



Greenwich School of Management

Institutional Review
by the Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education

June 2012

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About this review

This is a report of an Institutional Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the Greenwich School of Management. The review took place on 11-13 June 2012 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Matthew Kitching (student reviewer)
- Dr Aulay Mackenzie
- Dr Mary Meldrum
- Mrs Cathryn Thompson (review secretary).

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

- makes judgements on
 - threshold academic standards¹
 - the quality of learning opportunities
 - the enhancement of learning opportunities
- identifies features of good practice
- makes recommendations
- affirms action that the institution is taking or plans to take
- provides commentaries on public information and the theme topic.

A summary of the can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

In reviewing the Greenwich School of Management the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The [theme](#) for the academic year 2011-12 is 'the first year student experience'.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.² Background information about the Greenwich School of Management is given on page 3 of this report. A dedicated page of the website explains the method for of higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland³ and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents.

¹ For an explanation of terms see the [Glossary](#) at the end of this report.

² www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus

³ www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review//IRENI/pages/default.aspx

Key findings

This section summarises the QAA review team's key findings about the Greenwich School of Management.

QAA's judgements about the Greenwich School of Management

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at the Greenwich School of Management.

- Academic standards that the School delivers on behalf of its awarding bodies **meet UK expectations** for threshold standards.
- The quality of student learning opportunities at the School **requires improvement to meet UK expectations**.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities at the School **does not meet UK expectations**.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following **features of good practice** at the Greenwich School of Management.

- The level of support for international students and the contribution this makes to the international student experience (paragraph 2.9.3).
- The role of the Publications Officer in helping research postgraduate students to publish their work (paragraph 2.10.4).

Recommendations

The QAA review team **recommends** that before 1 October 2012 the Greenwich School of Management should:

- actively work with its awarding bodies to consider ways in which more detailed information on areas for improvement and good practice for the attention of the School can be identified in its external examiners' reports (paragraph 1.2.2)
- make sure that staff have a clear understanding of the differences between the regulatory requirements of the School's awarding bodies (paragraph 1.4.2)
- ensure that external examiners' reports are shared as a matter of course with the School's student representatives (paragraph 3.4).

The review team **recommends** that before 1 June 2013 the School should:

- develop and implement more robust processes for the systematic consideration of management information derived from its quality assurance processes which should enable it to demonstrate clearly how this leads to the enhancement of the student learning experience (paragraph 2.4.4).

The review team **recommends** that before 1 October 2013 the School should:

- raise staff awareness of and engagement with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education across the School, with particular focus on the application of the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications and Subject Benchmark statements (paragraphs 1.1.2 and 1.5.1)

- embed research-informed teaching across the institution (paragraph 2.1.3)
- develop a formal system for the training and support of student representatives in order to enable them to contribute more effectively to quality assurance processes across the institution (paragraph 2.3.3)
- develop a strategic approach to enhancement so that it can take forward enhancement-focused initiatives in a systematic and planned manner at institutional level (paragraph 4.3)
- develop a more formal and systematic approach to the identification, support and dissemination of good practice (paragraph 4.4)
- develop a more effective critique of the outcomes of quality assurance procedures to enable the School to identify opportunities for enhancement (paragraph 4.5).

Affirmation of action being taken

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

- The action being taken by the School to monitor and review support for students through the admissions process and extended through their induction and experience of their first year of study at the School (paragraphs 2.5.4, 5.1 and 5.2).

Public information

The information the School provides about its higher education is current, reliable, useful and accessible.

The First Year Student Experience

The School provides focussed support for all students in their transition into the first year of UK higher education, including international students and students with disabilities, at three separate entry points. This begins with pre-arrival information and continues with an extended course induction over a period of some weeks. Curriculum design and pastoral support pays particular attention to of the experience of the first year of study.

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

About the Greenwich School of Management

The Greenwich School of Management was founded in 1973 as an independent school of higher education specialising in business management. Since then, the School has developed its provision to include academic programmes validated through UK universities. The School provided bachelor's and master's degree programmes originally through an agreement with the University of Hull during 1994-2005. Following a change in the University of Hull's collaborative strategy in 2005 to focus on more regional partnerships, the School became an affiliated partner of the University of Plymouth from 2006 and an associated School of the University of Wales from 2005. The School also offers an American degree programme in partnership with Northwood University which has been in operation since

⁴ www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/IRENI/pages/default.aspx

1992. In 2010, the School was designated as a Highly Trusted Sponsor by the UK Border Agency for the purposes of recruiting non-EU students.

Its mission is 'to educate its students in the areas of management, leadership, law and cognate areas for roles in private and public sectors and charitable organisations worldwide. It also seeks to combine an education with the promotion of intellectual and social advancement, self-assurance and pride among its students. Within this context, it aims to sustain British university standards of quality, particularly with regard to the learning and personal development of its students through its educational courses.'

The number of students prior to the start of the academic year 2011-12 was 1,423 (932 undergraduates, 87 undertaking professional programmes and 404 postgraduates). The School has three intakes per calendar year and has plans to grow its student numbers to an estimated 2,700 by June 2012. There is a planned expansion to a new campus in west London and a further annexe at London Bridge due largely to a secured growth capital investment from experienced investors in UK education, Sovereign Capital Partners. This investment will support the strategic development of the School over the coming years.

This is the first direct QAA Institutional Review that the School has experienced although a number of its programmes are subject to professional statutory body regulations, such as the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants.

Explanation of the findings about the Greenwich School of Management

This section explains the key findings of the review in more detail.⁵

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

1 Academic standards

Outcome

The academic standards that the Greenwich School of Management delivers on behalf of its awarding bodies **meet UK expectations** for threshold standards. The review team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

Meeting external qualifications benchmarks

1.1 The responsibility for the oversight and authority for the approval and modification of awards and their mapping to the appropriate level of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) lies with the School's awarding bodies.

1.1.1 The programme approval processes of the awarding bodies both make explicit reference to the wider UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) and in particular, the FHEQ. However, the review team found limited evidence that the Quality Code is directly referenced or understood at the School level. While staff made reference to and demonstrated a clear understanding of the relevant professional statutory and regulatory bodies' requirements in relation to programme design and delivery, limited reference was made to the FHEQ or subject benchmark statements. It was noted that concern had been expressed within one of the awarding body's Periodic Review panels that some learning outcomes were not appropriate and that this matter had not been rectified despite repeated notification.

1.1.2 The review team **recommends** that, by 1 October 2013, the School raises staff awareness of and engagement with the Quality Code across the School, with particular focus on the application of the FHEQ and subject benchmark statements (see also paragraph 1.5.1).

Use of external examiners

1.2 Within the remit of the School's delegated responsibility, oversight of the external examiner system was generally adequate and issues raised by external examiners were discussed at appropriate fora within the School. The review team found a number of examples of issues raised by external examiners which were referred up to the Academic

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

⁶ www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary/pages/default.aspx

⁷ See note 4.

Development Committee where the decision was made that no further action was necessary, but the minutes did not adequately capture the underpinning rationale.

1.2.1 Some of the external examiners' reports were rather limited in depth and offered little direction to the School for areas of improvement or areas of good practice although, on the whole, the reports expressed satisfaction with the academic standards of provision. The review team was advised that external examiners often made extensive oral comments at examination boards but that these did not always manifest themselves as comments in the formal reports. However, there was limited transparency or oversight of these oral commentaries, and these, therefore, did not satisfactorily fill the gap, in terms of capturing either areas for improvement or good practice. The review team could identify no established process within the School to prompt external examiners for more detailed reports, although the team recognised that the overarching process is primarily the responsibility of the respective awarding bodies and therefore could lie outside of the School's immediate jurisdiction to make formal changes to the process without consultation.

1.2.2 The review team **recommends** that, by 1 October 2012, the School actively works with its awarding bodies to consider ways in which more detailed information on areas for improvement and good practice for the attention of the School can be identified in its external examiners' reports.

Assessment and standards

1.3 General oversight of the assessment and standards of the awards lies with the awarding bodies and the review team saw evidence that this was operating effectively. Within its delegated responsibilities, the School's assessment strategies are effective in ensuring that students have the opportunity to demonstrate the learning outcomes of their awards.

1.3.1 Students receive assessment briefs in their programme handbooks and advised the review team that they receive full and informative briefings to help them understand what is required of them in relation to each assessment. Students commented that they received feedback in a timely enough manner and that it enabled them to identify areas for improvement in future pieces of work. The review team also heard that students were able to see changes to assessment practices made in response to their feedback. The review team also saw evidence of effective consideration of the requirements of professional statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) into the design, approval, monitoring and review of assessment strategies.

Setting and maintaining programme standards

1.4 The processes for the setting and maintenance of the design, approval, monitoring and review of programmes are governed by the awarding bodies. There is appropriately delegated responsibility to the School for the delivery of programmes and input into the maintenance of standards. This framework allows students to demonstrate learning outcomes of their programmes and the review team saw and heard evidence that this was operating satisfactorily.

1.4.1 Staff expressed the view that the regulatory requirements of the two validating universities were very similar, and demonstrated little awareness of some significant regulatory differences between them. While there was no suggestion that students on particular programmes had been inappropriately informed of the correct regulations that applied to them, it was possible that students could be given the wrong advice or information about the regulatory requirements of their programmes without some appropriate staff development around this issue. There were some instances of confusion around nationally

recognised terminology relating to academic standards and quality assurance terminology. The team agreed that this could be rectified by staff development in this area.

1.4.2 The review team **recommends** that, by 1 October 2012, the School makes sure that staff have a clear understanding of the differences between the regulatory requirements of its awarding bodies.

Subject benchmarks

1.5 The policies and procedures of the awarding bodies made explicit reference to external reference points of the Quality Code (and the FHEQ and subject benchmark statements). However, there was limited evidence that Quality Code is directly referenced at the School level in programme design, approval, delivery and review of programmes. Although some staff demonstrated a knowledge of the impact of professional body requirements in programme design and delivery, there was limited awareness of other national external reference points.

1.5.1 As noted in paragraph 1.1.2, the review team **recommends** that the School raises staff awareness of and engagement with the Quality Code and, in this instance, with subject benchmark statements in particular.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

Outcome

The quality of learning opportunities at the Greenwich School of Management **requires improvement to meet UK expectations**. The review team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

Professional standards for teaching and learning

2.1 The School supports professional standards for teaching and support of learning across the institution.

2.1.1 The review team saw evidence which demonstrated that all teaching staff at the School hold appropriate qualifications. The Academic Staff Guide 2011-12 provides comprehensive information on what is expected and required of academic employees. A peer observation scheme is in operation across the School and Programme Leaders are responsible for analysing outcomes. This slightly conflicts with the policy on Peer Observation which suggests the exchange is confidential but records indicating the observation took place are submitted to the Director of Learning and Teaching.

2.1.2 All staff are allocated a personal development budget and staff with whom the team met spoke positively about the ease of accessing this resource. However, the team found no evidence of a systematic approach to the identification of training needs across the institution.

2.1.3 The School uses a variety of mechanisms to encourage research activity among staff. This includes promotion of the MPhil/PhD programme, participation in research seminars and encouragement to publish research papers and attend conferences. However, the review team found little evidence of a structured approach to ensuring that the research which staff are undertaking is informing the curriculum (see also paragraph 2.10.3). A small number of students with whom the team met cited some examples of professional practice informing the curriculum but this was not deemed to be commonplace. The review

team therefore **recommends** that, by 1 October 2013, the School embeds research informed teaching across the institution.

Learning resources

2.2 Learning resources are appropriate and allow students to achieve the learning outcomes of their programmes.

2.2.1 The School's approach to the management of learning resources has been historically informal; this fact is acknowledged by the institution and is currently being addressed. It was not clear to the review team how resource requirements have been consistently identified and met or how student feedback informed the process. The institution's first Learning Resources Strategy was drafted and approved between the First Team Visit and Review Visit.

2.2.2 Students confirmed that a number of improvements had been made to institutional resources over the last three academic years. This included Wi-Fi access across the institution, extension to library opening hours, computer availability and upgrades to teaching rooms. Students were largely pleased with the resources available to them with research students in particular aware of their lending options through the awarding bodies. Students specifically referenced the increased and accessible stock of electronic journals as an important resource. Other developments have included the appointment of an Online Director in October 2011 and increased use of the Student Portal for providing more effective communication with students. A new virtual learning environment is due to be launched in March 2013.

2.2.3 Staff informed the review team that all students are allocated a personal tutor, although a number of students whom the team met were uncertain of the identify of their allocated tutor. Personal tutors are provided with written guidance on the role as part of their initial staff induction. Staff were unclear about expectations regarding the standard number of tutees allocated to a tutor and the team heard conflicting explanations as to how allocations were determined.

Student voice

2.3 The review team was advised that the School aimed to increase student involvement in institutional level committees.

2.3.1 The Student Staff Consultative Committee is seen as the key source of student feedback and involvement in quality assurance. However, there are other limited examples of further student involvement in committees. At this stage, student involvement in five-yearly review and other quality assurance processes was embryonic. Student representatives with whom the team met felt that formal representation was almost redundant due to the size of the School and the frequent and informal opportunities for interaction between staff and students across the institution.

2.3.2 There is an initial training programme for student representatives but no apparent formalised ongoing support. The team was provided with conflicting information as to whether students were aware of their representatives and also the extent to which these representatives supported the institution in closing the feedback loop. While the School had demonstrated a response to the University of Plymouth's request for the School to improve awareness of the student representative system, this had not been entirely successful.

2.3.3 The team agreed that the School would benefit from greater involvement of students in quality assurance procedures. It was clear to the team that students are regularly

involved in discussions within the School but their contribution to decision making is more peripheral. Given the planned expansion of student numbers the review team questioned the sustainability and efficacy of the informal approach to student representation. With this in mind, the review team **recommends** that, by 1 October 2013, the School develops a formal system for the training and support of student representatives in order to enable them to contribute more effectively to quality assurance processes across the institution.

Management information is used to improve quality and standards

2.4 Management information is provided at both School and programme level for the consideration of its awarding bodies. While it meets the needs of its awarding bodies, it has the potential to be used more widely and effectively within the School itself. The review team considered the School's current approach to and use of management information to be weak.

2.4.1 Management information, in the form of student feedback, is gathered through the School's Student Perception and Module Evaluation Questionnaires. The team were informed that analysis was conducted by the Director of Learning and Teaching and also by Programme Leaders to identify the full range of issues and good practice arising from these questionnaires. Staff were uncertain however as to the exact process involved and also as to where these issues were discussed in the School's committee structure. In addition to this, the School's collection and consideration of statistical data appeared to be underdeveloped. The review team did not see evidence of ways in which retention, achievement or progression data were used to inform enhancement initiatives. There is limited use of trend data and this is exacerbated by the apparent informal nature of the School's committee structure. This informality has not supported effective thematic analysis taking place at institutional level. The team was unable to identify clearly the various committees with responsibility for analysing management information; this may in part be due to the absence of codified terms of reference and constitutions for each committee.

2.4.2 The team saw an example where management information had been used to identify failing students who required a re-sit in order to progress. In this instance, additional tutelage was offered to support them. The team was unable to locate clear policies regarding the use of management information and the requirement placed on staff to collect and consider this information and therefore the team was unable to confirm that such policies were being implemented.

2.4.3 While students were broadly positive about their experience and the opportunities provided to them, the team identified a risk to the quality of learning opportunities posed by the School's underdeveloped use of management information, particularly in light of the School's growth strategy and intended expansion.

2.4.4 The review team therefore **recommends** that, by 1 June 2013, the School develops and implements more robust processes for the systematic consideration of management information derived from its quality assurance processes which should enable it to demonstrate clearly how this leads to the enhancement of the student learning experience (see also paragraph 4.5).

Admission to the School

2.5 Clear, fair and explicit admissions policies and procedures exist and are consistently applied.

2.5.1 The School has clearly articulated admissions policies and an Admissions Committee. All students with whom the review team met were happy with the admissions

process. A significant number felt that their expectations had been met or surpassed. Students had a good understanding with regards to the role of the awarding bodies in setting admissions procedures.

2.5.2 Students are provided with a thorough induction pack which contains comprehensive information on all aspects of support available to them in addition to highlighting course requirements. In addition to this, students felt that pre-arrival information was both accessible and accurate. The School has a two week deadline for late enrolments and a slightly extended period for international students who may encounter visa problems. Where late enrolment occurs students are able to access a rolling induction period.

2.5.3 The School has three separate intakes each year. The review team was confident that the majority of students experienced a positive induction and this was not impacted upon by the frequency of new admissions. The School's Events Managers organise repeat Freshers' Fayres to ensure that new students are all able to access the same level of information. It was clear that the School, through the establishment of a working group to develop the first year student experience, is taking deliberate steps to refine the support available to new students.

2.5.4 The review team therefore **affirms** the action being taken by the School to monitor and review support for students through the admissions process and extended through their induction and experience of their first year of study at the School.

Complaints and appeals

2.6 The formal complaints and appeals procedures at School level and beyond to the respective awarding bodies were clear.

2.6.1 Students understood where they could access information on complaints and appeals and also understood the role of the awarding bodies within these processes. Students commented that there were good relationships between students and staff leaders and that it was possible to resolve problems informally via this route.

Career advice and guidance

2.7 The School's approach to career education, information, advice and guidance is broadly effective but could be strengthened in a number of areas.

2.7.1 The review team identified the use of the School's Career Development Questionnaire to identify needs during and beyond enrolment was positive and students clearly felt that this enabled the School to tailor careers support appropriately. The commitment to helping every student develop a curriculum vitae by the end of the first semester was also seen as a positive initiative.

2.7.2 However, the team found a number of other processes and systems were embryonic. While the School is now attempting to monitor final destination data, current response rates are low. In addition, although it features in the Careers Services Strategy, there are currently no internships, credit bearing placements or apprenticeships taking place at the School, while staff and students indicated that they would welcome this development.

2.7.3 The School was currently unable to provide substantial evidence to demonstrate any formal employer involvement in the design of the curriculum or in the development of the careers service itself. The review team felt that this potentially weakened the ability of the School to respond to challenges posed by a contracting jobs market.

Supporting disabled students

2.8 The School manages learning opportunities appropriately to enable the entitlements of disabled students to be met. There is an institutional commitment to equality and diversity which could be strengthened by a firmer emphasis on anticipating the needs of disabled students.

2.8.1 The School has an Equalities Statement which includes a commitment to disabled students. A Disability and Welfare Officer is in place and support services have been expanded during 2011-12. Furthermore, one of the awarding bodies provides support and training for the School in meeting the needs of disabled students. The Disabilities Provisions Committee first met in January 2011 and recent minutes demonstrate some proactive, planned support being put in place, for example, for hearing-impaired students. There was evidence of good support being provided for disabled students and regular follow-up contact with the students. Students and staff reported that the Disability and Welfare Officer was proactive post-enrolment when students requested help in following up referrals from academic members of staff.

2.8.2 There is scope, as acknowledged by the School, to build on the support for disabled students to provide robust pre-enrolment identification of the individual support needs of disabled students so that effective action plans can be developed before enrolment for each student requiring support. This may also be cross referred to the review team's view of the need to improve analysis and consideration of management information in section 2.4.

Supporting international students

2.9 International students are well supported and the quality of learning opportunities is appropriate.

2.9.1 The review team found that there was robust support in place to support international students with matters such as visa issues, accommodation and setting up UK bank accounts. The International Student Advisor provides good support to the School's international agents in training them about entry requirements and application processes. Pre-enrolment support was good and the International Student Advisor ensured that students were well supported through the application and pre-enrolment process.

2.9.2 Once students arrived at the School the induction processes met the needs of international students. Good pastoral support arrangements were in place. International students reported good English language and academic skills support available through study skills modules and also through referral to the Academic Advisory Service. A recent innovation involved working with alumni in Mumbai to create graduate employment opportunities for local students when they return to their home. The School is encouraged to continue to develop this activity.

2.9.3 The review team concluded that the level of support for international students and the contribution this makes to the international student experience was a **feature of good practice**.

Supporting postgraduate research students

2.10 Appropriate support and guidance is provided to enable postgraduate research students to complete their studies, publish their work and to enable staff involved in research programmes to fulfil their responsibilities.

2.10.1 The review team found that there were sound arrangements in place for research student training, and the research students whom the team met commented that they were well supported. There were opportunities for both students and staff to attend a research conference held by the awarding body and seminars held both in the School and elsewhere.

2.10.2 Some issues had been raised in annual reporting and periodic review about the composition of supervisory teams to ensure that students had a supervisory team and not a single tutor. The team saw evidence that progress has been made to resolve these issues. The School has also taken steps to ensure that supervisory teams included a house tutor. The research students whom the team met were positive about their supervisory experience and had found no difficulties in meeting with the remotely located members of supervisory teams.

2.10.3 Although there was strategic support for staff in developing their research profile, there was still limited evidence of academic staff engagement in the research environment. The review team noted that teaching staff were not systematically underpinning teaching by using their own published research to inform their teaching (see also paragraph 2.1.3).

2.10.4 The role of the Publications Officer was key in taking a strategic and holistic review of the research environment and in proactively helping research students to publish their research. The review team identified this as a **feature of good practice**.

Learning delivered through collaborative arrangements

2.11 The School does not deliver learning through other providers.

Flexible, distributed and e-learning

2.12 Currently the School does not deliver any programmes through flexible and distributed arrangements.

Work-based and placement learning

2.13 Currently the School does not provide any formal work-based placements as part of its programmes. The review team noted that the School has plans to introduce placements in the future but that it was not yet clear to staff if these would provide placement credits.

Student charter

2.14 The review team found that a student charter was in place but that it could be better communicated to students, as the students met by the team were not all aware of the charter. However, the students were clear about what was expected of them. They mentioned programme handbooks and induction programmes as sources of information about their programmes and about expectations of them in terms of the correlation between attendance and performance.

3 Public information

Outcome

The Greenwich School of Management **makes information about academic standards and quality publicly available** via its website. The information is clear, accessible, accurate, and up to date. Students find the information useful both in helping them make an

informed choice when applying to the School, and in preparing for what they might expect when they enrol. The review team's reasons for this conclusion are given below.

Findings

3.1 Information as specified in HEFCE 2006/45 is made publicly available via the School's website and also, where appropriate, in programme handbooks. The School has not yet fully subscribed to the Higher Education Statistics Agency and as a result has no information available through Unistats. The School is, however, preparing for the implementation of the Key Information Set and a number of challenges have been identified which the School are proactively addressing with the relevant agencies.

3.2 The review team was informed that local arrangements had previously been in place for monitoring the accuracy of published information. Increasingly, attempts were being made to systematise this. At present the Principal holds responsibility for the accuracy of published information with a range of key staff, particularly department heads and programme leaders, taking responsibility for reviewing information annually. The review team was not provided with written guidance that articulated this approach and therefore the team encourages the School to clarify further these arrangements so that staff are better informed of the process.

3.3 Students spoke positively about the information they receive, both before and during their programmes of study, and confirmed staff assertions that increasingly the Student Portal was proving an invaluable resource for making information accessible to students.

3.4 The School acknowledged that external examiners' reports are not routinely shared and discussed with student representatives and the review team therefore **recommends** that, by 1 October 2012, the School ensures that external examiners' reports are shared as a matter of course with the School's student representatives.

4 Enhancement of learning opportunities

Outcome

The enhancement of learning opportunities at the Greenwich School of Management **does not meet UK expectations**. The review team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

Findings

4.1 The review team found that although there was a demonstrable ethos and commitment from all staff to improving the student experience, methods of planning and communication were very informal, despite the fact that the School is now growing rapidly in size. However, there was a lack of shared understanding about future developments for the School and how this would impact on student learning opportunities.

4.2 There was little evidence of an institutional-level strategic approach to enhancement; it was not planned or systematic and tended to be reactive in nature. Although there was an embryonic Strategic Plan for Academic Development and Learning and Teaching Quality Enhancement Strategy, the review team consider that these require a sharper focus and sense of direction. There was little evidence among staff of awareness of these strategies or that they were being used in a systematic way to improve the quality of the student learning opportunities.

4.3 The management and committee structures of the School were unclear and in this context it was difficult to demonstrate how the enhancement of learning opportunities was overseen or managed at an institutional level. There were a number of committees which had neither formal terms of reference or constitutions and the review team found it difficult to get a picture of which committees were currently in operation, how they interrelated and their purpose. With current and planned increases in student and staff numbers, the lack of a strategic approach to the enhancement of the student learning opportunities presents a significant risk to this area. Although the Academic Development Committee had some oversight of quality assurance processes, the role of the Academic Board in developing clear academic strategies and taking forward an enhancement agenda was not evident. The review team **recommends** that, by 1 October 2013, the School develops a strategic approach to enhancement so that it can take forward enhancement-focused initiatives in a systematic and planned manner at institutional level.

4.4 Although there was some evidence that management information was used in quality assurance mechanisms, this was predominantly at programme level. The School needs to develop a more systematic use of management information to inform forward planning for the enhancement of student learning opportunities. The informal approach to planning and communications made it difficult to identify and demonstrate tangible examples of good practice or how an institutional oversight of good practice is achieved and shared. The review team **recommends** that, by 1 October 2013, the School develops a more formal and systematic approach to the identification, support and dissemination of good practice.

4.5 The School has, in consultation with its awarding bodies, put in place appropriate quality assurance processes and mechanisms. While these mechanisms are well developed for assurance purposes, they need to be fully embedded and better understood across the School in order to provide a more effective basis for quality enhancement. The review team concluded, therefore, that the School needs to make more systematic use of the outputs from these processes to develop and establish a more strategic approach to enhancement. The team **recommends** that, by 1 October 2013, the School develop a more effective critique of the outcomes of quality assurance procedures to enable the School to identify opportunities for enhancement (see also paragraph 2.4.4).

5 Theme: First Year Student Experience

Each academic year a specific theme relating to higher education provision in England and Northern Ireland is chosen for especial attention by QAA's Institutional Review teams. In 2011-12 the theme is the **First Year Student Experience**.

The review team investigated the first year student experience at the Greenwich School of Management. It found that students were effectively supported at application through to induction stage, with particular efforts made for those students who were entering UK higher education from overseas for the first time.

Supporting students' transition

5.1 The School's induction programme is comprehensive and consistently applied across the three entry points of an academic year. An effective rolling induction programme is in place for late enrollers up to two weeks after the commencement of the course, with an exceptional third week for international students. Students meet staff from across the academic and support functions of the School. Students confirmed that they had received a useful induction into the School and to the facilities available to them. Early enrolment gives students more time to settle in prior to their studies, although the team did not meet any students who had taken up this offer.

5.1.1 The School recognises the changing demographic of students and their associated needs. This is particularly important given plans to expand student numbers.

5.1.2 Support for students in their transition to higher education was sound, particularly that provided to international students pre and post-enrolment. As noted in paragraph 2.5.4, the review team affirmed the action being taken by the School to monitor and review support for students. Furthermore, as noted in paragraph 2.8.2, the pre-enrolment identification and support for students with disabilities is an area identified by the School for improvement.

Information for first-year students

5.2 All students receive a student handbook and demonstrated an awareness of the information it contained. Students considered the Student Portal to be a reliable source of information, including relevant policies. The Careers Office meets all students in the first term through a one-to-one interview and the completion of a questionnaire. Support needs are referred to the Academic Advisory Service. Students seeking employment provide a curriculum vitae during the first term and this is used to match to any jobs available in the Careers Office bank of employers. Students appreciated the targeted emails regarding career opportunities.

Assessment and feedback

5.3 Students are effectively introduced to academic conventions and receive an introduction to 'Turnitin' as a learning tool early in their first year, as well as other support for study skills. The review team was advised that formative assessment is conducted early in first year modules, with an emphasis on how to use feedback effectively to enhance their studies. Student achievement is closely monitored by tutors, and the Academic Advisory Service proactively contacts and offers guidance to students whose academic work may require further attention. The first year tutor also takes a proactive approach in supporting students to complete their assessments and takes a key role in following up students who don't submit their work on time.

Monitoring retention and progression

5.4 The review team saw evidence of the monitoring of retention and progression through annual programme monitoring, although there was more limited evidence of an institutional analysis of this type of management information. The team noted the potential for a sharper focus on this type of activity through the recent establishment of the working group on the First Year Student Experience (see also paragraph 2.5.3).

Glossary

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

The handbook can be found on the QAA website at:

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

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

www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/pages/default.aspx.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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