



# **Newbold College of Higher Education**

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

December 2012

## Key findings about Newbold College of Higher Education

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in December 2012, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Washington Adventist University, Andrews University, Theologische Hochschule Friedensau, and Adventist Colleges Abroad.

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

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

### Good practice

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

- wide-ranging student involvement in the processes for managing the provision (paragraphs 1.5 and 1.12)
- the responsiveness and openness of library staff to student feedback (paragraph 2.19)
- the effective use of social media to communicate with students (paragraph 3.1).

### 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:

- review the relationships, responsibilities and terms of reference of academic committees to achieve consistent and timely implementation of action plans and a greater emphasis on quality enhancement, and to develop further the mechanisms for identifying and disseminating good practice (paragraphs 1.4, 2.2 and 2.4)
- produce an action plan for the further aligning of current practice to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 1.8)
- develop tutorial guidelines which formalise arrangements for all students to receive at least an appropriate minimum entitlement (paragraph 2.10)
- expedite the process of relaunching the College website and associated promotional material (paragraph 3.5).

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

- widen external representation and critique, and encourage consistent student attendance at all appropriate academic committees (paragraphs 1.3 and 1.10)
- develop and formalise the current peer observation process (paragraph 2.6)

## Review for Educational Oversight: Newbold College of Higher Education

- provide a formal mechanism for identifying individual and college-wide staff development needs and evaluating outcomes (paragraphs 2.15 and 2.16)
- develop consistent use of the virtual learning environment across all of the provision (paragraph 2.20).

## About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)<sup>1</sup> (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Newbold College of Higher Education (the provider; the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David, Washington Adventist University, Andrews University, Theologische Hochschule Friedensau, and Adventist Colleges Abroad. The review was carried out by Mr Mike Coulson, Mr Rob Mason, Professor Diane Meehan (reviewers) and Mr Peter Clarke (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).<sup>2</sup> Evidence in support of the review included the self-evaluation document, agreements with the awarding bodies and organisations, a student submission, annual internal monitoring reports, monitoring visit reports, and meetings with staff and students.

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

- the Academic Infrastructure/the UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- the Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges and Universities
- British Accreditation Council
- South East England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer.

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

Newbold College of Higher Education was founded in 1901 as Duncombe Hall College to prepare people for pastoral work in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It changed its name to Newbold College in 1961 and later became Newbold College of Higher Education. It is the senior college for, and owned by, the Trans-European Division of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and a member of the Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges and Universities. The College is a registered charity and is accredited by the British Accreditation Council. It has been affiliated since 1983 with Andrews University, USA, and since 1998 with Washington Adventist University, USA.

The College is based on an 80-acre site in Bracknell, Berkshire. It provides academic, pastoral and theological education for just under 300 students from some 60 countries, with almost 200 on higher education programmes. These are taught by over 30 full-time and part-time academic staff, supported by 30 professional services staff. The College's stated ethos is to provide education for the whole person. Its mission is to foster a Christ-centred and diverse learning community that prepares students for service in an ever-changing world.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath their awarding bodies and organisations, with student numbers shown in brackets.

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

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

### **University of Wales Trinity Saint David**

- BA (Hons) Business Management (4)
- MPhil/PhD Theology (Research) (12)

### **Washington Adventist University (USA)**

- BS Business Studies (19)

### **Andrews University (USA)**

- BA Arts and Humanities (2)
- BA Media Arts (2)
- University Year in England (12)
- Undergraduate Theology (37)\*
- Licence in Theology (4)\*
- Licence in Theology part-time (3)\*
- Gap Year (4)
- Access Year to BA Theology (1)

### **Theologische Hochschule Friedensau (Germany)**

- Undergraduate Theology\*
- Licence in Theology\*
- Licence in Theology part-time\*
- Postgraduate Theology (27)
- Postgraduate Theology (Intensive) (22)

### **Adventist Colleges Abroad**

- Undesignated (7)

\* For these awards, students may gain credits from either Andrews University or Theologische Hochschule Friedensau.

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

The College is a member of, and accredited by, the Accrediting Association of Seventh-day Adventist Schools, Colleges and Universities, which undertakes regular reviews. The College has developed its own modules and programmes, which have been accredited with its awarding institutions. Although not required by the universities, the College has adopted a policy of double-marking, has external examiners for the Theologische Hochschule Friedensau provision, and plans to re-establish them for other programmes. The College is responsible for setting and marking of assessments, with moderation carried out by the awarding institutions. Theologische Hochschule Friedensau requires representation on examination boards. The University of Wales Trinity Saint David requires an external chair for examination boards and external examiners.

## **Recent developments**

The College has been a partner institution of the University of Wales Trinity Saint David (the University) for several years. However, in 2010, the University decided to sever its agreements with its non-Welsh partners. The University stressed that the decision was not a response to shortcomings on the part of the College. All undergraduate and postgraduate theology provision validated by the University of Wales Trinity Saint David has been taught out, and the Business Management provision will be taught out by July 2013. The College has sought to enter a new validation arrangement with a UK university, but has been unsuccessful.

Prior to the review visit, the College had been working with a university to gain validation for several awards. Considerable work had been undertaken and the College had received positive feedback from this university. However, shortly before the review visit, the university changed its policy and announced that it would not be entering into any new partnerships. In correspondence, it was stated that this was a policy issue and did not reflect any concerns regarding the College's ability to deliver the programmes. This was the second time the College had experienced similar difficulties.

In February 2012, the College entered into partnership with Theologische Hochschule Friedensau in Sachsen-Anhalt, Germany. As a result, BA and MA Theology students will be studying towards degrees awarded by that institution, although students may opt for level 4 and 5 credits to be accepted by Andrews University in the USA, if they are not studying towards an award from Theologische Hochschule Friedensau.

In 2011, the College became a partner of the Adventist Colleges Abroad consortium. This enables students from the USA to study at the College for up to a year, with credits accepted by their home university.

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

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. The President of the Newbold Student Association led a group of students in the analysis of student surveys, guided by the QAA handbook on student submissions. The result was a DVD presentation in the form of student interviews. During the visit, the team met with a representative group of students. Two students attended the preparatory meeting. The submission and the meetings made valuable contributions to the review.

## Detailed findings about Newbold College of Higher Education

### 1 Academic standards

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

1.1 Arrangements for the validation of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees are complex. Significant policy changes by potential UK validating bodies over the last few years have given rise to a difficult and turbulent situation, which the College has made appropriate attempts to overcome. Although the University of Wales Trinity Saint David has withdrawn from collaborative partnership with the College, theology research students at the College were able to transfer to the University of Wales Trinity Saint David at the end of 2012. The College is currently seeking another UK partner for its undergraduate and postgraduate theology provision.

1.2 The College takes care to ensure that it fully complies with the recently agreed written agreements with all the awarding bodies and organisations. It makes governor meeting minutes, academic committee minutes, course evaluations and an annual monitoring report available to the awarding bodies as required. Registration and grade information is supplied to the awarding partners, as required under the terms of the agreements. Although the College has had several disappointments in its attempt to secure a UK validating body for its business and theology provision, students appreciate the College's efforts in keeping them fully informed regarding changes in validating arrangements.

1.3 There is a well considered committee and reporting structure for managing academic standards. The Academic Board, which meets monthly, oversees all academic provision and is supported by the Academic Resources Committee, the Academic Quality Assurance Committee, Academic Quality Assurance Panels and programme teams. Membership of the Academic Board comprises senior academic staff, the Deputy Principal and two student representatives. The Deputy Principal provides the link to the Senior Management Team, although the Principal is ex officio on all committees. The arrangements mean that all heads of curriculum areas are regularly involved in decision-making. However, as there has been no external representation on the Academic Board or the Academic Resources Committee for the last two years, a valuable opportunity to benefit from outside expertise is being missed. An external representative has recently been appointed to the Academic Quality Assurance Committee. There is student representation on the Academic Resources Committee, but attendance has been sporadic. The team considers it **desirable** that the College widen external representation and critique, and encourage consistent student attendance at all appropriate academic committees.

1.4 There is a rigorous internal annual monitoring and reporting process. The Academic Quality Assurance Panels provide effective and incisive independent monitoring of all programme teams and the Academic Board. Their reports are collated and considered by the Academic Quality Assurance Committee, which then reports to the Academic Board, which prepares responses, an action plan and an annual monitoring report. The effectiveness of the process is demonstrated by the introduction of a timetabled study skills module, following recommendations from an external examiner. This has been evaluated over the last two years, with a noticeable improvement in student performance being identified. While the monitoring process has recently been refined, it is still somewhat cumbersome, as a significant number of meetings still take place. Minutes of the relevant

bodies show that issues are discussed in several forums, but that there is a lack of clarity in identifying where action is needed and in ensuring that such actions are taken. This is exacerbated by the rather limited terms of reference of academic committees, or, in the case of the Academic Quality Assurance Committee, a lack of terms of reference.

1.5 Student representation on the Academic Board is effective in communicating student views within the academic management structure and the academic process, and feeding back to students through monthly reports made to the Newbold Student Association open meeting. Students are also represented on the Academic Resources Committee, Academic Quality Assurance Committee and at governors' meetings.

1.6 There is effective oversight of academic provision by the awarding bodies and organisations. Visits by representatives of Andrews University, Washington Adventist University and Theologische Hochschule Friedensau have all taken place within the last two years, each followed by a report containing commendations and recommendations for improvement. The Washington Adventist University visit in 2011 resulted in a renewed contract and a revised policies and procedures handbook. Formal reviews by the Adventist Accrediting Association took place in 2009 and October 2012, with the latter stating that the College had either fully or partially addressed 95 per cent of the recommendations arising from the previous visit. The College prepares an annual institutional report for the Adventist Accrediting Association.

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

1.7 The College uses a range of external reference points to maintain academic standards. These include the Academic Infrastructure/the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, external examiners, awarding body and organisation reviews, subject benchmark statements, the Adventist Accrediting Association, the British Accreditation Council, and Accreditation UK/British Council inspections. Preparation for programme approval has included input from an external subject specialist, external examiners and appropriate external committee representatives. Proposed theological modules are passed to the Adventist Ministerial Training and Advisory Committee for comment. All new programmes and modules are finally submitted to the awarding bodies and organisations for approval. The College has firmly embedded external reference points within its processes, having previously been accredited by the Council for National Academic Awards and then the Open University Validation Services. Programmes reflect *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) descriptors for honours, master's and doctorate level qualifications and the learning outcomes and level descriptors of the South East England Consortium for Credit Accumulation and Transfer.

1.8 Thorough mapping of the College's provision against the Academic Infrastructure and in preparation for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) was carried out in 2010 and updated in 2012. Within this process, the College has carefully examined its key areas of operation against the Quality Code, Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality and Part C: Information about higher education provision, and relevant components of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*. The mapping has been used to benchmark quality of provision, highlight areas of good practice and identify areas needing improvement. For example, the mapping relating to disability provision has resulted in the Disability Officer discussing necessary changes with the Senior Management Team. The mapping process has been overseen and approved by the Academic Board, and all academic managers and course leaders are aware of the relevant contents and indicators. New lecturers are made aware of this mapping and of the Academic Infrastructure. Although areas requiring further

attention are highlighted throughout the mapping document, there is no specific action plan to indicate the responsibilities and timetable for addressing these areas. The team considers it **advisable** that the College produce an action plan for the further aligning of current practice to the Quality Code.

1.9 Programme specifications are prepared in line with the QAA *Guidelines for preparing programme specifications* and subject benchmark statements. External examiners are involved in the preparation process. Programme specifications are presented to the Academic Board for discussion and further refinement. The intended learning outcomes for individual modules and for the programmes overall are clearly identified and agreed by programme teams, and are appropriate to the aims of the programmes.

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

1.10 The College makes effective use of external examiners in some areas, even though these are not a formal requirement of any of the current awarding bodies and organisations. External examiners are consulted regarding module descriptors and outcomes, examination questions and bibliographies. Their comments have been used to improve academic standards in several instances. There are two external examiners for Theology, but none for other programmes, as this is not a requirement for Andrews University and Washington Adventist University degrees. However, the College has expressed the intention to make appointments for September 2013. External examiner reports and minutes of examination boards are considered by the Academic Board. Representatives from Andrews University and Washington Adventist University check examination board minutes at periodic review visits. Several examples of minutes seen by the QAA review team were rather brief and lacking in detail.

1.11 Academic staff use blind double-marking of examination scripts to assure assessment standards, although external examiners may also mark or moderate. Student evaluation and feedback and external examiners' reports are also used to assure quality. Examiners' reports contain both positive and negative comments regarding double-marking and feedback. Scripts checked by the team for both Business and Theology showed consistency and integrity in marking. Students are able to access their marks and feedback electronically.

1.12 College evaluation of its own structures and processes for managing academic standards is effective. Student feedback and evaluation is strongly encouraged, with anonymous evaluations at the end of every module and also, for some programmes, at the end of the year. Students participate in the review and development of programmes and the wider college community in a number of ways, through representative attendance on academic and community committees and at least one governors' meeting annually. Wide-ranging student involvement in the processes for managing the provision is **good practice**. Students have noted that curricula have been enhanced as a result of feedback from members of earlier cohorts, and they are aware that changes which they may suggest will benefit future students. Students indicated that staff are open to suggestions and, for example, have adopted more interactive teaching approaches.

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

## 2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 Responsibilities for the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities mirror those for the management of academic standards, as set out in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.6.

2.2 There is a clear process for monitoring the quality of learning opportunities through the annual monitoring report process. Reports are produced by programme teams. They evaluate and report on a range of aspects, including enrolments, student outcomes, teaching, assessment and resources. Reports also contain action plans for current issues and review progress from previous years. Although these are detailed and comprehensive, they mainly focus on operational and administrative issues and do not effectively and formally identify good practice and findings which may be worthy of wider dissemination in the department or college-wide. This reflects the problems with the terms of reference of academic committees referred to in paragraph 1.4. The team considers it **advisable** that the College review the relationships, responsibilities and terms of reference of academic committees to achieve consistent and timely implementation of action plans and a greater emphasis on quality enhancement, and to develop further the mechanisms for identifying and disseminating good practice.

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

2.3 The effectiveness of the use of external reference points is as outlined in paragraphs 1.7 to 1.9. The College endeavours to ensure that staff are up to date with higher education developments through attendance at external events held by QAA, the British Accreditation Council and the Association of University Administrators. One staff member is an external examiner and another is an academic board/general council member of two higher education institutions. Other staff have acted as external members of validation panels. The range of external activity contributes to the College's awareness of external developments and issues.

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

2.4 The College has recently produced a learning, teaching and assessment statement. Its aims are to set the direction of, and to lead and support continuing development in, these areas. Staff stressed that it is not, in its current form, a policy document. Its content on processes and mechanisms that support the maintenance and enhancement of teaching and learning is limited, for example in areas covering the planning of staff development activities. Although the Academic Board can deal with matters affecting the quality and enhancement of teaching and learning and the Academic Quality Assurance Panels contribute to quality enhancement, there is no clear focus on these areas in their terms of reference.

2.5 The College's process for assessing the quality of teaching performance relies mainly on student feedback on tutors' practice. There is no formal mechanism to notify senior managers of good practice or poor performance in teaching and learning. The College recognises the need for an appropriate mechanism to be developed and implemented.

2.6 Peer observation has been used in the School of Business on an informal trial basis and uses a pro forma which guides the observer through the process and outlines expected qualities. A written record is made and a discussion about the session subsequently takes

place. This mainly focuses on style and content rather than on what students learn. Teachers who have used the process found it valuable for exchanging ideas on planning and practice. Some staff also team-teach and take the opportunity to jointly reflect on the sessions and discuss how they can improve their practice. The team considers it **desirable** that the College develop and formalise the current peer observation process.

2.7 Students are clearly informed of mechanisms to provide feedback on their experiences in their handbook and within their programme. Feedback methods include personal tutor contact, student representation on committees, and completion of module and programme questionnaires. All feedback is analysed at programme and area level, and findings used in annual monitoring. Students' views on teaching quality are gathered from semester questionnaires. Students consistently rate the quality of teaching as good. They value their tutors' passion, expertise, knowledge and use of personal experiences in their teaching.

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

2.8 Students use a range of sources to gather information about their programmes before they apply to the College. These include the website, discussions with staff and recommendations from past and current students. A comprehensive admissions policy clearly explains student entry criteria to enable staff to make objective decisions on acceptance. Applicants are required to forward original copies of qualifications before entry. Although the College does not interview all students, for example those from abroad, many are contacted by telephone and email to discuss their application. Admission is granted by the Admissions and Records Officer in consultation with curriculum area heads and course directors. In discussion, students stated that the application process is fair and thorough. The College also provides prospective students with the opportunity of free accommodation, typically for a weekend, to enable them to view the facilities and talk to staff.

2.9 Generic assessment grading criteria are provided in programme handbooks. Tutors provide module-specific criteria in lectures. Students are clear about grading criteria and what they need to do to achieve a specific grade. Students reported that they get supportive and helpful oral feedback on their work. However, written feedback seen by the team was limited in detail and did not always clearly show students how to improve future work. Marked work is consistently returned in a timely fashion, typically within three weeks.

2.10 Each student has a personal tutor, who provides academic and welfare support. Students are briefed on the tutorial process at induction and in handbooks. Most tutors record discussions and outcomes, and set targets for subsequent reviews. For new students, the College's tutorial guidelines state that individual tutorials should take place at least twice in the first semester and once for returners. However, there is no formal timetable to ensure that this requirement is met and the College leaves the responsibility for organising appointments with students. While this is appropriate in terms of giving students responsibility for their own learning, there is no formal system in place, should a student fail to make appropriate arrangements. Staff and students stated that tutors usually attempt to contact students before hand-in dates to ensure that this does not happen, but acknowledge the shortfalls of the current system. The team considers it **advisable** that the College develop tutorial guidelines which formalise arrangements for all students to receive at least an appropriate minimum entitlement.

2.11 The College operates an open-door policy where students can seek academic and welfare support from staff by email, text, internet telephony, or individually face-to-face. Individual support for assignment work is available by appointment and individual academic support is provided within module teaching time. The College has recently introduced voluntary study skills support sessions. Topics include English, essay preparation and

referencing. Students are made aware of the service by regular email and notices. Those who attend value this provision.

2.12 Students receive advice to help them prepare for life after their time at the College. For the students in the Department of Theological Studies, this takes place in their ministry placement. Business students have visiting speakers and discuss personal development plans in lectures. The College counselling service provides confidential help and advice on welfare issues. Students were very complimentary about the range, depth and accessibility of their academic and pastoral support. The range and depth of academic and pastoral support and the accessibility of staff are a strength of the provision.

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

2.13 The College's Academic Staff Appointments and Mentoring Policy clearly details the recruitment, mentoring and induction process for new tutors. New staff are allocated mentors to guide them through College processes and practices. Teaching staff are well qualified: most have higher degrees, including many with doctorates. There is no requirement for staff to hold an appropriate teaching qualification, although a small number do.

2.14 The College's Staff Professional Development Policy outlines the process for funding individual staff development requests, study leave and scholarships, but does not indicate how college-wide development is identified and delivered. The main mechanism for identifying staff development needs is informal. A number of ad hoc College events were held during 2012, relating mainly to health and safety and online learning. At the time of the review, the training for online learning has not led to any subsequent development of the College's virtual learning environment by staff. Individual staff development largely relates to subject knowledge updating and administrative topics. A small proportion has focused on teaching and learning. Many staff contribute to external conference papers and other publications, for example textbooks and academic articles. The College actively encourages staff to consider sabbaticals and, at the time of the review, three staff have been granted sabbatical leave for 2013.

2.15 There is no formal process for the evaluation of individual and college-wide development events, although a number have been evaluated informally with, for example, a staff report or group questionnaire. In September 2012, the College reviewed and redrafted its Staff Professional Development Policy and included evaluation as part of the process. At the time of the review, this requirement had not been fully implemented. The team considers it **desirable** that the College provide a formal mechanism for identifying individual and college-wide staff development needs and evaluating outcomes.

2.16 A standard Appraisal and Professional Development Interview Form is used for annual staff appraisals. Although appraisers discuss a staff member's contributions, they do not formally comment on staff performance. The College recognises that the process and forms need reviewing to ensure that performance needs and staff development are considered more effectively.

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

2.17 The respective agreements with the awarding bodies and organisations clearly set out the College's responsibilities for the provision and maintenance of appropriate learning resources, including library provision. The adequacy of the College's learning resources are considered as part of the awarding body and organisation monitoring processes.

For example, one of the specific areas considered by the Adventist Accrediting Association as part of its accreditation visit is library and resources.

2.18 Within the College, the processes for ensuring the adequacy of learning resources are well defined. The College librarian is Secretary to the College's Academic Resources Committee and a member of the Academic Board. The College's information technology (IT) manager is also a member of the Academic Resources Committee. The librarian is involved with discussions about new programme developments and has responsibility for determining resource implications and ensuring that adequate resources are built into budget discussions. The operation of the library is governed by the library's Strategic Plan, supplemented by operational policies such as the Collection Management Policy. The College is in the process of developing a college-wide IT plan as part of its strategic planning process.

2.19 The library gathers student feedback formally through its annual user satisfaction survey. The findings of the survey are reported back to students through emails and posters. The library also produces an annual report as part of the College's annual monitoring cycle. The 2012 survey showed that students are satisfied with the College's library provision and the support received from library staff. This was supported by students in discussions with the review team, who stated that they find library staff very open to feedback. They gave examples of improvements that have been made as a result of their feedback, including the ability to reserve books electronically, a drop-box system for returning books and extended library opening hours. The responsiveness and openness of library staff to student feedback is **good practice**.

2.20 Physical IT facilities are generally appropriate for needs. Furthermore, students are able to use their own IT equipment through the College's wireless network. A virtual learning environment has recently been developed for use within the College and some relevant staff training was provided. All students have accounts whereby they can access a range of module and programme-related material on the virtual learning environment. The College acknowledges that, while the virtual learning environment is used effectively to provide additional support for some students, further work is required to develop its use. Availability of materials is variable, with some modules having no presence and the material available on others varying from being basic documentation - such as module descriptors - to more developed learning support materials. The team considers it **desirable** that the College develop consistent use of the virtual learning environment across all of the provision.

2.21 The College offers students valuable formal and informal placement opportunities. In Theology, the formal placements are supported by a placement handbook and arrangements are overseen by a placement coordinator, who has responsibility for ensuring that placement providers are mentored and monitored. Placements are well tailored to the needs of the students and include non-church-based placements for those not intending to enter the ministry. Students are prepared for placements and are monitored throughout the placement periods. Field trips are organised for study abroad programmes, and those students studying Business also get opportunities to visit local companies. Students stated that they welcome the opportunity to undertake such visits and noted that, following feedback, the number of these activities has increased.

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 College uses an appropriate range of mechanisms to communicate public information to students and other stakeholders, including its website, its virtual learning environment, social media, and printed programme and promotional materials. Information is available on the website for prospective students, current students, staff and alumni, and covers a range of relevant topics including the programmes available, information about admissions, and other College procedures and policies. Website materials are supplemented by a range of printed leaflets and brochures. Students commented that, as prospective students, they had received information in a timely manner and had found the information to be accurate. Students had mixed views of the website, with some finding it clear and helpful and others less so. College staff make significant and valuable use of social media, which they use to communicate information to students about what is happening on campus and to offer supplementary tutorial support. Social media enable students to access staff at any time. This effective use of social media to communicate with students is **good practice**.

3.2 At the start of their programme, all new and returning students are given helpful and comprehensive details of facilities, resources, contacts, timetables, assessment dates and how to prepare for the coming year. Undergraduate and postgraduate programme handbooks are provided in hard copy or electronic format. These give programme details and information on plagiarism, appeals and other important academic regulations.

3.3 The College publishes a helpful overarching Handbook of Academic Programmes and Policies, which is made available to staff and students on the College website. Due to the uncertainty about the validating partner for the Theology programmes, the updated version of the handbook excludes Theology, and students on these programmes have access to a programme-specific handbook. Students in Theology undertaking a placement also receive a placement handbook. The team generally found these handbooks to be accurate, and students commented positively on their usefulness.

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

3.4 The College acknowledged that its public information has tended to be developed organically and without an overarching process, and that some of the website links and content have not been checked regularly. To address this, the College has recently developed a Public Information Policy, which is not yet fully implemented. This sets out practices for disclosure of information held by the College, and the procedures and responsibilities of key staff for ensuring the accuracy of any information published. In November 2012, the College appointed a new Digital Marketing and Promotions Coordinator, part of whose remit is to update the website and to work with academic staff to ensure consistency of information. The College is also in the process of rebranding all of its public documentation. Programme teams, together with the Deputy Principal, are responsible for the currency of programme handbooks.

3.5 The period of uncertainty experienced by the College has clearly impacted on its published material. In terms of public information, the team found that - while many elements of the College's website had been updated - it continued to include some out-of-date references to previous structures, programmes and partnerships. The College is now preparing to launch a new website in January 2013 and demonstrated this to the team. It has

developed well considered plans for content ownership and change management, accuracy checking procedures, and for post-implementation user group evaluations. The College's planned new website and its revised policies for public information are well designed to help ensure accurate and clear information. This is supported by the introduction of a formal written Public Information Policy, the appointment of the Digital Marketing and Promotions Coordinator and Student Recruitment Coordinator (publications), the rebranding of the College, and its relaunch of printed promotional materials. The team considers it **advisable** that the College expedite the process of relaunching its website and associated promotional material.

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

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

Newbold College of Higher Education action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight December 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The review team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>wide-ranging student involvement in the processes for managing the provision (paragraphs 1.5 and 1.12)</li> </ul>	Seek to enhance what is already seen as good practice by reviewing the Student Evaluation and Feedback Policy	1 September 2013	Deputy Principal, Quality Assurance Coordinator and Chair of Academic Board	Examples of questionnaires	Academic Board	Curriculum area minutes  Academic Quality Assurance Committee reports
	Expand the range of questions for student evaluation and provide more robust, regular feedback to students, especially via news-sheets	1 September 2013	Curriculum area heads	Examples of feedback to students (for example curriculum area news-sheets)	Academic Board	Academic Board minutes

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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the responsiveness and openness of library staff to student feedback (paragraph 2.19)</li> </ul>	Continue to survey students annually to monitor trends, needs and concerns	Survey April 2013, analysis 31 May 2013	Associate Librarian	List of issues developed to inform strategic and operational planning	Deputy Principal and Academic Resources Committee	Plans approved by Academic Resources Committee and Academic Board
	Continue to seek feedback through informal contact with students and more formally through their elected representatives	In progress	Librarian and Associate Librarian	Issues identified for immediate action and for inclusion in medium and long-term planning	Deputy Principal and Academic Resources Committee	Formal and informal student feedback and Academic Resources Committee minutes
	Review mapping of library services against the Quality Code Chapter B4 (also see below)	1 September 2013	Librarian	Revised strategy for library services to disabled students as part of whole-college approach	Disability Coordinator and Deputy Principal	Mapping evaluated and minuted by Academic Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the effective use of social media to communicate with students (paragraph 3.1).</li> </ul>	Increase the use of social media for communication with students	1 September 2013	All staff	Demonstrate via statistical analysis an increased use of social media (for example Skype, Facetime, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)	Digital Marketing and Promotions Coordinator and Student Recruitment Coordinator	Analysis evaluated by Senior Management Team
<b>Advisable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the provider to:						

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review the relationships, responsibilities and terms of reference of academic committees to achieve consistent and timely implementation of action plans and a greater emphasis on quality enhancement, and to develop further the mechanisms for identifying and disseminating good practice (paragraphs 1.4, 2.2 and 2.4)</li> </ul>	<p>Develop and/or review the terms of reference and reporting structure/procedures for course boards, curriculum area boards, Academic Resources Committee, Academic Quality Assurance Panels, Academic Quality Assurance Committee and Academic Board</p>	1 September 2013	Deputy Principal, Quality Assurance Coordinator and Chair of Academic Board	Existence of new and/or revised terms of reference as appropriate	Academic Board	Evaluated and minuted by Academic Board
	<p>Require regular submission of action plans to inform an overarching whole-college rolling academic action plan overseen and maintained by a newly-appointed Quality Assurance Coordinator</p> <p>This action plan will include items from all academic committees, annual monitoring reports, and Academic</p>	1 September 2013	Deputy Principal and Quality Assurance Coordinator	Existence of a whole-college overarching action plan	Academic Board	Evaluated and minuted by Academic Board

Quality Assurance Committee	Disseminate points of good practice as identified in reports from Academic Quality Assurance Panels and Academic Quality Assurance Committee, and in minutes from other academic committees	1 September 2013	Deputy Principal and Quality Assurance Coordinator	Documents evidencing dissemination of items of good practice (for example Briefing Statements)	Academic Board	Evaluated and minuted by Academic Board
	Maintain and update all academic policies in one place online	1 May 2013	Deputy Principal	Existence of all academic policies on website, in the public domain or password protected, as appropriate	Academic Board	Academic Resources Committee minutes Evaluated and minuted by Academic Board
	Develop a timetable for the regular review of academic policies and procedures	1 June 2013	Deputy Principal and Quality Assurance Coordinator	Document agreed by Academic Board Document agreed by Academic Board	Academic Board	Evaluated and minuted by Academic Board
	Review annual monitoring processes and	1 June 2013	Deputy Principal and Quality Assurance		Academic Board	Evaluated and minuted by Academic

	monitoring templates		Coordinator			Board
	Email information updates to Academic Board members	1 March 2013 and thereafter	Deputy Principal and Office Manager	Evidence of emailed information	Academic Board	Evaluated and minuted by Academic Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>produce an action plan for the further aligning of current practice to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 1.8)</li> </ul>	Update and enhance current mapping against the various Chapters of the Quality Code, with action points for each Chapter to be fed into the overarching academic action plan	1 September 2013	Academic Board members each responsible for reviewing and revising alignment against specific Chapters and reporting back to Academic Board	Evidence of updated mapping document and of action plans supporting each Chapter	Academic Board	Evaluated and minuted by Academic Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop tutorial guidelines which formalise arrangements for all students to receive at least an appropriate minimum entitlement (paragraph 2.10)</li> </ul>	Review and update the current tutorial policy/processes and develop a timetabled mechanism to ensure all students receive a minimum number of required tutorials	1 September 2013	Deputy Principal and curriculum area heads	Students all attend a minimum number of tutorials, as evidenced by tutors' tutorial attendance sheets	Academic Board	Evaluated and minuted by curriculum area boards and Academic Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>expedite the process of relaunching the College website and associated promotional material (paragraph 3.5).</li> </ul>	Launch the new website	January 2013	Digital Marketing and Promotions Coordinator	Evidence of new website	Senior Management Team	Senior Management Team minutes
	Review all promotional materials for	1 September 2013	Principal, Deputy Principal, Bursar and Student	Evidence of reviewed and updated materials	Senior Management Team	Evaluated and minuted by Senior

	completeness, currency and accuracy, in accordance with the Public Information Policy		Recruitment Coordinator			Management Team
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>widen external representation and critique, and encourage consistent student attendance at all appropriate academic committees (paragraphs 1.3 and 1.10)</li> </ul>	Appoint external member of Academic Board	31 December 2012	Deputy Principal	Presence of an external member from the University of Winchester in place for the meeting on 28 January 2013	Academic Board	Agreed and minuted by Academic Board
	Add to Department of Theological Studies external examiners by once again appointing external examiners for provision within School of Business and study abroad programmes, as appropriate	1 September 2013	Heads of School of Business and Study Abroad Programmes	Presence of and input from external examiners, as appropriate	Academic Board	Evaluated and minuted by curriculum areas and Academic Board
	Encourage more regular student attendance at all appropriate	1 September 2013	Chairs of Academic Board, Academic Resources	Regular attendance by student members of committees, noting that	Academic Board	Attendance noted in all appropriate minutes as

	committees		Committee, curriculum area/ course boards	Academic Board attendance has been consistently good		received and evaluated by Academic Board
	Student members of curriculum area/course boards to be encouraged to give reports to regular bi-semesterial meetings of students within their cohort or curriculum area	1 September 2013	Curriculum area/course board chairs	Regular reports from students to students	Academic Board	Reports noted in all appropriate minutes as received and evaluated by Academic Board
	Student members of Academic Board and Academic Resources Committee to be encouraged to give regular reports to the Newbold Students' Association	1 September 2013	Staff Adviser to Newbold Students' Association	Regular reports to Newbold Students' Association	Newbold Students' Association Executive	Reports evaluated and noted by Newbold Students' Association Executive

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop and formalise the current peer observation process (paragraph 2.6)</li> </ul>	<p>Review and update the current peer review process document/form</p> <p>Implement peer observation in all curriculum areas</p>	<p>1 May 2013</p> <p>31 December 2013</p>	<p>Deputy Principal and Quality Assurance Coordinator</p> <p>Curriculum area heads</p>	<p>Revised document</p> <p>Evidence of whole-college intra and inter-curriculum area peer observation</p>	<p>Academic Board</p> <p>Academic Board</p>	<p>Evaluated and minuted by Academic Board</p> <p>Evaluated and minuted by curriculum area boards and Academic Board</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide a formal mechanism for identifying individual and college-wide staff development needs and evaluating outcomes (paragraphs 2.15 and 2.16)</li> </ul>	<p>Curriculum areas to discuss all staff development needs at regular curriculum area meetings and to follow published policy for staff development initiatives</p> <p>Curriculum area heads to meet together once a semester with the Senior Management Team to determine and approve whole-college staff development needs</p>	<p>1 September 2013</p> <p>1 September 2013</p>	<p>Curriculum area heads</p> <p>Senior Management Team</p>	<p>Evidence of staff development discussions at curriculum area boards</p> <p>Senior Management Team minutes</p>	<p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Senior Management Team</p>	<p>Senior Management Team minutes and curriculum area board minutes as received by the Academic Board</p> <p>Evaluated and minuted by Senior Management Team</p> <p>The process will be informed by annual appraisals and linked to curriculum area action plans and the whole-</p>

	<p>The maintenance of a spreadsheet showing all staff development requests granted, with notes on all outcomes</p> <p>Evaluation of the outcomes of all staff development requests granted</p>	<p>1 September 2013</p> <p>31 December 2013</p>	<p>Office Manager</p> <p>Curriculum area heads</p>	<p>The existence of a staff development spreadsheet appropriately maintained and updated</p> <p>Curriculum area documents showing evaluation</p>	<p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Academic Board</p>	<p>college strategic plan</p> <p>Evaluated and minuted by Senior Management Team</p> <p>Outcomes evaluated in curriculum area annual monitoring reports</p> <p>Evaluated and minuted by Academic Board</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop consistent use of the virtual learning environment across all of the provision (paragraph 2.20).</li> </ul>	<p>Develop a Virtual Learning Environment Policy</p> <p>All credit-bearing modules to include an online delivery element via the virtual learning</p>	<p>1 June 2013</p> <p>31 December 2013</p>	<p>Secretary of Academic Resources Committee and IT Manager</p> <p>Curriculum area heads</p>	<p>The presence of a Virtual Learning Environment Policy</p> <p>The presence of online provision/ blended learning support</p>	<p>Academic Board</p> <p>Academic Board</p>	<p>Evaluated and minuted by Academic Resources Committee and Academic Board</p> <p>Evaluated and minuted by curriculum area/course boards</p>

	environment to support campus-based delivery, and where appropriate to offer a full online alternative for off-campus students					Evaluated and minuted by Academic Board
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## About QAA

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

QAA's aims are to:

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

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

More information about the work of QAA is available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk).

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

## Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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