used by the College. The team found that concerns about high student achievement made by Teesside University were not clearly followed through with confirmed actions. As noted in paragraph 1.5, data reporting mechanisms should be reviewed to ensure that student achievement is carefully considered.

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

2.4 As noted in paragraph 1.7, the College relies on its awarding bodies to align its policies and procedures with the Academic Infrastructure.

2.5 Robust procedures to detect and investigate alleged cases of plagiarism are in place for courses awarded by the Universities of Teesside and Bolton. However, the team saw examples of work identified as plagiarised for which records of subsequent actions were unavailable, and an example of plagiarism which, despite having been assessed and internally verified, remained undetected. The College recognises that its procedures require strengthening and has taken steps to improve staff briefing and documentation, and is purchasing plagiarism detection software. Currently, there is no formal monitoring of cases of academic misconduct. It is advisable for the College to clarify the procedures for detecting academic misconduct to ensure that they reflect the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*), Section 6: *Assessment of students*.

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

2.6 The College does not have a single overarching teaching and learning strategy or a policy statement outlining its approach to teaching and learning, but seeks to meet the approaches adopted by its awarding bodies. This results in a less active and coordinated presentation of the College's own approaches. Developments in teaching and learning, such as the use of technology-supported learning, wider learning experiences, and staff development, are fragmented. This makes the monitoring and review of the management and enhancement of the student learning experience difficult. It is desirable that the College develops a teaching and learning strategy that could enhance practice.

2.7 The College has a process of peer observation of teaching and tutoring staff. Programme leaders determine schedules and observation teams. However, the structure of the form used is unfocused, making its use in assuring quality and enhancement limited. The forms do not provide opportunity for those observed to record their response and reflection on the observation activity. Many of the forms viewed by the team were incomplete. Overall, the process is not fully used. It is advisable for the College to review the peer observation process to ensure a robust system which can deliver appropriate staff development.

2.8 Various mechanisms are employed to ensure that students' views are heard and acted upon. Elected student representatives attend course and programme committee meetings and are represented on Academic Board. Student surveys undertaken at the end of modules produce feedback for programme committees and feed into the quality assurance cycle. The 'You said, We did' campaign conducted through the intranet allows students to comment on and note responses and actions taken on a variety of College issues.

2.9 The College has a staff recruitment policy. New appointments receive a generic induction. All new staff are approved by the awarding bodies for teaching on their courses. The College claims that it has a rigorous approach to staff appointments and that the awarding bodies approve the academic qualifications of the new staff. However, the process did not initially identify that a member of staff employed to teach on the HND Health and Social Care lacked appropriate contemporary practice experience, necessitating remedial action from the College with new staff appointments. It is advisable that the College ensures effective staff recruitment procedures so that staff meet specific course expertise requirements.

2.10 In August 2011, the external examiner for the HND Health and Social Care reported on the need for students to engage directly in workplace practice, albeit on a voluntary basis, to meet the intended learning outcomes for core units. Consequently, the Programme Leader introduced the expectation for students to gain enhanced Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) clearance. Students were informed of this. The team was informed that most of the students have gained CRB clearance. The external examiner subsequently commended the team for their response.

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

2.11 Responsibility for student support and welfare rests with the programme leaders, supported by the Compliance Team staff. Regular meetings of the Compliance Team allow the sharing of information with programme leaders. Students do not have personal tutors, but they feel well supported by staff. Additional time for personal support can be gained through bookings with staff or by using external services support. Students receive thorough induction programmes and are generally well informed about their work at the College.

Induction programmes include opportunities to undertake additional English language study. Staff are available to support students with learning or other special needs.

2.12 Students consider the academic support and guidance that they gained from staff at the College to be substantial. They indicated that formative drafting and resubmission procedures were encouraged. However, the team found no clear expectation of the level of formative feedback on assessment given to students, and noted the potential for inconsistent approaches. It is advisable that the College clarifies the amount and expectations of feedback support to students in drafting assignments and applies these systematically across all programmes.

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

2.13 The College offers well attended internal staff development sessions to provide information and sharing of good practice across courses. External consultants have delivered training days in conflict management, problem solving and the Academic Infrastructure. The university awarding bodies ensure that staff are familiar with their regulations, assessment protocols, and e-resources.

2.14 Staff maintain the currency of their knowledge and engage with the academic community through membership of professional bodies. The College is supporting staff membership of the Higher Education Academy to strengthen such engagement. Teaching staff are well qualified with almost all staff either having, or undertaking, a master's or doctor's degree. Relatively few staff have teaching qualifications. The College had agreed to support staff on teacher education programmes, but the withdrawal of the partnership with the University of Bolton has delayed these plans. It is desirable that the College introduces opportunities for staff to obtain teaching qualifications.

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

2.15 External examiners confirm that resources are sufficient to support learning. The course approval processes of awarding bodies identify the appropriateness of physical, staff and electronic resources. Programme teams plan resource needs before the start of a semester, and as part of their quarterly reporting cycle. Significant improvements have been made to library space, book stock, e-journals and wireless access. The student written submission identifies high levels of satisfaction with resources at the College and students who met with the team concurred. Students make extensive use of the awarding bodies' virtual learning environments to access learning materials and, in particular, electronic provision of periodicals. The College's virtual learning environment is a new development for which significant improvements are planned. The team considers that the responsiveness of the College's managers in ensuring good access to academic materials is good practice.

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 easily navigable website, e-prospectus and student handbook provide a wide range of information for students and other stakeholders. Information is clearly presented, covering areas such as the College mission and core values, programmes of study, learning facilities, regulatory requirements, accredited partners, welfare support and entry requirements. The student handbook provided during the induction process contains further information about the College, including health and safety, and the responsibilities of students and staff. Students consider the information they receive to be realistic, relevant and sufficient. The website information on studying in the UK only lists websites where generic information can be accessed. A more student-focused approach outlining learning styles, local information about cultural and social activities would be beneficial to students and would reflect the support the College provides.

3.2 The College's intranet, although still under development, provides a wide range of information and materials for students and staff, including course handbooks, lecture notes, course specifications, assessments, timetables and the Academic Planner. Course handbooks are provided electronically for each course. For Edexcel courses, these mainly comprise course specification information rather than an overview of what and how the student will study and be assessed. Staff use the intranet for student contact, providing feedback, access to teaching and learning materials and information about social events. The College aims to develop the site as a fully functioning virtual learning environment in the near future.

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

3.3 The process for ensuring the accuracy of public information is not formalised and may involve several members of the College management. Programme leaders check the information for their programmes which is approved by the Director of Studies who is responsible for all academic information. Non-academic documents are approved by the Operations Manager and signed off by the Legal and Compliance Advisor. Responsibility for ensuring that information relating to awarding bodies is complete, accurate and compliant rests with the Director of Studies. The College indicated it has a current version control policy, but it is unclear how this operates, as some public documents contain errors. It is desirable for the College to improve procedures for version control management and the publication of all its public documents.

3.4 The College has a range of policies and procedures which are published in the Quality Manual, the prospectus, student handbook and on the College website. The style and accuracy of policies and procedures is variable with some policies reading more as procedures, while other policies have no relevant procedures.

3.5 Students on the HND Health and Social Care are required to complete a compulsory period of work experience, albeit on a voluntary basis, and require enhanced CRB clearance in order to undertake this. The website and e-prospectus make no clear reference to these issues or the costs. It is desirable that the College clarifies and brings to the attention of students the requirements for work placement on the website, in the e-prospectus and in the course specification.

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

## Action plan<sup>3</sup>

The College of IT & E-Commerce action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight, May 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The review team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the responsiveness of the College's managers in ensuring good access to learning materials (paragraph 2.15).</li> </ul>	Continuous development and review of learning materials	From June 2012	Director of Studies	Wider provision of learning materials on demand	Academic Board	Feedback from students, staff and awarding bodies
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clearly identify responsibility for the management of academic standards within the Senior Management Team (paragraph 1.1)</li> </ul>	A member of the senior management team will be identified as being responsible for academic standards	September 2012	Managing Director	Responsibility of the Senior Management Team as reflected in the Academic Board minutes	Academic Board	Feedback and reports from awarding bodies and annual reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>revise the operation of Academic Board</li> </ul>	Action points at programme level to	September 2012	Director of Studies	Academic Board minutes reflect	Academic Board	Minutes of the Academic Board

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

to make it more responsive to issues encountered at programme and course level (paragraph 1.2)	form agenda points for Academic Board meetings			discussion and closure of action points raised at the programme and course level		and Programme Committee Meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that programme committees adhere to their terms of reference (paragraph 1.3)</li> </ul>	Terms of reference clarified and Academic Board meeting agenda point to check compliance	September 2012	Director of Studies	Academic Board will ensure the programme committee's compliance with the terms of reference	Academic Board	External reports, Programme Committee and Academic Board minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review the interpretation, presentation and analysis of student progression and withdrawal data so that the performance of students can be more effectively monitored (paragraph 1.5)</li> </ul>	Developing customised tool for robust progression analysis data	May 2013	Director of Studies	Operations Manager will ensure the appropriateness of the progression statistics	Academic Board	Quarterly reports and periodic student statistics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review the communication protocols with Teesside University (paragraph 1.6)</li> </ul>	Process initiated	From June 2012	Director of Studies and programme leaders	Regular and timely exchange of information between Programme Leader and Link Tutor at Teesside University	Academic Board	External reports and annual reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review the content and terms of reference of the Quality Manual to ensure that it</li> </ul>	Revised and updated version of the Quality Manual will be presented to the Academic Board	January 2013	Director of Studies	The Quality Manual used by staff as central document for policy guidance	Academic Board	The Quality Manual and annual reports

functions as a central point of reference (paragraphs 2.2 and 3.4)						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clarify the procedures for detecting academic misconduct to ensure that they align with the <i>Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students</i> (paragraph 2.5)</li> </ul>	Unfair means handling procedure to be published and form part of the Quality Manual	September 2012	Director of Studies	Reduction in the percentage of unfair practices	Academic Board	Completed student work and Assessment  Reports from the awarding bodies
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review the peer observation process to ensure a system which can deliver appropriate staff development (paragraph 2.7)</li> </ul>	Action points coming out of peer reviews to be presented to the Academic Board to consider staff development issues	From June 2012	Director of Studies	Peer review data part of staff development programme	Academic Board	Peer review reports and staff development records
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure effective staff recruitment procedures so that staff meet specific course expertise requirements (paragraph 2.9)</li> </ul>	Adhere to the expectation as recommended by the awarding bodies	From June 2012	Director of Studies	Staff meet the requirement of the awarding bodies	Academic Board	External verifier reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clarify the amount and expectations of feedback support to students in drafting assignments and apply these</li> </ul>	Policy on feedback support to be incorporated in the Quality Manual	From September 2012	Director of Studies	Internal and external assessment boards	Academic Board	Review of published formative feedback guidance

consistently (paragraph 2.12).						
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>produce more detailed minutes which record the closure of actions at meetings (paragraph 1.4)</li> </ul>	Action taken reports to be mandatory to ensure all outstanding issues find closure	From July 2012	Director of Studies and programme leaders	Minutes reflect closure of action points	Academic Board	Programme Committee and Academic Board minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>implement more detailed recording of individual student achievement in the Edexcel Assessment Board (paragraph 1.8)</li> </ul>	Customised tool to record and analyse the individual student achievement	December 2012	Director of Studies and programme leaders	Data available on demand	Academic Board	Periodic student statistics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop a teaching and learning strategy (paragraph 2.6)</li> </ul>	Consultation process with peers and experts, leading to production of teaching and learning strategy	From July 2012	Director of Studies	Staff adhere to the Teaching and Learning Strategy Guide for programme delivery	Academic Board	Quality Manual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>introduce opportunities for staff to obtain teaching qualifications (paragraph 2.14)</li> </ul>	Opportunities explored and reported to the Academic Board, leading to production of a policy to sponsor staff for teaching qualifications	From July 2012	Director of Studies	Majority of the staff hold teaching qualifications	Academic Board	Enhanced staff profiles

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improve procedures for version control management and publication of public documents (paragraph 3.3)</li> </ul>	Version control software	March 2013	Operations Manager	Consistent version control	Academic Board	All reports and publications to be checked for version control and signed off by Operations Manager
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clarify and bring to the attention of students the requirements for work placement in all its public information (paragraph 3.5).</li> </ul>	Public information being revised to reflect specific requirements of the awarding bodies	From July 2012	Director of Studies	Updated and current public information	Academic Board	Website and marketing brochures to be checked and signed off by Director of Studies

## 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary). Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook<sup>4</sup>](#)

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

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

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

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

**awarding organisation** An organisation with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the Qualifications and Credit Framework for England and Northern Ireland (these qualifications are at levels 1 to 8, with levels 4 and above being classed as 'higher education').

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>4</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**quality** See **academic quality**.

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

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

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

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