London School of Theology

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

May 2012

Key findings about London School of Theology

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in May 2012, the QAA review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of Brunel University and Middlesex University.

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

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

Good practice

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

- the support and encouragement of strong student participation in the management of standards and the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 2.4)
- the comprehensive academic and personal support provided for students (paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6)
- the time made available to highly qualified academic staff for scholarly activity, research, and personal study (paragraph 2.7)
- the recognition by the School of the importance of public information demonstrated by establishing the role of Director of Communications to assure the consistency of information provided to students and potential students (paragraph 3.4).

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:

- have consistent assessment procedures across all programmes, especially with respect to responses to external examiners' reports, ensuring the timely return of students' work to continue to assure academic standards (paragraph 1.7).

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

- continue to develop systematic ways of interrogating student progression data to contribute to the maintenance of academic standards and the enhancement of learning opportunities (paragraphs 1.8)
- employ more formal systems for identifying and disseminating good practice that would further enhance the quality of learning and teaching (paragraph 2.3)
- provide regular feedback to students of the School's responses to their concerns (paragraph 2.4)
- identify and deliver staff development needs within a strategic framework in order to enhance the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 2.8)
- further develop electronic learning resources to enhance the experience, in particular, of distance learners (paragraph 2.11)

- document all public information processes and protocols to ensure their continuing comprehensiveness, currency and accuracy (paragraph 3.2).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)[1] (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at the London School of Theology (the provider; the School). 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 Brunel University and Middlesex University. The review was carried out by Lynn Fulford, Ann Kettle and Philip Lingard (reviewers), and Catherine Fairhurst (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 annual monitoring reports, student programme handbooks, staff job descriptions, School policy documents, minutes of meetings, partnership agreements, and meetings with staff and students.

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

- the Academic Infrastructure
- partnership agreements with Brunel University and Middlesex University
- criteria of the British Association of Counsellors and Psychotherapists.

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

The London School of Theology (the School) is an independent Christian theological college. Established in 1943 in London as an evangelical non-denominational Bible college, it moved to a campus in Northwood in 1970. There are a range of programmes in theology and related vocational disciplines. The School's mission is 'to be an evangelical academic learning community called to equip and encourage one another to be disciples of Jesus Christ'.

In 2005, the School transferred the validation of its programmes to Middlesex University. Prior to this, all programmes had been validated by Brunel University. There are still 21 Brunel University PhD students enrolled who have not yet completed their degrees. There are currently 441 students enrolled on Middlesex University-validated programmes, including 144 on distance learning programmes. All taught provision is based in Northwood, north-west London, where approximately 100 students live on the campus.

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

Middlesex University
- Certificate of Higher Education in Theology
- Diploma of Higher Education in Theology
- BA (Hons) in Theology
- Certificate of Higher Education in Theological Studies (by distance learning)
- Diploma of Higher Education in Theological Studies (by distance learning)
- BA (Hons) in Theological Studies (by distance learning)
- Certificate of Higher Education in Theology and Counselling

---

[1] www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4.
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx.

- Diploma of Higher Education in Theology and Counselling
- BA (Hons) in Theology and Counselling
- Certificate of Higher Education in Theology, Music and Worship
- Diploma of Higher Education in Theology, Music and Worship
- BA (Hons) in Theology, Music and Worship
- Certificate of Higher Education in Theology and Worship
- Diploma of Higher Education in Theology and Worship
- BA (Hons) in Theology and Worship
- Postgraduate Certificate in Transformation
- Postgraduate Diploma in Transformation
- MA in Transformation
- Postgraduate Certificate in Integrative Psychology
- Postgraduate Diploma in Integrative Psychology
- MA in Integrative Psychology
- MA in Aspects and Implications of Biblical Interpretation (by distance learning)
- MTh
- MPhil
- PhD

Brunel University
- PhD

The provider's stated responsibilities

The management of standards and the quality of the majority of the higher education provision is set out in Memoranda of Cooperation Agreements with Middlesex University. The overall responsibility for the standards of the validated provision remains with the Universities. The School is responsible for the management of standards and the monitoring of the quality of learning opportunities, as specified within the agreements. This includes admissions, tuition and assessment. The Memorandum of Agreement with Brunel University describes the School's responsibilities for research degree programmes, including monitoring and review, student support and external examiner's nomination.

Recent developments

The strategic development of the content and delivery of the theological provision at the School is being considered by an Educational Review Group, which will report to the Board of Governors in June 2012. Recently, an MA in Theological Education has been validated. This has been developed to facilitate the professional development of those already involved in the delivery of theological higher education.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a written submission to the review team. The submission was compiled independently by the student academic representative and programme representatives, using information from a school-wide student questionnaire and a selected focus group. The questionnaire received 103 responses from students on a wide variety of programmes. The focus group included representatives from every programme group and year at the School. The team found the student submission informative and explored its content in meetings with students both at the preparatory meeting and during the visit to gain a clear picture of the student learning experience.

Detailed findings about the London School of Theology

1   Academic standards

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

1.1   The School effectively fulfils its responsibilities for the management of academic standards, as shown by the Middlesex University revalidations of the programmes and the external examiners' reports. These responsibilities are defined in the agreements with the University. The School is responsible for student admissions (including accreditation of prior learning), the provision of tuition, student assessment, as well as learning resources and student support services. The School's responsibility for students registered for research degrees with Brunel University include: student recruitment and induction, annual monitoring and review of their performance, provision of academic and non-academic support and the nomination of external examiners.

1.2   Coherent line management structures are in place and the staff have a clear understanding of their specific roles and responsibilities. The terms of reference and membership of all School committees are explicitly defined in its Academic Oversight document. Academic standards are managed by the Senior Leadership Team, which includes the Acting Principal (Vice Principal Community), the Chief Operating Officer, the Vice Principal Academic, the Academic Secretary and the Director of Communications. The Academic Board is responsible for the planning, development and operation of the academic work of the School. It delegates operation of the programmes to the programme boards.

1.3   There is an effective working relationship between the School and Middlesex University. The School's nominated institutional link tutor and the University's link tutor oversee the maintenance of standards and the quality of programme delivery, in compliance with University requirements. Frequent communication is maintained between the School and the University to support this formal relationship. The University link tutor attends the programme boards, boards of examiners and the School's Academic Board. The Research Committee has thorough oversight of postgraduate research students registered with both Middlesex University and Brunel University.

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

1.4   The School engages with the Academic Infrastructure through its collaboration with Middlesex University. Policies, procedures and practices are in line with the Academic Infrastructure. The subject benchmark statement for Theology and Religious Studies informs the academic programmes. These are designed, validated and reviewed according to the University's quality procedures. The awards reflect *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. The School has been actively involved in the national Quality Code consultation process.

1.5   The postgraduate programmes are informed by the *Master's degree characteristics* and *Doctoral degree characteristics* documents published by the QAA. The award of BA (Hons) in Theology and Counselling fulfils the professional practitioner criteria and is accredited by the British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy. All contracted full and part-time tutors are members of the Academic Board, appropriate programme boards and boards of examiners. This enables staff to understand and engage with academic standards. Students have access to programme specifications through programme

handbooks, which detail the requirements, policies and procedures and are available electronically.

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

1.6   The assessment procedures are fair and effective; this is confirmed by the external examiners who express satisfaction with academic standards. The external examiners are nominated by the School and appointed by the Universities. There is a coherent process for internal moderation and second marking, which helps ensure the quality of marking and feedback within individual modules. Module leaders report on the quality of submitted assessed work. A moderation summary form is completed for every module, providing valuable opportunities to identify generic strengths and areas for development in students' work. This process includes an evaluation of the spread of marks, which some module leaders use to compare marks with those of previous years, but this is not yet done consistently across all programmes.

1.7   The review team found some other inconsistencies in student assessment procedures across programmes, for example in the timeliness of student assessment feedback, and on occasions, some slow responses to external examiners' reports. The Annual Monitoring Report covers all programmes, but presents only a broad overview of academic standards. There is no clearly articulated system to ensure that individual programmes develop monitored action plans. It is advisable for the School to have consistent assessment procedures across programmes, especially with respect to responses to external examiners' reports, ensuring the timely return of students' work to continue to assure academic standards.

1.8   The School has identified data analysis as an area where improvements can be made to maintain standards and enhance the learning opportunities. A student records' database has recently been developed, but little analysis has yet been undertaken of student achievement, progression and retention data. The team considers it desirable that the School continues to develop systems for the collection and interrogation of data. Programme retention, progression and achievement statistics can then be compared and so contribute to the maintenance of standards and the enhancement of learning opportunities.

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

---

2   Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1   The quality of learning opportunities is monitored effectively by the Academic Board through the programme boards using external examiners' reports and feedback from students. The School is required to inform the University of any changes in resources, staffing or other factors that might endanger the threshold quality of the programmes it delivers. The mechanisms for the management of academic standards described in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.3 also apply to the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.

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

2.2   Paragraph 1.4 identifies how the College effectively engages with the Academic Infrastructure and the accreditation body. This also applies to the management and enhancement of learning opportunities. The Training Unit document, the Research Supervisor Handbook and the student induction programme are examples of how external reference points, such as the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, are fully used in the management and enhancement of learning opportunities. Staff engage with external reference points through familiarity with the requirements of the School's awarding and accrediting bodies.

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

2.3   External examiners' reports and annual monitoring reports provide evidence that oversight of the quality of learning and teaching is maintained. A formal scheme of teaching observation has recently been introduced with development plans to include formal peer observation. Previously, staff were encouraged to engage in reflection on the delivery of teaching and learning. Good practice in teaching and learning is identified and disseminated in a variety of ways, such as team teaching, faculty lunches and external examining activities**.** It is desirable to employ more formal systems for identifying and disseminating good practice that would further enhance learning and teaching.

2.4   Students report that they are very satisfied with the quality and variety of teaching. They are able to express their views because they have strong representation on School boards, committees and the elected Student Committee. This ensures effective student involvement in quality processes across the provision. Other comprehensive formal and informal processes are used to determine their views, including analysis of module and programme student feedback, personal tutorials and good access to staff. This support and encouragement of effective student participation in the management of standards and quality of learning opportunities is good practice. It was, however, suggested in the student submission, and confirmed in meetings with students, that the School needs to communicate more clearly the actions taken in response to student feedback. It is desirable that the School provides regular feedback to students on concerns they have raised in maintaining and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning.

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

2.5   The School has well established and robust systems to support its diverse student community. Each undergraduate and taught postgraduate student is assigned a personal tutor who is available for academic advice and support. Study skills modules and workshops are provided for first-year undergraduates and third-year undergraduates concerning their project/dissertation. Careers advice, help with English language and disability support are provided on an individual basis. Distance learning students are provided with some electronic support. Student committees also organise their own peer support networks and support services, including a mentoring scheme. The student records' database is not yet used to enhance student support. The Vice-Principal Community oversees student support services and meets regularly with the students. The students report that they are satisfied with the academic and personal support provided by the School, especially the accessibility of the staff.

2.6   There are comprehensive student recruitment and induction procedures. All applicants are interviewed. Those residing overseas are interviewed by using voice-over internet protocol services. The students said they particularly appreciate meeting their peers

at the three-day induction programme, whose organisation is delegated to the student committee. All full-time undergraduates undertake practical training in externally provided placements during their first or second year. The Training Unit manages these placements and provides extensive support. The comprehensive academic and personal support provided for students is good practice.

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

2.7   The School has a strong culture of research and scholarship. Academic staff are encouraged to enhance the level of their academic qualifications and to engage in research and scholarly activity. There is evidence of publishing in a wide range of journals, membership of academic societies, professional bodies and external examining. Full-time members of the academic staff have one day a week for personal study and development and have access to a generous sabbatical scheme. This encouragement of research and scholarly activity is good practice.

2.8   Although staff are encouraged to undertake research and scholarly activity, there is no systematic approach to the professional development of staff or any staff development strategy. Developmental needs are identified by annual appraisal on an individual basis. There is a mentoring process for new and visiting academic staff, but no formal training requirements in teaching, learning and assessment. The quality of learning opportunities would be enhanced, and this is a desirable recommendation, if staff development needs were identified and delivered within a strategic framework.

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

2.9   The School has good learning accommodation with a separate postgraduate centre and a large scholarly library. The library is kept up to date and students have access to a variety of electronic journals and other appropriate resources. Undergraduates reported that they are concerned about the security of books in the library, as borrowed books are often not returned or they are borrowed without authorisation. The School is currently considering the potential resource implications of a secure library system.

2.10   All members of the teaching staff are well qualified academically and this is recognised and appreciated by students. There are 14 full and 14 part-time academic staff together with visiting lecturers and a network of associate research supervisors who provide specialist postgraduate supervision. The students studying counselling have access to a local Christian counselling service, which provides them with supervised counselling practice in an organisational setting.

2.11   The open intranet system provides information for staff and students, but is not an interactive virtual learning environment. It includes calendars, policies and guidelines, programme guides and limited learning content. There has been a recent review of the intranet together with the information management system infrastructure. The work and expertise required to provide adequate resources has been determined. Improvements to the electronic learning resources would enhance teaching and learning, particularly for distance learning students, and this is a desirable recommendation.

> 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 information is professional in appearance, well presented, current and effective in communicating with prospective students, existing students, staff and all other stakeholders. The School provides in printed form and on its website a range of useful information about its higher education provision, which includes prospectuses and handbooks for each programme of study, the intranet, and various publicity and informational material. There are also School social networking sites, which update students on key events and information about the School. There is limited electronic communication with students, as explained in paragraph 2.11. The students reported that they are satisfied with the quality and currency of published information available to them both when they were applicants for entry and as members of the School. They are consulted about the effectiveness of some of the published information, for example the effectiveness of the School logo. They reported that the website was beneficial when they were considering their programme application and found the descriptions of student life, module details and a video of a conversation by a programme leader helpful.

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

3.2   The School's arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information are comprehensive but informal. These arrangements include an annual review for currency of the information, student feedback processes and safeguards for social media sites. A draft Public Information Policy has been produced, identifying a set of principles for publishing information, defining senior management responsibilities and describing a clear purpose and audience for issuing public information. The processes by which information is produced, approved, registered, published and audited are yet to be formally defined in the policy. It is desirable for this policy to document all public information processes and protocols to assure their continuing comprehensiveness, currency and accuracy.

3.3   Responsibilities for producing programme information are clearly defined. This is produced by the relevant programme leaders and approved by the Academic Secretary. All material relating to the delivery of higher education programmes is coordinated by the Academic Secretary and Chief Operating Officer prior to approval by the University, as defined in Middlesex University's Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook. Programme handbooks are contextualised by the School within a Middlesex University template. The students confirmed that programme handbooks contain essential information on programme content, assessment procedures, communications and support. They are available on a disk and on the intranet. Students are provided with the 'ABC of LST', a handbook defining the details of the operational details of the School and the community. Staff, including visiting lecturers, are issued with a Staff Handbook, which describes the policies, operation and administration of the School.

3.4   The School's recognition of the importance of public information is demonstrated by the recent appointment of a Director of Communications, who reviews all published material for internal consistency of information provided, across all forms of media. The team considers the creation of this new role to be good practice.

> 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[3]

London School of Theology action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight May 2012						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The review team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
• the support and encouragement of strong student participation in the management of standards and the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 2.4)	Establish Student Participation Forum, which monitors the quality of participation, communication and partnership between students and staff	November 2012	Academic Secretary and Student Academic Representative	Establishment of functioning Student Participation Forum	Academic Board	Evidence of established Student Participation Forum
	Student Participation Forum monitors quality of participation, communication and partnership between students and staff	January 2013 (and then ongoing)	Academic Vice Principal, Academic Secretary, Student Academic Representative, programme level student representatives	The forum receives, evaluates and responds to the information regarding adequacy of communication with students	Academic Board and Student Council	Regular monitoring of function of Student Participation Forum through termly reports
	Relevant staff, institutional	October 2012	Academic Secretary,	Evident student satisfaction that	Student Participation	Feedback at Student

[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 bodies.

	committees/groups and students communicate appropriately so that participation is ensured by identification of issues of concern and identification of individual responsible to communicate response	(and then ongoing)	programme leaders, tutors, student representatives	staff/institution note, and respond appropriately to expressed student concerns	Forum	Participation Forum, student programme evaluation forms, student module feedback forms
• the comprehensive academic and personal support provided for students (paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6)	Review, evaluate and monitor student tutorial support structure	July 2013 (ongoing)	Community Vice Principal and Welfare Secretary (Student Council)	Feedback from students and faculty indicating 80 per cent satisfaction with provision of academic and personal support	Academic Board and Student Committee	Feedback from programme evaluation, programme boards, and Student Participation Forum
	Enhance database provision to facilitate student support record keeping	July 2013	Academic Secretary	Enhanced database provision, facilitating recording, access and presentation of student support records	Senior Leadership Team	Semester evaluation report
• the time made available to highly qualified academic staff for scholarly activity, research, and personal study (paragraph 2.7)	Development and monitoring of enhanced Institutional Research and Study Policy	February 2013	Academic Vice Principal and Academic Board	Continued staff professional development and enhancement of academic profile of institution through development and	Senior Leadership Team and Academic Board	Annual monitoring report of Institutional Research and Study Policy informed by annual appraisals

				implementation of Institutional Research and Study Policy		
• the recognition by the School of the importance of public information demonstrated by establishing the role of Director of Communications to assure the consistency of information provided to students and potential students (paragraph 3.4).	Approval and implementation of Public Information Policy Establish and implement monitoring and evaluation process for Public Information Policy	October 2012 February 2013	Director of Communications Director of Communications	Production of Public Information Policy The provision of consistent, timely and accurate information to students, potential students, staff and other stakeholders	Senior Leadership Team Senior Leadership Team	Termly report from Director of Communications, feedback from students, potential students, staff and other stakeholders
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:						
• have consistent assessment procedures across all programmes, especially with respect to responses to external examiners' reports, ensuring the timely return of students' work to continue to assure academic	Programme boards to develop action plans to monitor response to external examiners' reports	October 2012 (and ongoing)	Academic Secretary, programme leaders, programme boards	Production, implementation, monitoring of action plans in response to external examiners' reports showing clear evidence of consistent assessment procedures across all programmes	Academic Secretary and Academic Board	Report by Academic Secretary as a standing item on the Academic Board agenda Feedback from external examiners in subsequent reports

standards (paragraph 1.7).	External examiners' reports, institutional responses and action plans reported to Academic Board and exam boards	November 2012 (and ongoing)	Academic Secretary	Reports to Academic Board and exam boards, showing clear evidence of consistent assessment procedures across all programmes	Academic Board and exam boards	Exam boards' minutes and external examiners' reports
	Consistent implementation across all programmes and monitoring of institutional policy on timely return of students' work	October 2012	Academic Secretary, programme leaders and Registrar	Return of students' work within institutional policy guidelines	Academic Board	Student module feedback, programme feedback, registry assessment documentation
	Inclusion of assessment submission dates and expected return of work dates within student programme handbooks					
	Amendment of registry assessment documentation to include expected and actual return dates					

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:						
• continue to develop systematic ways of interrogating student progression data to contribute to the maintenance of academic standards and the enhancement of learning opportunities (paragraphs 1.8)	Development of the School's database to facilitate analysis of student recruitment, achievement, progression and retention	June 2013	Academic Secretary and Registrar	Database information system that will enable statistical analysis of student recruitment, achievement, progression and retention, and the use of this information by programme, academic and exam boards	Senior Leadership Team and Academic Board	Programme boards, Academic Board and exam boards' minutes Exam boards' documentation External examiners' reports
• employ more formal systems for identifying and disseminating good practice that would further enhance the quality of learning and teaching (paragraph 2.3)	External examiners' reports, institutional responses and action plans as a standing item on programme, academic and exam boards' agendas	November 2012 (and ongoing)	Academic Secretary and programme leaders	Identification and dissemination of good practice as identified within external examiners' reports	Academic Board, programme boards	Programme boards, Academic Board, exam boards' minutes, action plans
	Establishment and monitoring of formal policy and process of peer observation of teaching	October 2012 (and ongoing)	Academic Vice Principal	Peer observation of teaching of all faculty in accordance with policy	Academic Board	Annual report to the Academic Board
	Implementation of	July 2013	Academic Vice	Faculty participation	Academic Board	Report to

	common/corporate assessment marking activities as part of faculty development	(and ongoing)	Principal	in and reflection on common/ corporate assessment marking activities		Academic Board and programme boards
• provide regular feedback to students of the School's responses to their concerns (paragraph 2.4)	Establish Student Participation Forum	November 2012	Academic Secretary and Student Academic Representative	Establishment of functioning Student Participation Forum	Academic Board	Terms of reference of Student Participation Forum
	Student Participation Forum monitors quality of participation, communication and partnership between students and staff	January 2013 (and then ongoing)	Academic Vice Principal, Academic Secretary, Student Academic Representative, and programme level student representatives	The forum receives, evaluates and responds to the information regarding adequacy of communication with students	Academic Board and Student Council	Regular monitoring of function of Student Participation Forum through termly reports
	Relevant staff, institutional committees/groups and students communicate appropriately so that participation is ensured by identification of issues of concern and identification of individual responsible to	October 2012 (and then ongoing)	Academic Secretary, programme leaders, tutors, student representatives	Evident student satisfaction that staff/institution note, and respond appropriately to expressed student concerns	Student Participation Forum	Feedback at Student Participation Forum, student programme evaluation forms, student module feedback forms

	communicate response					
• identify and deliver staff development needs within a strategic framework in order to enhance the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 2.8)	Development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of Staff Development Policy	February 2013	Chief Operating Officer and Academic Vice Principal	Professional and personal development of staff within the overall strategic strategy of the School in accordance with the Staff Development Policy	Senior Leadership Team	Monitoring of policy by Senior Leadership Team through annual reports Annual staff appraisals
• further develop electronic learning resources to enhance the experience, in particular, of distance learners (paragraphs 2.11)	Continued development of internet, intranet and information management systems	July 2013 (and ongoing)	Director of Communications, IT Department,	Fully functioning internet, intranet and management information systems	Senior Leadership Team	Feedback from staff and students, module and programme evaluation
	Identification of specific requirements and resources in regard to the implementation of an enhanced virtual learning environment	July 2013	Director of Communications, Academic Secretary, programme leaders	Strategic Development Plan for implementation of an enhanced virtual learning environment	Senior Leadership Team	Feedback on Strategic Development Plan from staff and students
• document all public information processes and protocols to ensure their continuing comprehensiveness, currency and accuracy (paragraph 3.2).	Development of Public Information Policy to include processes by which information is produced, approved, registered, published and audited, and how these processes are monitored and	Draft - November 2012 Final - February 2013	Director of Communications	Public Information Policy, which includes processes by which information is produced, approved, registered, published and audited, and how these processes are	Senior Leadership Team	Appropriate approval registration, publishing and auditing of public information

		audited to ensure their continuing comprehensiveness, currency and accuracy			monitored and audited to ensure their continuing comprehensiveness, currency and accuracy		
		Monitoring of Public Information Policy and processes	July 2013	Director of Communications	Monitoring, evaluation and implementation of Public Information Policy and processes	Senior Leadership Team	Quarterly Report to Senior Leadership Team

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.

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk