



# **Kaplan Financial**

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

May 2012

## Key findings about Kaplan Financial

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 the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy, the Chartered Institute of Taxation, the Chartered Alternative Investment Analyst Association, the Global Association of Risk Professionals, the University of London, and Liverpool John Moores 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 and organisations.

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

## Good practice

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

- the comprehensive and systematic way in which staff development is planned and delivered (paragraph 2.14)
- the well designed and effective process which assures the accuracy and completeness of published information (paragraph 3.11).

## Recommendations

The team has also identified a number of **recommendations** for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

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

- monitor the way in which the quality manual is used to ensure effective management of academic standards across all centres (paragraph 1.6)
- consider the inclusion of student representatives on the Academic Council (paragraph 1.7)
- consider extending the analysis of management information to include gender balance, ethnicity and disability (paragraph 1.12)
- consider a more systematic approach when communicating actions taken as a result of student feedback (paragraph 2.7)
- consider the development of a formal policy on the use and monitoring of social media (paragraph 3.13).

## About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)<sup>1</sup> (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Kaplan Financial Ltd (the provider; Kaplan Financial). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA), the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute (CFA), the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA), the Chartered Institute of Taxation (CIOT), the Chartered Alternative Investment Analyst Association (CAIA), the Global Association of Risk Professionals (GARP), the University of London, and Liverpool John Moores University. The review was carried out by Dr Gillian Blunden, Dr Clive Marsland, Mr Robert Mason (reviewers), and Mr Ian Fleming (coordinator).

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

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

- specified requirements of professional bodies
- *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*
- requirements of sponsoring client firms.

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

Kaplan Financial is part of the Kaplan UK group and was established in 1958 as the Financial Training Company. It operates from 22 centres throughout the UK, employs 720 staff and enrolls over 38,000 students each year, nearly 85 per cent of whom follow ACCA, ICAEW and CIMA programmes. Under the name of Kaplan Business School, Kaplan Financial also offers programmes leading to the University of London international exams. The Business School opened in 2010 and currently has 44 students. Since 2007, Kaplan Financial has also been offering a range of franchised undergraduate and postgraduate programmes with Liverpool John Moores University.

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

### **Association of Chartered Certified Accountants**

- ACCA professional status

### **Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales**

- Associate Chartered Accountant

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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).

#### **Chartered Institute of Management Accountants**

- CIMA professional status

#### **Chartered Financial Analyst Institute**

- Chartered Financial Analyst
- Investment Management Certificate

#### **Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy**

- CIPFA professional status

#### **Chartered Institute of Taxation**

- Chartered Tax Adviser

#### **Chartered Alternative Investment Analyst Association**

- Chartered Alternative Investment Analyst

#### **Global Association of Risk Professionals**

- Financial Risk Manager status

#### **University of London**

- BSc (Hons) Accounting and Finance
- BSc (Hons) Economics and Finance
- BSc (Hons) Banking and Finance
- BSc (Hons) Accounting with Law
- Laws LLB

#### **Liverpool John Moores University**

- BA (Hons) Accounting and Finance
- BA (Hons) Business and Finance
- BA (Hons) Business Administration
- MBA
- MBA top up
- MSc International Accounting and Finance
- MSc Banking and Finance
- MA Financial Management

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

Kaplan Financial works with eight awarding organisations and prepares students for their external examinations. In addition, there is a partnership agreement with the University of London to deliver its validated undergraduate and postgraduate awards. A further agreement with Liverpool John Moores University has now been terminated and remaining programmes covered by this agreement have final cohorts of students.

### **Recent developments**

The Liverpool John Moores University programmes will no longer be offered from September 2012 and will end when the current cohort of students has completed their studies. Kaplan Business School is in the final stages of agreement with two UK universities to offer a range of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes from September 2012.

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

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. The organisation encouraged students to contribute to the review. A student feedback questionnaire, a short presentation and a poster about educational oversight were produced. A student working group decided to produce a video submission. Students decided upon format and content, and Kaplan Financial staff were not involved in the process, nor did they edit the videos. Two videos provided helpful contextual information for the team. In addition, the team met a group of six students during the review and spoke with three additional students by conference call.

## Detailed findings about Kaplan Financial

### 1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The Kaplan UK Group is part of Kaplan Inc, owned by the Washington Post and providing education and career services to one million students worldwide. The Kaplan UK Management Board has overall responsibility for human resources, financial status, physical resources and the overall academic portfolio, including standards, strategic direction, objectives and performance monitoring. In 2011, its overall UK operations were accredited by the British Accreditation Council, with each Kaplan Financial centre undergoing its own individual inspection.

1.2 The majority of Kaplan Financial centres offer three core products: those awarded by the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA), the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW), and the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA), with a number of other more specialised products being offered in individual centres. Kaplan Financial is not responsible for setting the academic standards of the professional financial awards for which it prepares its students. These are the responsibility of the relevant awarding body or organisation.

1.3 Under the trading name of Kaplan Business School, Kaplan Financial began to offer programmes leading to University of London international undergraduate degrees in 2010, with all responsibility for academic standards resting with the University.

1.4 In April 2010, Kaplan Financial began offering undergraduate and postgraduate programmes franchised under the agreement with Liverpool John Moores University, with all responsibility for academic standards resting with the University. Recruitment to these programmes has ceased, following a University decision in January 2012 to withdraw from all franchised partnership agreements, and the remaining students are currently being taught out under University regulations.

1.5 All Kaplan Financial centres follow the same quality assurance processes and each has a centre manager. Responsibilities in respect of academic standards for professional and university-validated awards are clearly delineated in the checklists of responsibilities supplied and key staff, including programme leaders and tutors, are fully aware of their responsibilities and able to articulate them clearly. Each centre manager produces a monthly report for the Kaplan UK Management Board, which includes student feedback and action planning to meet student concerns. Monitoring of the monthly Kaplan UK Management Board reports by Kaplan Financial has led to further refinement of the reports to focus in more detail on the student experience.

1.6 All quality assurance procedures are documented in the quality manual, which is currently being reviewed and developed to ensure further alignment with the Academic Infrastructure and UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code), as the university-validated portfolio is expanded. The manual includes the complaints procedure, a policy for the utilisation of student feedback, and all aspects of quality assurance. The team considers it desirable that the effectiveness of the use of the quality manual should be monitored by the Kaplan Financial, in the light of its current variable use across the centres.

1.7 In December 2010, Kaplan UK established an Academic Council based on guidance set out in the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* to provide academic oversight of programmes leading to the award of a degree validated by a UK university. Its terms of reference and membership are currently under review, but it is broadly responsible for safeguarding the standard of both academic and profession awards. In order to take full account of the student voice, the team recommends that consideration is given to the inclusion of representatives of the student body in its membership.

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

1.8 Kaplan Financial effectively uses the quality assurance and compliance criteria of the awarding organisations to maintain academic standards and to retain accreditation. For the professional accountancy programmes, it fully engages with stated accreditation requirements in respect of syllabus, assessment and marketing materials. Relationships with awarding organisations are managed proactively by product managers.

1.9 For the provision validated by universities, each programme specification provides information on the programme content, structures and assessment. Kaplan Business School uses definitive programme specifications, module outlines and content, intended learning outcomes, learning and assessment strategies, and learning resources effectively. These are all aligned with the Academic Infrastructure and the emerging the UK Quality Code.

1.10 A further external reference point used by Kaplan Financial is the stated requirements of the employers who sponsor a large proportion of current students. This is manifested by modification of programme delivery modes to suit clients and the provision of bespoke programmes. There is a high level of employer sponsorship and involvement of client firms in the management of academic standards.

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

1.11 Kaplan Financial has no responsibility for the setting or marking of external examination papers of the body awarding or organisations for whose awards the students are prepared, although tutors make effective use of internally set and marked mock examinations to assure and enhance academic standards.

1.12 Kaplan Financial utilises statistical data systematically and rigorously to support its monitoring of student achievement, retention and progression. This occurs at programme, centre and management board level. Data on pass rates and retention is comprehensive and a key driver for quality improvement within the organisation, both in operational and academic strategic contexts. Where formally required by awarding bodies and organisations, improvement actions are discussed and recorded, locally and at a strategic level within Kaplan Financial. Monthly board reports from each centre are circulated to all centre managers, as well as to the Kaplan UK Management Board, to share and facilitate best practice. This is an effective means of communication. Kaplan Financial has a clear Equality and Diversity Policy, but the team considers that its detailed analysis of management information could be extended to include a consideration of progression and achievement by gender, ethnicity and disability.

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

## 2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 Responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities include: student enrolment, induction and guidance, teaching and learning, the development of staff teaching skills, library provision, learning resources, and the quality review of the provision, including the collection and use of student feedback. Internal management responsibilities for these functions are overseen by the Kaplan UK Management Board, where management information is considered by means of monthly reports provided by product managers, with responsibility for specific awarding body or organisation's provision, and centre managers. Student satisfaction is an important feature of this reporting mechanism.

2.2 Arrangements for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities operate effectively. Quality assurance checks are regularly carried out through the use of student feedback, monthly oversight of student performance data and centre manager's monthly reports. The monthly reporting system includes student experience metrics analysis, covering satisfaction feedback data, review of at-risk students, and the centre's responses on academic excellence and student experience issues. It identifies areas of challenge in a timely fashion. Issues emerging from monthly reports are used to identify key themes for training within the Kaplan Tutor Academy. Effective and timely action is taken in response to external client expectations of teaching delivery. The timeliness of student experience action planning and its direct link to training of staff were noted by the team.

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

2.3 The use of external reference points is grounded on the Kaplan Financial's relationships with its awarding partners and its sponsoring client firms. Kaplan Financial meets their approval criteria and is subject to their assurance and compliance systems. These include: regular self-reporting against external performance indicators, audit visits, inspection reports and student feedback surveys. Relationships with awarding partners are strong and Kaplan Financial delivers curricula to prescribed formats and to schedule. The awarding bodies and organisations' requirements are a regular feature of board reports.

2.4 Kaplan Financial makes use of other external reference points to provide a broader context for the enhancement of student learning opportunities. Some staff attend Higher Education Academy events, and there is a developing understanding of current student experience issues in higher education. Both staff and client firms report on the usefulness of regular meetings, which foster shared purpose in adapting learning and teaching content to meet workplace requirements, and a sense of partnership between client firms and Kaplan Financial. Ways of using client firms more proactively to provide professional contexts for students' learning are being considered. External reference points are used effectively to enhance learning opportunities for students.

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

2.5 Kaplan Financial has effective internal mechanisms for developing learning and teaching knowledge, for enhancement of learning, and for maintaining good practice in delivery of its programmes of study. National product teams develop new programmes, and product managers and centre managers are responsible for ensuring fitness of purpose, currency, market demand and consistency of delivery. The approval and validation process for such programmes is secure and considers learning and teaching issues in a holistic way, taking account of sector best practice. A range of sources for student opinion is used, including an electronic support mechanism, feedback forms and use of social media. Students are also encouraged to contribute to the Kaplan Financial deliberative structures, including staff-student liaison meetings and the Student Council, which is under development and is to be encouraged as a means of focusing student opinion.

2.6 Teaching is centred on class-based study, but Kaplan Financial is also committed to online learning and the development of its virtual learning environment En-gage. Class-based study is offered at flexible times during a seven-day week to meet student needs, as many students work full or part-time. A variety of teaching methods is used, including lectures, seminars and tutorials. Programmes are geared towards examinations, and students value the significant study support for revision, including focused tutorials and an online examination tips website, in supporting their academic progress. Student use of the virtual learning environment has improved over the last three years as a result of technical and content improvements. Course materials, including handbooks, study guides and training and revision documentation, are available in both electronic and hard copy format, and are of an appropriate standard. Students of Kaplan Financial also use University of London online resources. Kaplan Financial is committed to continue updating its virtual learning environment capacity and tools for student engagement in line with sector-wide developments, technical innovations, and rising student numbers.

2.7 Regular use is made of student feedback to evaluate the quality of teaching. Some of the mechanisms by which student evaluation of teaching is encouraged are yet to prove fully effective, but action has been taken by Kaplan Financial to improve response rates, including research on low uptake, a staff-student survey, and the piloting of quick feedback methods by the use of text messaging. Kaplan Financial has stated its commitment to encouraging wider levels of engagement by students in surveys, and this is to be encouraged. Students are encouraged to evaluate teaching, especially by means of module evaluations, and action has been taken as a result of issues being raised. However, students are not always aware of the action taken. It is considered desirable that Kaplan Financial takes a more proactive and systematic approach to communicating actions taken as a result of such evaluations.

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

2.8 The arrangements for the support of students reflect Kaplan Financial's stated aim to create a range of learning opportunities that can be combined in unique ways to meet the needs of different learners. A range of mechanisms and procedures is in place to ensure that students receive academic and welfare support. Tutors are seen by students as a first point of call, and their advice is highly valued. A social media site is operated and monitored, and a customer care application, which deals with a range of engagement criteria, from suggestions to complaints, is available. Monthly staff-student liaison meetings are held in some areas of the provision.

2.9 There are appropriate orientation procedures for new students, which include enrolment guidance, joining instructions and a welcome brochure. Individual enrolment interviews are conducted with international students, at which they have the opportunity to raise questions, and these are followed by induction meetings with academic staff. Students are also able to use an online support system for pastoral support.

2.10 Academic support for students includes one-to-one tutorial help and guidance. Additional tutorials are available on request. The exam tips website is well used by students, proactively managed by Kaplan Financial and supplemented by a surgery-style 24-hour online forum during examination periods. Students report positively on the high quality of tutorial content and the helpfulness and availability of teaching staff, particularly at times of heavy workload during the year. Master classes, valued by students, are held regularly in both face-to-face and live online formats to reinforce study skills and underpin learning.

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

2.11 Kaplan UK has an established staff development process and training and development needs of staff are identified both strategically and locally. All new staff attend a welcome day and the agenda includes student experience issues. Staff are supported to achieve professional qualifications relative to their discipline and there is additional support for new and existing tutors through intensive training courses provided by the Kaplan Tutor Academy. Currently, there is no provision of professional and industrial updating for tutors on a regular basis.

2.12 A mentoring system is in place for new staff and continues for a minimum of six months, after which staff join a Kaplan UK-wide peer observation scheme. This scheme is being developed, with clear process and guidance information provided to observers and observees. A peer review model is used, which focuses upon skills for teaching rather than subject knowledge, and the process is used both for the purposes of individual appraisal and for wider sharing of good practice.

2.13 A learning innovation team provides strategic direction for learning, teaching and innovation, and the Kaplan Tutor Academy manages strategic development across Kaplan UK. Teaching staff confirm their engagement with activities and events arranged by the Academy. For example, they engage in a series of web-based seminars to enhance teaching practice. Online training is provided to update curriculum knowledge and staff attend external conferences and annual internal training events. The Kaplan Europe Academic Excellence Summit is offered to celebrate teaching excellence. Financial and remission support is available to staff who wish to pursue discipline-related study, both for professional practice and for academic study up to level 8 in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*.

2.14 Teaching excellence is rewarded at centre and national level. Kaplan Financial is developing a Postgraduate Certificate in Education for its own staff. This programme development is to be welcomed. Teaching staff value the range of development opportunities, the central focus provided by the Kaplan Tutor Academy, and the support of Kaplan UK in enhancing their teaching. The review team considers Kaplan Financial's comprehensive and systematic approach to staff development to be good practice.

## **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 Physical resources for students include well equipped and well appointed lecture facilities of varying sizes, a number of quiet breakout areas for independent study, social breakout areas, and wireless and personal computer access across the teaching accommodation. Live update monitors provide information on day courses, examination schedules and revision classes, as well as useful contextual information, such as stock market indices. Kaplan Financial is considering its ongoing space requirements for students at a period of considerable expansion in student numbers.

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 Responsibilities for publishing and ensuring the accuracy of public information are shared between Kaplan Financial and each relevant awarding body or organisation. Kaplan Financial also meets the requirements of each awarding body or organisation with which it works. Kaplan Business School programmes lead to University of London international programmes awards, and responsibilities are shared with the University. All public information relating to these programmes undergoes the same production, scrutiny and monitoring procedures to ensure its accuracy and completeness.

3.2 Kaplan Financial publishes a wide range of information about its higher education provision for current and prospective students in electronic format on its website, including facilities, programmes and professional qualifications, entry requirements, application procedures, and careers guidance. Individual programmes also give information on teaching, learning and assessment methods, fees, timetables, and links to the awarding bodies and organisations. The content, which is primarily focused on prospective students and other interested parties, is clear, comprehensive and easy to navigate.

3.3 All students are sent a welcome guide by email before starting their programme. This contains helpful details about Kaplan Financial, staff and other appropriate contacts, transport arrangements, and other important guidance. Overall, the guide is well presented and effective in communicating its range of public information to students and stakeholders.

3.4 For international students wishing to study at Kaplan Financial, the website has an area devoted to relevant information, including the programmes available, guidance on courses and visa applications, studying in the UK, overseas agents and their contact details. A comprehensive electronic brochure with similar information can be downloaded. Virtual open days of Kaplan UK centres and programme information are also available on the website. Registered overseas students are sent an international student handbook as an electronic attachment before starting their course. This contains briefings and familiarisation information about Kaplan Financial and study in the UK.

3.5 Kaplan Financial uses a number of agents in various countries, particularly in Asia-Pacific and Africa, to promote their programmes. Agents are supplied with a variety of information for potential students, including course brochures and leaflets, advertisement materials and posters in electronic and hard copy formats. Face-to-face meetings between agents and Kaplan Financial staff, usually annually, are used to monitor the use and currency of the information, and student feedback is also used.

3.6 Marketing materials, in the form of advertisements, flyers and prospectuses, are available in electronic and paper formats. These are used at promotional events, such as open days. Kaplan Financial manages its virtual learning environment for enrolled students. This learning platform allows remote access by students from home, overseas and Kaplan Financial sites, and contains online resources, testing, and study materials to support their learning. The platform also gives users programme news and updates, the parts of their programme left to complete, and a facility to rate the quality of learning materials. Students comment positively on the value of the resources. Kaplan Financial also manages the pages of a social networking site, on which staff can upload student examination guidance topics, and students are able to give feedback on facilities and provision.

3.7 Kaplan Financial operates an exam tips website, which is available to current and prospective students, and also to members of the general public who may show an interest in the topic. This provides instructive information on exam help and master classes, and offers online discussions with other users. Most students use this facility and find the content helpful in improving their exam techniques.

3.8 Each awarding body or organisation stipulates conditions for advertising and promoting their courses. These primarily focus on the use of logos, pass rates and awards received. Kaplan Financial fulfils its obligations in this respect.

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

3.9 There are clear lines and defined areas of responsibility for ensuring that information is accurate and complete before publication. All persons who deal with the processes and arrangements relating to its accuracy and completeness are responsible to the Management Board. Responsibilities for managing the flow and accuracy of public information depend on its type and use. Learning materials are the responsibility of the Head of Learning Solutions; promotional, advertising and other marketing materials, including course brochures and prospectuses, are the responsibility of Head of Kaplan Financial Marketing. Heads of National Product are responsible for ensuring the accuracy of specific course information and that public information meets the appropriate awarding body or organisation requirements. Kaplan Financial web content is the responsibility of the Head of ACCA/CIMA Marketing, with support from an eCommerce team. All other public information, for example marketing and promotional information, is published by the Kaplan UK marketing teams in collaboration with appropriate product managers.

3.10 There is a thorough and systematic process for ensuring that this public information is checked and complete before publication. This process checks and scrutinises the documentation at each stage of the process, including original drafts, revisions, conformance to house styles, appearance and suitability. In addition, each awarding body or organisation may check copies where necessary. Kaplan Financial marketing campaigns and literature are reviewed twice a year. These reviews focus on currency of pass rates and course information.

3.11 There is a similarly thorough and comprehensive process for the production of learning materials in both paper-based and electronic formats for each programme. Materials include: examination materials, tuition packs, lecturers' resource guides, powerpoint presentations, distance learning guides, revision guides, and study notes. These materials are used in all Kaplan UK centres, which run similar provision. The process is managed by the Head of Content and Product Development and follows a rigorous development, review, checking and production procedure. All learning materials are reviewed and updated or replaced as necessary. The review team considers this thorough and effective process to be an example of good practice.

3.12 All electronic content on websites and the virtual learning environment is uploaded using final approved paper-based copies. This ensures that electronic versions mirror paper-based versions. There are a variety of processes for checking the accuracy and completeness of this electronic information. For the website, new and updated content follows a thorough and extensive multi-stage production and review process, including input from senior management. Approval is also sought, where necessary, from the appropriate awarding body or organisation where necessary. The virtual learning environment content is checked by the content team of Kaplan UK Publishing. Live monitoring of the virtual learning environment and the exam tips website is effectively carried out by the National Product Support Manager.

3.13 Although Kaplan Financial does not have a formal documented policy to monitor social media, the eCommerce Manager and a supporting team carry out daily monitoring of all comments and updated material to identify improper use and offensive material. Admissions tutors and events managers are able to remove such material immediately. The team recommends that Kaplan Financial should consider the use of a formal policy for the use and monitoring of social media to recognise the potential misuse and popularity of these media.

3.14 Data protection issues are monitored carefully, with clear processes in place for the publication of student details and opt-out functions. When Kaplan Financial wishes to use information for promotional purposes, individual consent forms are used to ensure that appropriate permissions are obtained for information used for photographic and film media.

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>

Kaplan Financial 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 comprehensive and systematic way in which staff development is planned and delivered (paragraph 2.14)</li> </ul>	To continue to enhance the systematic approach by formalising peer observations process	30 August 2012	Kaplan Training Academy	Formal observation process	Kaplan UK Management Board	Biannual staff feedback on the suitability of the peer observation process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the well designed and effective process which assures the accuracy and completeness of published information (paragraph 3.11).</li> </ul>	To continue to improve the completeness of information by introducing an electronically based workflow to streamline organisational wide processes	31 December 2012	Heads of Marketing	Electronic workflow process	Kaplan UK Management Board	Product heads review use of the system
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the provider to:						

<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 and organisations.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>monitor the way in which the quality manual is used to ensure effective management of academic standards across all centres (paragraph 1.6)</li> </ul>	Fully develop the quality manual to serve the purpose of the professional education business	31 December 2012	Head of Quality	Quality Manual utilised in all aspects of the business	Director of Operations	Evaluate quarterly Board report comments on the suitability and usability of the quality manual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider the inclusion of student representatives on the Academic Council (paragraph 1.7)</li> </ul>	Agenda item for next academic council meeting	9 October 2012	Academic council members	Elected students to academic council	Kaplan UK Management Board	Active student participation to informing academic and professional offer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider extending the analysis of management information to include gender balance, ethnicity and disability (paragraph 1.12)</li> </ul>	Agenda item at the next Product Strategy Board meeting to identify the feasibility of benchmarking using professional body data	23 October 2012	Product Strategy Board	Statistical information from the professional bodies	Kaplan UK Management Board	Product Strategy Board minutes
	Develop internal statistical monitoring via Equality & Diversity committee meetings	20 November 2012	Equality & Diversity Committee	Committee meeting minutes	Kaplan UK Management Board	Equality & Diversity Committee minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consider a more systematic approach when communicating actions taken as a result of student feedback (paragraph 2.7)</li> </ul>	Local and national publication of how student feedback has informed improvements	31 December 2012	Centre managers and product managers	Local and national publication	Kaplan UK Management Board	Quarterly evaluation on board reports on improvements made and publicised

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>consider the development of a formal policy on the use and monitoring of social media (paragraph 3.13).</li></ul>	Create a formal social media policy	31 October 2012	Heads of marketing	Formal policy communicated and implemented	Kaplan UK Management Board	Annual review of social media policy
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## 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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