



London School of Commerce

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

October 2012

Key findings about the London School of Commerce

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in October 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 Cardiff Metropolitan 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 this awarding body.

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 work of the Advisory Board (paragraph 1.5)
- the effective use of external reference points, especially the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 1.9)
- the use of management information systems and biometric attendance software for monitoring students (paragraph 2.3)
- staff expertise in the supervision of major projects on the taught master's programmes (paragraph 2.8)
- the School's timetabled programme of staff training activities (paragraph 2.11)
- the well structured staff development templates (paragraph 2.13)
- the highly proactive manner in which the library uses feedback to improve its services to students (paragraph 2.16).

Recommendations

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

The team considers that it is **advisable** for the provider to:

- move on from the transitional arrangements and deliver the programmes as validated by the University (paragraph 1.2).

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

- complete the review of the academic committee structure (paragraph 1.4)
- establish a school-wide process for managing the oversight of external examiners' reports (paragraph 1.11)
- strengthen the arrangements for identifying and disseminating good practice (paragraph 2.2)
- review the higher education focus of teaching observations (paragraph 2.6)
- further develop the student survey to include questions on the quality of teaching and learning (paragraph 2.7)
- include information on staff development in the Staff Handbook (paragraph 2.14)

- work with the University to clarify the wording of the section in the School's prospectus on the registration of students and whether there are interim exit awards (paragraph 3.1)
- publish programme specifications online for all awards upon which students can enrol at the School (paragraph 3.2)
- provide students with an overview of the assessment regulations operating at each stage of their programmes (paragraph 3.3)
- standardise the public information available to students regarding their programmes of study (paragraph 3.5)
- work with the University to provide students with a handbook for all stages of the University's programme (paragraph 3.6).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at London School of Commerce (the provider; the School). This is a joint review with the School of Business and Law. Both schools have the same owners and management system. 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 Cardiff Metropolitan University. The review was carried out by Dr Gillian Blunden, Ms Brenda Eade, Professor Hastings McKenzie, Mr Bob Millington (reviewers), and Mr Philip Markey (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).² Evidence in support of the review included documentation supplied by the provider, such as student handbooks, minutes of the Academic Board, the Quality Assurance Enhancement Board and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee, annual reports and progression data. Awarding body evidence included external examiner and validation reports. The team also met staff and students. The team also used reports from the Accreditation Service for International Colleges.

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

- the Academic Infrastructure
- agreements and programme specifications from Cardiff Metropolitan University.

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

London School of Commerce (the School) was established in 1999. It is a trading division of St Piran's School (GB) Ltd and is the Associate College of Cardiff Metropolitan University (the University). It is a member of the Association of Independent Education Providers. In 2011, it was nominated for the Times Higher Education Leadership and Management Award in the category for the most Outstanding International Strategy. The Accreditation Service for International Colleges gave the School the highest grade of A6, which marked it as a Premier College.

The School offers programmes ranging from undergraduate and master's programmes to PhDs. The School is located in central London. There are 1,262 undergraduate and 1,222 postgraduate students. The School has students enrolled from over 100 different countries.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath their awarding body, with student numbers shown in brackets:

Cardiff Metropolitan University

- BA (Hons) Business Studies/Business and Management Studies (1,038)
- BSc Computing (224)
- MBA (1,063)
- MSc Information Technology (88)
- MSc International Hospitality Management (52)
- MSc International Tourism Management (19)
- Research Degrees (MPhil/PhD) (91)

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

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

The provider's stated responsibilities

The School is the Associate College of Cardiff Metropolitan University. Its responsibilities are clearly specified in the Memorandum of Agreement. The School is responsible for the delivery of programmes, learning resources, student support and for promotion through its website and other information. The School sets and marks all assessments, records marks, and establishes procedures for academic offences and appeals and complaints. The Board of Examiners is managed by the School at the initial stages, and hosted at the degree phase through the degree boards chaired by the University.

Recent developments

University relationships have matured since their inception. The School has responded to change in the higher education environment both in the UK and overseas. In particular, changes in UK Border Agency regulatory requirements have been carefully monitored by senior management staff throughout 2011 and 2012. A review in 2010 led to changes in the Strategic Plan and an enhancement of the quality framework during 2010-12.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. In preparing the submission, senior School staff worked with student members of the Student-Staff Liaison Committee to provide information on the review process. One student from the School attended the Review for Educational Oversight Briefing event held in London. The students then drafted a student submission and circulated this to their colleagues in the Student-Staff Liaison Committee for their comments and contributions. Students were offered staff support at this stage and were reminded that the student submission is required to be representative of student views from across the School. The team met students during the visit to the School when the submission was discussed. Students said that the submission was an accurate summary of their views. The team found the submission helpful in setting the agenda for the review.

Detailed findings about London School of Commerce

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The London School of Commerce fulfils its responsibilities for the management of academic standards. There is a close working relationship with the University, with whom it has the Associate College status and a franchise for its research degrees, through an Associate Research Centre. The School is responsible for managing academic standards for levels 4 and 5 of the undergraduate programmes which constitute advanced diplomas, and the first two trimesters (120 credits) of the postgraduate programmes. These stages/trimesters are recognised by the University for advanced standing through articulation agreements. The management of academic standards for level 6 of the undergraduate programmes and the final 60 credits of the postgraduate awards is the responsibility of the University through validation agreements.

1.2 The School is in a transitional arrangement in respect of the stages of the programmes for which it is responsible. In July 2011, the University validated programmes for all levels of the undergraduate awards and for the full 180 credits of the postgraduate degrees. Students follow the modules for these programmes, but currently are not enrolled on to the University programmes until level 6 (undergraduate programmes) and the final trimester (postgraduate programmes). It is not clear whether students are entitled to interim awards. (See also paragraph 3.1.) It is advisable that the School moves on from the transitional arrangements and delivers the programmes as validated by the University.

1.3 The Senior Management Team has effective oversight of the management of academic standards. The Head of Quality, assisted by the Registrar, oversees the management of standards through the programme leaders. Programme leaders hold regular meetings with staff to discuss operational issues, and chair the Programme Committees. They work effectively with the University link tutors on all matters relating to academic standards. The School continually reviews and evaluates its processes for managing academic standards. To enhance its overview of academic standards, the School now produces annual monitoring reports for levels 4 and 5 and the first 120 credits of the postgraduate programmes. A standard template has been adopted for annual monitoring processes and the School proposes to take an overview of annual monitoring through the revised template and committee structure.

1.4 The School has an established committee structure. The Council provides an effective bridge between commercial and academic matters. The Academic Board oversees the work of its standing committees, which include the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee and the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Board. The undergraduate and postgraduate programme committees report to the latter two committees. Standard agendas ensure consistency in the operation of these committees. Although the committee structure was refined in 2011, the School acknowledges there is some duplication in the work of the committees and will be undertaking a further review of its quality framework. It is desirable that the School completes the review of the academic committee structure.

1.5 The Advisory Board, which has external membership, enables the School to respond effectively and swiftly to changes in the economic and political environment. The work of the Advisory Board is highly supportive because it provides the College with extensive knowledge and expert guidance to develop strategically. The work of the Advisory Board is good practice.

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

1.6 The School makes thorough use of external reference points in the maintenance of academic standards. Partnership arrangements between the School and the University ensure that all elements of the Academic Infrastructure are included in documentation and considered at validation events. Procedures in the University's Academic Handbook provide clear reference points for maintenance of academic standards. School staff have a clear understanding of these. The School's own quality framework, used for the articulated component of the programmes, is benchmarked against the elements of the Academic Infrastructure.

1.7 The School has drawn up its own regulations for assessment, clearly benchmarked against the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 6: Assessment of students*, in respect of the articulated component stage of the programmes.

1.8 Since 2008, the School has fulfilled the accreditation requirements of the Accreditation Service for International Colleges. The most recent continuation accreditation visit in January 2011 granted the School the Premier College Status.

1.9 School management and staff demonstrated a clear knowledge of external reference points. Key documentation showed how these reference points are used in the management of academic standards. The effective use of external reference points, especially the Academic Infrastructure, is good practice.

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

1.10 The School effectively manages the assessment process for levels 4 and 5, and the first two trimesters of the postgraduate provision. This is confirmed by the external examiners, appointed by the School, who attend the assessment boards and make positive comments on the assessment process in their reports. All assessments are internally verified before being sent to the external examiners. A sample of assessed work is second marked and moderated. The University (through the link tutor) moderates assessment for level 6 and the final trimester of the postgraduate programmes, and appoints external examiners. An overview of the management of the assessment process for all levels is provided through the link tutor who attends the University assessment boards.

1.11 External examiners' reports indicate that marking is sometimes generous, and feedback to students does not always state how they can improve. Staff development has taken place to address this and a standard template for assessments now encourages clarity of marking criteria and more structured feedback. Clear and full responses are made to external examiners' reports by individual programmes. The School recognises the need to produce an overview of comments and to review responses to actions required. It is desirable that the School establishes a school-wide process for managing the oversight of external examiners' reports.

<p>The review team has confidence in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding body.</p>

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 The School is clear about the significant responsibilities for managing learning opportunities that the University delegates to it. The annual programme monitoring provides an important opportunity to evaluate the quality of the provision in all the related areas, including the recruitment and support of students, the delivery of teaching and learning, and the provision of human and physical resources.

2.2 The Academic Board and its subcommittees provide valuable forums for the oversight of the quality and enhancement of learning opportunities. Minutes establish the significant role played by the Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee, for example in driving forward the actions identified for improvement. However, they also indicate that there is insufficient consideration of good practice. The School is currently reviewing its committee arrangements and refining procedures. It is desirable that the School strengthens its arrangements for identifying and disseminating good practice.

2.3 High levels of student completion and achievement on the programmes provide clear evidence of the strength of the management of learning at an operational level. The multiple-entry and accelerated progression opportunities that are offered to students on the taught programmes necessitate a highly structured approach being taken by both module and programme leaders. Management activities are fully supported by programme administrators at every level of study. The systematic use of management information systems and biometric attendance software facilitates the real-time tracking of student progress. Similar arrangements apply for the management of the School's research programmes through the work of the Head of Research, research supervisors and externally appointed directors of study. The administrative and technological infrastructure is equally well integrated and effective. The use of management information systems and biometric attendance software for monitoring students is good practice.

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

2.4 Paragraphs 1.6 to 1.9 also relate to the use of external reference points for the management and enhancement of learning opportunities.

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

2.5 Programme delivery is underpinned by a robust teaching, learning and assessment strategy that reflects the School's mission to provide high-quality and cost-effective higher education to students from a wide range of international cultures. Details of the implementation of the strategy are discussed at programme meetings, staff development activities and monitored in academic committees. This helps to ensure consistency in approach across the School.

2.6 Teaching quality is closely monitored through teaching observations and the consideration of module performance data and student feedback. Arrangements for the observation and review of teaching have recently been strengthened and are now implemented annually. The first set of observations aimed at improving general proficiency has been piloted and there have been favourable outcomes. Following its scrutiny of observation feedback, the team supports this view and considers that teaching observations

should pay more attention to the specific requirements of higher education teaching, such as learning outcomes, level of study and delivery of research-led teaching. It is desirable that the School reviews the higher education focus of the teaching observation.

2.7 Students' views on the quality of teaching and learning are very positive in their written submission and this was confirmed in the meeting with the team. Student engagement in quality monitoring procedures is highly valued by the School. Staff-student liaison meetings, programme committees and the Academic Board, which includes a student member, discuss student concerns. Online module feedback questionnaires are used to monitor student evaluations. In 2012, a new questionnaire was introduced benchmarking questions against those in the National Student Survey. This was issued and evaluated on a trimester basis across the provision and the overall results have been published and made available to students on the internet. The team considers it desirable that the survey is further developed to include questions on the quality of teaching and learning. This will support continuous improvement at the point of module delivery.

2.8 The quality of learning opportunities on the programmes is also supported by the School's robust staff recruitment policy. The criteria used identify the requirement to appoint highly qualified staff with previous experience of higher education teaching and assessment. The staff records made available to reviewers are impressive and reveal that almost all possess a higher degree - about a third at doctorate level - and that the majority have substantial experience of teaching higher education or supervising research students at other institutions. The School has made full use of its staff expertise not only in developing its Research Centre and delivering research programmes, but also to inform the highly structured approach it has adopted for the supervision of major projects on the taught master's programmes. Staff expertise in the supervision of major projects on the taught master's programmes is good practice.

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

2.9 The School has highly effective processes for supporting its students. These include the work of a Welfare and Student Services Manager, marketing officers to support students in the country of origin and during their programme in London, and teaching staff to provide student academic support and guidance. Mechanisms for student feedback have recently become more formal. The Student-Staff Liaison Committee, which meets at least three times a year and is chaired by the International Development Manager, effectively monitors student support. Statements by students who met the team, the student submission and feedback in questionnaires, all indicate high levels of satisfaction.

2.10 The opportunities for students to provide feedback enable the School to be aware of any issues regarding student support. From 2012-13, students are represented on the Academic Board. They have been represented on programme committees prior to 2012. Structured analysis of feedback from student surveys occurs at the Academic Board.

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

2.11 The School's staff development guidelines provide a coherent framework to ensure that the career development needs of individuals and its corporate objectives are met. Arrangements include a clear staff recruitment policy, induction and mentoring arrangements for new appointments, and the use of annual performance reviews to discuss individual needs. The School provided examples of the way it uses both its internal training programme and supports attendance at external and university-led events to enhance the provision. The School's programme of staff training activities is well attended by staff and is most effective in disseminating good practice in assessment and developing a fuller

understanding of the Academic Infrastructure. The School's timetabled programme of staff training activities is good practice.

2.12 All members of teaching staff are expected to engage in individual continuous professional development and scholarly activities to maintain their currency in their subjects. In its drive to support excellence in teaching, the School encourages staff involvement in a wide range of scholarly activities. For example, it provides significant financial support for individuals to enrol on doctoral programmes and complete formal English language teaching qualifications.

2.13 Staff performance reviews have recently been strengthened and take place annually. New well structured templates are proving to be most effective in securing valuable two-way feedback and encouraging the all-round development of staff. The well structured staff development templates are good practice.

2.14 However, some aspects of staff development, such as the induction of new staff, need further embedding. The review team noticed, for example, that the School's Staff Handbook, which is an important document in the induction process, contains no information on staff development. It is desirable that information on staff development is included in the Staff Handbook.

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 The School has comprehensive learning resources and ensures that these are accessible to students. There are a number of ways in which students can express their views on learning resources. The recently introduced Student-Staff Liaison Committee plays a primary role in gathering student views on learning resources. It is also used as a forum to disseminate information gained from other sources. This includes highlighting improvements made in response to student feedback regarding resources such as the library or student portal. Student surveys are also conducted periodically, and the recent satisfaction survey for information technology demonstrates that while the student portal is well regarded, the wireless and internet access are regarded as less satisfactory. The School explained that a programme of improving wireless access has been initiated in response to this finding and that access has subsequently improved.

2.16 There is a library shared with the School of Business and Law, based at the Southwark campus. It has a wide range of resources to support student learning. It is open six days a week and it is widely used by students at the School. A helpdesk is in operation during opening hours. It is staffed by a full-time librarian with the support of two library assistants. The library is proactive in using feedback from surveys and focus groups to maintain and develop its resource base. There is a rolling programme of drop-in sessions, covering topics such as electronic resources, plagiarism and using the library. The library is highly responsive to issues raised by students, enabling it to develop into a resource that significantly benefits student learning. The team concludes that the highly proactive manner in which the library uses feedback to improve its services to students is good practice.

2.17 The School has 291 networked computers spread across three sites, including open access areas and laboratories. It ensures that the student portal, and its associated electronic submission system, are made available through wireless access available at all three sites. Programme resources are discussed during approval processes, and reviewed on a rolling basis in proportion to the student numbers on each programme. The portal is primarily used as the repository for electronic learning resources, and its electronic submission tool also enables staff to feedback electronically on submitted work. It also

provides individualised information regarding a student's attendance record and visa status, with more general information on the School, the library, the registry, exams, information technology and timetables. It effectively supports all of the School's programmes and while students recognised that its potential is not yet being fully exploited, the level of service it currently provides is also well regarded by students.

2.18 Upon reaching the award stage of a programme, students enrol with the University and are then able to access its learning resources and careers support, although it is unclear how much formal information students receive regarding the range of extra learning resources that then become available.

The review team has **confidence** that the provider is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of the intended learning opportunities it provides for students.

3 Public information

How effectively does the provider's public information communicate to students and other stakeholders about the higher education it provides?

3.1 The School's primary sources of public information for students, employers and stakeholders are its website and its printed and electronic programme prospectuses. This information details aspects of studying in London and the UK, informs students about admissions and visa requirements, and details its programmes which lead to undergraduate and postgraduate degrees from its awarding body. The School prospectus and website do not clarify that students enrol first at the School for an award accredited by the University before articulating onto the award phase of their programme with the University. This issue is compounded when prospective students receive formal offer letters from the School. This offer is always for the University's parent award and not for one of the School's diplomas. It is desirable that the School works with the University to clarify the wording of the section in the School's prospectus on the registration of students and whether there are interim exit awards.

3.2 Once enrolled at the School, students are provided with a generic Student Handbook and have access to the student portal which provides module study information for the semester ahead. An overview of the whole programme is provided in programme-specific student handbooks, which are in effect study guides. Programme specifications are not published and prospective and existing students do not routinely have access to the level of programme detail provided in programme specifications. It is desirable that programme specifications are published online for all awards upon which students can enrol at the School.

3.3 Assessment regulations are not readily available to students. This is despite the Quality Handbook stating that programme assessment regulations should be contained in student handbooks. It became clear to the team that students are not fully aware of the School's assessment regulations. It is desirable that the School provides students with an overview of the assessment regulations operating at each stage of their programmes.

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

3.4 The School has clearly defined processes for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of published information. The Head of Marketing is responsible for signing off the prospectus, web-based media, and advertising. The Head is also responsible for ensuring that the University has given approval for documents where necessary. The accuracy of student information in handbooks and the student portal is primarily the responsibility of the operational or academic staff responsible. The Head of Student Services signs off content in the Student Handbook.

3.5 Information for prospective students and stakeholders is readily accessible on the website. There is inconsistent presentation of programme level information in both the website and the printed prospectus, offering prospective students variable information depending upon the programme of interest. It is desirable that the School standardises the public information made available to students regarding the programmes of study.

3.6 The School provides detailed study information for its students upon joining. The Student Handbook is published electronically and relates to the School's policies and practices, but no equivalent information is available for students about the award phase of their qualification. The team learned that under the current transitional arrangements students are briefed about University regulations upon registering for the award phase, but no formal printed or electronic information is made available. It is desirable that the School works with the University to provide students with a handbook for all stages of the University's programme.

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

Action plan³

London School of Commerce action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight October 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the work of the Advisory Board (paragraph 1.5) 	<p>Members of Advisory Board consulted on a regular basis on regulatory, political and educational environments, and strategic opportunities</p> <p>Meeting convened with UK Border Agency senior staff</p>	<p>November 2012</p> <p>January 2013</p>	Chair, Advisory Board	<p>School adapts to demands of UK Border Agency and retains Highly Trusted Sponsor licence</p> <p>Strategic planning informed by intelligence on political, educational and regulatory contexts</p>	Chief Executive Officer	Council March 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the effective use of external reference points, especially the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 1.9) 	Compliance with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) to be reviewed by Academic Board	June 2013	Academic Board	Transition to benchmarking against the Quality Code completed	Council July 2013	Annual reporting cycle 2013

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

	(Re)validation documentation to include benchmarking against the Quality Code	As required	Any (re)validation panel which may be convened	Compliance with the Quality Code confirmed in any (re)validation events Compliance with the Quality Code confirmed in annual reporting process		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the use of management information systems and biometric attendance software for monitoring students (paragraph 2.3) 	Updating of School attendance policy	November 2012	Director of Operations	High level of student completion of programmes	Chief Executive Officer	Compliance monitoring team
	Systematic use of progression data at and following examination boards to inform student support needs	November 2012 and bimonthly thereafter	Head of Examinations and Director of Operations	Comparative cohort data available to examination boards	Head of Quality	Progression and examination boards
	Upgrade of functionality of examinations database	November 2012	Head of Examinations, Director of Operations and Information Technology Manager		Head of Quality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> staff expertise in the supervision of major projects on the taught master's programmes (paragraph 2.8) 	Tailoring of Research Methodology to each mode of major project	Research Methodology module leader	February 2013	High performance of students in major projects	Postgraduate Programmes Committee March 2013	Major project results each trimester, reviewed by Academic Board
	Staff development sessions with	Head of Quality and	February 2013	Success in embedding the		Annual reporting

	supervisors on best practice on each mode of major project	programme leaders		business development proposal and integrated case study options within the major project alongside the established dissertation option		and monitoring cycle 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the School's timetabled programme of staff training activities (paragraph 2.11) 	<p>Benchmark the present strategy against the annual monitoring and reporting cycle 2011-12</p> <p>Identify and action any required iteration of activities</p>	February 2013	Head of Quality and programme leaders	Revised and fine-tuned staff development policy and activities for 2013	Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee April 2013	<p>Annual reporting and monitoring cycle autumn 2013</p> <p>Annual Strategic learning environment review February 2014</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the well structured staff development templates (paragraph 2.13) 	<p>Complete audit of current staff development activities</p> <p>Confirm and identify focus groups for staff development key performance indicators for 2013-14 development cycles</p>	February 2013	Head of Quality and programme leaders	Identification and implementation of refined staff development strategy informed by audit outcomes and needs analysis	Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee April 2013	<p>Annual reporting and monitoring cycle autumn 2013</p> <p>Annual strategic learning environment review February 2014</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the highly proactive manner in which the library uses 	Use the feedback obtained to inform the learning	May 2013	Librarian and Head of Quality	Fully embedded reporting and action planning	Director of Operations	1 Quality Assurance and Enhancement

feedback to improve its services to students (paragraph 2.16).	environment strategy and library operations update for 2013-14			on library feedback and learning environment strategy for 2013		Board 2 Student-staff liaison committee 2014
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is advisable for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> move on from the transitional arrangements and deliver the programmes as validated by the University (paragraph 1.2). 	<p>Complete discussions with partner University on agreement and arrangements to implement the validated programmes</p> <p>Register students with the University from semester one of programmes</p>	<p>February 2013</p> <p>June 2013 intake and following</p>	Chief Executive Officer	<p>Contractual and quality assurance arrangements agreed with the University</p> <p>Students registered with University throughout degree programmes</p>	Academic Board, June 2013 and Council July 2013	<p>Annual monitoring reporting on the provision to University in autumn 2013, and overview to Academic Board February 2014</p> <p>External examiners reports</p> <p>University moderator feedback</p>
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is desirable for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> complete the review of the academic committee structure (paragraph 1.4) 	Evaluation of operation of committees and proposal on final	February 2013 Academic Board	Academic Registrar and Head of Quality	Committee structure optimised to avoid duplication	Academic Board June 2013	Evaluated in annual overview process in February 2014

	shape of committee structure			<p>of responsibilities, while maintaining programme level and senior academic level oversight of quality and standards</p> <p>Participation of wide range of academic staff and academic-related administrative and support staff</p> <p>Staff clear on responsibilities devolved to programme level and responsibilities of Academic Board</p>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish a school-wide process for the managing oversight of external examiners' reports (paragraph 1.11) 	<p>Examinations confirmed at repository of all external examiner reports from the School and partner universities</p> <p>Consideration of cross-programme, cross-school external</p>	February 2013	Head of Examinations and Head of Quality	<p>All external examiner reports received centrally in Examinations department and circulated to specified staff</p> <p>Annual review of cross-programme issues to</p>	Academic Board June 2013	Evaluated in annual overview process in February 2014

	examiner themes to be added as standard item to annual overview process template			supplement each trimester response to external examiner		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strengthen the arrangements for identifying and disseminating good practice (paragraph 2.2) 	<p>Identification and dissemination of good practice to be added to terms of reference and standing agenda item of Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee (or equivalent within revised committee structure)</p> <p>Added as a standing item of programme leader's reports to Academic Board</p>	<p>April 2013 Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee</p> <p>Feb 2013 Academic Board meeting</p>	<p>Chair and Learning Teaching and Assessment Committee</p> <p>Head of Quality</p>	<p>Best practice in programme design and delivery, student engagement, assessment and feedback to be shared among staff on different programmes, levels and schools</p> <p>Implement sharing of good practice in agreed staff development plan</p>	Academic Board June 2013	Evaluated in annual overview process in February 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the higher education focus of teaching observations (paragraph 2.6) 	<p>Teaching observation template to be expanded to include questions on: learning outcomes; level of study; and, delivery of scholarship-informed teaching</p> <p>Production of training</p>	February 2013	<p>Senior Programme leader and disseminated to programme leaders</p> <p>Head of Quality</p>	<p>Teaching observations carried out incorporating higher education focus</p> <p>Feedback given</p>	Academic Board June 2013	Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee September 2013

	guidelines for observers			to observed staff in relation to higher education focus		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> further develop the student survey to include questions on the quality of teaching and learning (paragraph 2.7) 	Online module questionnaire expanded to include questions on teaching and learning adapted from the National Student Survey	<p>Questionnaire template revised December 2012</p> <p>Revised template released to students January 2013</p>	<p>Academic Registrar</p> <p>Information Technology Manager</p>	Data collected across all programmes to include questions on the quality of teaching and learning	Academic Board February 2013	Student-Staff Liaison Committee Feedback February 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> include information on staff development in the Staff Handbook (paragraph 2.14) 	<p>Material from Quality Handbook on staff development policies and procedures summarised and inserted in Staff Handbook</p> <p>Staff development issues to be added to induction checklist for use by programme leaders</p>	<p>February 2013</p> <p>December 2012</p>	<p>Head of Quality</p> <p>Senior Programme Leader</p>	<p>Staff development handbook to incorporate staff development information</p> <p>New staff clear on induction processes and procedures</p>	Director of Operations	Chief Executive Officer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work with the University to clarify the wording of the section in the School's prospectus on the registration of students and 	Standardise the required terminology and details which are provided to students via the website, prospectus and offer letters	In parallel with timescale for moving to fully validated university provision	Head of Marketing	Published information consistent and clear on enrolment with the School, registration with	Chief Executive Officer	Feedback from partner University

clarify whether there are interim exit awards (paragraph 3.1)	Revise the prospectus and associated web and printed materials for the February 2013 intake	above		the University, the nature of the award and exit awards available to students		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> publish programme specifications online for all awards upon which students can enrol at the School (paragraph 3.2) 	Module specification material to be merged into programme specifications, along with overall programme outcomes from validation documentation	Jan 2013	Head of Quality	Free-standing programme specification materials for each diploma and degree programme to be drawn together in individual programme specification, and made available to students online	Academic Board Feb 2013	Student-staff liaison committee feedback February 2013
	Revised programme specifications published to students online	January 2013	Information Technology Manager			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide students with an overview of the assessment regulations operating at each stage of their programmes (paragraph 3.3) 	Material from Quality Handbook and Regulations to be summarised into key headlines for students	January 2013	Head of Quality in working group with Academic Registrar and Head of Examinations	Assessment Regulations summary published on student portal	Academic Board June 2013	Initial feedback at Student-Staff Liaison Committee February 2013
	Summary of regulations published on student portal along with information on where	February 2013				Analysis of student feedback on awareness of assessment requirements via online module

	to obtain further guidance					questionnaires
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> standardise the public information made available to students regarding their programmes of study (paragraph 3.5) 	Prospectus and related website material to be reviewed and standardised for February 2013 intake	January 2013	Head of Marketing	Presentation of information on website and printed materials standardised across all programmes	Head of Quality and Academic Registrar	Feedback from partner University
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work with the University to provide students with a handbook for all stages of the University's programme (paragraph 3.6). 	Work with the university to agree content and clarify the appropriate means of student access to both School and university assessment regulations Wording confirmed by partner University	January 2013 February 2013	Programme leaders	Information on university regulations governing the award of the degree to be made available in handbook form for students from commencement of their first trimester	Head of Quality and Academic Registrar	Feedback at Student-Staff Liaison Committee February 2013 Feedback from partner University

About QAA

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

QAA's aims are to:

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

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

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

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

Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

awarding organisation An organisation with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the Qualifications and Credit Framework for England and Northern Ireland (these qualifications are at levels 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:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

quality See **academic quality**.

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

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

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

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