



New York University, London

Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight

Review by the Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education

May 2012

About this report

This is a report of a review under the Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at New York University, London. The review took place on 17 May 2012 and was conducted by a panel, as follows:

- Professor Alan Jago
- Professor Debbie Lockton
- Ms Fiona Crozier.

The main purpose of the review was to:

- make judgements about the provider's delegated responsibilities for the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities
- draw a conclusion about whether the provider's public information is reliable
- report on any features of good practice
- make recommendations for action.

A summary of the [key findings](#) can be found in the section starting on page 3. The [context](#) in which these findings should be interpreted is explained on page 4. [Explanations](#) of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 4.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.¹ More information about this review method can be found in the [published handbook](#).²

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/pages/default.aspx

² www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/eo-recognition-scheme.aspx

Key findings

The QAA panel considered evidence relating to the educational provision at New York University, London (NYUL), both information supplied in advance and evidence gathered during the visits of the review itself. The review has resulted in the key findings stated in this section.

Judgements

The QAA panel formed the following judgements about New York University, London:

- **confidence** can be placed in New York University, London's management of its responsibilities for academic standards
- **confidence** can be placed in New York University, London's management of its responsibilities for the quality of the learning opportunities.

Conclusion about public information

The QAA panel concluded that:

- **reliance can** be placed on the public information that the New York University, London supplies about itself.

Good practice

The QAA panel identified the following **features of good practice** at New York University, London:

- comprehensive and dedicated academic and pastoral support is provided to students through various means, both formal and informal (paragraphs 2.8-2.10)
- NYUL provides detailed, written pre-arrival information (paragraph 3.1)
- NYUL staff are involved in preparing students at NYU prior to departure and students receive staged orientation in their first weeks at NYUL (paragraph 3.1)
- students receive helpful information, including detailed syllabi and course handbooks, during their time at NYUL (paragraph 3.4).

Recommendations

The QAA panel makes the following recommendations to New York University, London.

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

- consider formal means of providing feedback to students on actions taken as a result of their evaluations (paragraph 2.7)
- expand the ways in which staff development opportunities are identified (paragraph 2.11).

Context

New York University, London (NYUL) is the study abroad site in London of New York University (NYU). It is one of 11 such sites worldwide. NYU validates all the academic programmes taught at NYUL at undergraduate and graduate levels. It was established in 1999 in Bedford Square, London.

The majority of undergraduate students on the NYUL programme study for one semester. Some programmes are a year long. Graduate students spend six months in London before transferring to New York. All students are recruited through NYU; this may include visiting students from other universities. The application and admissions process is competitive and rigorous. NYUL does not award its own degrees and students gain credit to a NYU award, or an award of their own institution in the case of visiting students. All programmes include a mixture of academic and community or performance-based activity.

NYUL is a registered charity and is governed by a Board of Trustees, which meets twice a year to scrutinise all aspects of the programmes and to review reports and developments of the site. The Board is chaired by the NYU Vice Provost for Globalization and Multicultural Affairs. NYUL's Director is directly responsible to the NYU Office of Global Programs, headed by the Vice Provost, for the management of its programmes.

NYUL operates under the academic standards umbrella of NYU. Courses are assessed in London and credits awarded by NYU. Responsibility for academic standards of any awards rests with NYU, and NYUL ensures through its management processes that these standards are upheld. NYU is accredited in the USA by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. It was most recently accredited in 2009. NYUL is included within this accreditation.

There is a formal agreement between NYU and NYUL in an Affiliation and Services agreement, most recently agreed in 2010. This sets out the relative responsibilities of the two bodies.

Detailed findings

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 Responsibility for establishing the framework for academic standards rests with NYU. As a consequence, NYUL is subject to all NYU's quality assurance arrangements.

1.2 There is an integrated governance and management structure to oversee academic standards. All aspects of the academic programmes are monitored carefully through a network of panels and meetings. This includes a weekly meeting of NYU's Global Sites directors by video conference. There are regular meetings of staff with specialist interests across sites, and, more locally, there are staff meetings twice each semester. There are also two meetings each semester of all staff. The senior management of NYUL meet regularly.

1.3 Assessment is carried out in line with NYU practice. There are clear marking and grading criteria set out in each individual syllabus. These are outlined in the Student and Staff Handbooks. All assessed work is returned with feedback on achievement and ways of improving. All graded pieces of work are returned by week seven of each semester. Final grades are signed off by the relevant member of teaching staff and then reviewed by the Assistant Director for Academic Affairs or the Graduate Programme Coordinator before being sent to NYU Registrar's Office in New York. Once the grades are agreed, they are posted online for students to access. Students have the opportunity to appeal their final grades. Initially, they must seek an explanation from their tutor. If they still believe the grade is either inaccurate or unfair, they may appeal in writing to the Director, NYUL. The Director will consult with relevant staff members before coming to a decision.

1.4 Historically, NYUL has used data of grade distributions across all global sites and the home campus for the purpose of comparing achievement.

1.5 There is a strict attendance policy at NYUL. Students risk losing marks if they fail to meet the required standards. These standards are set out in their Student Handbook.

1.6 NYUL has no role in relation to programme approval and the course standards are set by NYU. However, NYUL may suggest new courses which may be unique to NYUL. Course offerings for the coming semester are discussed by the Academic Affairs team with the Director of NYUL. Any suggestions for new course offerings must be submitted to NYU for approval at least a semester in advance. A full proposed syllabus must be submitted, which goes to the relevant NYU department for initial approval and then to the departmental or school curriculum committee for final approval. For all proposed additions to the academic programme, there is a clear and robust process to ensure the course design and syllabus are either transferred from an already approved course at NYU or are approved by the relevant department in the appropriate school at NYU. This involves a lengthy consultative process and new syllabi are scrutinised very carefully to ensure that appropriate standards are in place. Final approval for a proposed course comes from either the relevant departmental or university-wide committee.

1.7 Standard syllabi formats are used in all NYUL programmes. These have to meet NYU standards with transparent course descriptions, objectives, assessment criteria and advice, attendance policy, session details and recommended reading.

1.8 Staff are encouraged to keep abreast of NYU developments and initiatives by meeting with NYU staff when in London or attending relevant conferences.

1.9 There is no current system of formal class or peer observation. Staff had discussed its introduction at a staff meeting, but it had not yet been agreed. There are two staff meetings each semester at which issues that staff have raised are discussed. These have included student feedback, attendance policy, grade descriptors and staff development.

1.10 NYUL undertakes student course evaluations using the standard NYU format. Students that the review team met were unclear what happened to these evaluations. Staff were made aware of the outcomes of the process by the NYUL Director.

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

1.11 Currently, NYUL's key reference points have been the requirements of NYU. NYUL acknowledges that it might be advantageous to review and evaluate its own work in a wider context and include some other external reference points, including the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). Many staff teaching at NYUL also teach at UK higher education institutions and thus bring awareness of external reference points to their contribution to NYUL.

1.12 It has been agreed recently that an Academic Advisory Committee is to be established in order to review and advise on academic provision at NYUL.

The panel has **confidence** in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the awards to be conferred by its awarding body.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 There is a formal agreement between NYUL and NYU which sets out the responsibilities of both parties. NYUL is responsible for providing the courses and student welfare, but everything is done in collaboration with NYU. All senior managers who are responsible for managing the quality of the learning opportunities at NYUL confer or meet regularly with their NYU counterparts.

2.2 NYU London works in close cooperation with both the NYU Office of Global Programs and the individual schools and departments of the university to ensure high standards and consistency in course delivery. Courses taught at NYUL fall into two broad categories - one type is modelled on NYU courses, but the second has a distinctive London/UK basis. In addition, there is an exchange programme with the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, which allows students from both university programmes to take classes at the other's centre. The NYUL Tisch programme also has long-standing collaborative relationships with the Royal Academy for Dramatic Art (RADA) for a specialist Shakespeare in Performance programme and with the BBC for a TV production programme.

2.3 The academic programme is reinforced by a programme of activities, visits, volunteering opportunities and events. In addition, NYUL is in the process of establishing internships. The panel was told that NYUL was finalising a contract with an organisation that will organise suitable placements in line with the students' areas of study. The internships will be highly selective and will last a semester. The review panel was told that the programme required some fine tuning, but that it should be operational in autumn 2012.

2.4 Faculty staff are recruited by NYUL, but with input and final approval from NYU. NYU also requires students to evaluate both their courses and the learning resources every semester. Such evaluation allows the faculty to inform planning for the next semester. In addition, there are regular visits from academics and senior staff from NYU who meet with staff and students, which allows further discussion about the quality of learning opportunities.

How effectively are external reference points used in monitoring and evaluation processes?

2.5 NYUL's external reference point is NYU. As noted in paragraph 2.1, there are regular visits from NYU staff, which allows a discussion of resources and improvements to be made. In addition, teaching staff at NYUL are normally active teaching staff at other UK higher education institutions. The self-evaluation document mentions the need to use the Quality Code as an external reference point and stated that NYUL was about to establish an Academic Advisory Council, which would consist of external members to review and advise NYUL. The review panel was told that such a council was not unique to NYUL, but that they did not exist on all the sites operated by NYU.

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

2.6 Apart from the visits from NYU staff noted in paragraph 2.1, students undertake detailed evaluations every semester. Overall programme evaluations go back to NYU, but staff at NYUL have access to them. Individual course evaluations are standard; they cannot be changed and are completed online. NYU coordinates responses and sends summary responses back to London. Evaluations are sent to teaching staff so that they can see the result for their individual classes. The review panel was told that staff could make changes to courses based on such evaluations. In NYU, evaluations also go to the relevant departments. The panel was told that NYU would only check if action had been taken if a very severe issue had been raised. In addition to course evaluations, Tisch has a mandatory plenary session every Monday for 15-20 minutes. This is to let students know of any changes to the operation of their programme, but also gives students an opportunity to raise issues that affect them as a group. In addition, Tisch also operates a weekly two-hour 'surgery' which allows students to raise individual issues.

2.7 On the undergraduate programmes, the staff that the panel met acknowledged that it was difficult to let students know of actions taken as a result of their feedback, as many are only at NYUL for one semester, although they would let students know of action taken in respect of issues raised mid-semester. They acknowledged that there was no mechanism for communicating with students once they returned to NYU and the staff felt that this could be improved. However, the panel heard from staff that NYUL is very responsive to student feedback and this was confirmed by the students the panel met. NYUL has recently established a Student Council and it was noted that this would make it easier to feedback to students. The panel felt that it would be desirable for NYUL to consider formal means of providing feedback to students on actions taken as a result of their evaluations.

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

2.8 NYUL has a number of mechanisms to support students. All staff have office hours and there is email contact with staff. Staff must respond to emails within two working days. They can refer students to support systems within NYUL and get feedback on student progress from those support services. Small class sizes also allow staff to monitor students effectively. NYUL provides writing support and there are two teachers who provide teaching on English for Academic Purposes.

2.9 The review panel was told that there is a constant monitoring system and that staff are very aware that, as students are from overseas, they may need additional support. There is an Academic Affairs department for academic support and guidance for undergraduate students and the Tisch Director and the MA Programme Leader fulfil this role for postgraduate students. Students maintain contact with NYU through their appointed academic adviser, and staff from NYU visit to advise students on programme options and career advice.

2.10 Students have membership privileges at the University of London and can opt to be members of UCL Students' Union. There is a detailed orientation event at the start of each semester, which is evaluated by students. Student evaluations include evaluation of support services. While some of the support provided seemed very informal (for example raising issues at social events with staff), students met by the panel confirmed that they felt very well supported by all of the staff at NYUL. As a result of the evidence seen by the panel, it concluded that the comprehensive and dedicated academic and pastoral support provided to students through various means, both formal and informal, is a feature of good practice.

How effective are the provider's arrangements for staff development in relation to maintaining the quality of learning opportunities?

2.11 The self-evaluation states that there is induction for new staff which explains the expectations and requirements of NYU and that staff are regularly evaluated through student evaluations. The self-evaluation states that there was a budget for conference attendance and the staff who met with the panel confirmed that a budget is available and that accommodation is made to ensure that staff could attend events. There is no formal staff appraisal, which some staff feel would be a help to them, although all staff confirmed that any staff development needs they identified were met. There is no system of peer observation, although team teaching on Stern courses leads to informal peer observation. The panel was told that there had been some discussion of peer observation and whether this should be formalised. The panel felt that it would be desirable for NYUL to expand the ways in which staff development opportunities are identified.

2.12 The self-evaluation identified that an area for development was enhanced IT training and support for staff to allow them to access and use online teaching resources. The students confirmed that not all staff use the virtual learning environment as part of their teaching.

How effectively does the provider ensure that students have access to learning resources that are sufficient to enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes of their programmes?

2.13 The self-evaluation gave details of computer suites and stated that students had access to the University of London Senate House Library, which has a section for NYUL courses. Students have membership to specialist libraries, supplemented by online library provision.

2.14 The review panel was told that there are a number of ways by which student views on resources are obtained. In addition to meetings with NYU staff and the Tisch Director noted in paragraph 2.9, and student evaluations which include an evaluation of resources, NYUL established a Student Council in spring 2012 which had its first meeting at the time of the visit. In addition, the self-evaluation states that there were two special interest groups - the Liberal Studies Government and the Stern Political Economy Exchange, which meet regularly and feed back to the administration. One student each semester is selected by the NYU Student Senate Council to be an international ambassador to students and staff at NYUL and the NYU Student Council. In addition, the self-evaluation states that there were

regular feedback meetings in the residencies, and an online message box for student comments, and that student life staff routinely check the programme social networking site. All of this is in addition to detailed end-of-semester student evaluations. These forms of feedback were confirmed by both the staff and the students.

The panel has **confidence** that the provider is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing the quality of the learning opportunities it provides for students.

3 Public information

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

3.1 The self-evaluation states that the information issued by both NYU and NYUL covers both generic and programme-specific issues. NYU uses a variety of media to provide accurate information to students in the recruitment and acceptance stages of the process, for example websites, blogs, printed promotional materials and presentations. London staff liaise with NYUL and check the accuracy of the information presented at recruitment and pre-arrival stages, and are also involved in presenting this information to students in pre-departure meetings in New York, which also give students the opportunity to ask questions. The pre-departure information is clear and detailed. Information about the available courses in London is on a number of websites. The panel was told that students have all of the relevant information they need by the time of their arrival in London. The students that met the panel confirmed that the information they received about NYUL prior to arrival was accurate and that prior to their arrival in the UK there were regular meetings in New York and blogs to help them in their preparation for study in London. In addition, the students told the panel that they felt that the information they received prepared them for the level of academic study they would be engaged in at NYUL. They noted that the level of study at NYUL was the same as, if not higher than, in some programmes at NYU. The panel felt that the detailed, written pre-arrival information provided by NYUL and the involvement of NYUL staff in preparing the students prior to departure, followed by a staged orientation, is good practice.

3.2 Once at NYUL, students undergo a five-day period of orientation/induction before the start of teaching. They confirmed that the induction was very focused, and that they found the programme specific social networks groups and services that NYUL set up for them very helpful. Students are asked to evaluate the induction they receive at the end of the induction period.

3.3 Students also receive detailed programme handbooks. The review panel found these to be very detailed and clear, which was confirmed by the students. They are particularly useful in respect of signposting relevant support for students. The handbooks are supplemented by additional information about London, which is updated every semester.

3.4 Each course has a standard course template. These must describe assignments, weighting and due dates so that, before registration, students are familiar with these aspects of the course. The students told the panel that the templates gave a clear outline of the course and contents of each lecture and the assessment/assessment dates. In addition, students felt that the syllabi were clear as to what was required in terms of assessment. The feedback that they received, often within a week, made explicit what they needed to do to improve. The panel felt that the information that the students receive during their time at NYUL, including detailed syllabi and programme handbooks, is a feature of good practice.

The panel 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.

4 Action plan

New York University, London action plan relating to the Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight May 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The panel identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> comprehensive and dedicated academic and pastoral support is provided to students through various means, both formal and informal (paragraphs 2.8-2.10) 	Review and enhance all aspects of academic and pastoral support and services available to students outside of the centre	January 2013	Director; Associate Director; assistant directors of Academic Affairs and Student Life; Wellness Counsellor; Graduate Programme Coordinator	Increase of reported activity by faculty Review of statistics indicating student take-up of opportunities Reports from relevant staff	Director/Associate Director/New York University Global	Feedback from staff/faculty at regular meetings Student evaluations Student Council feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYUL provides detailed, written pre-arrival information (paragraph 3.1) 	Liaise with relevant schools, programmes and departments at NYU NYC to ensure accuracy of information, updates, and so on	Nov 2012	Assistant directors and senior programme managers, Academic Affairs and Student Life; Wellness Counsellor; Graduate Programme Coordinator	Positive student evaluations and feedback	Director/Associate Director	Student evaluations; staff reviews

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NYUL staff are involved in preparing students, pre-departure, at NYU and students receive staged orientation their first weeks at NYUL (paragraph 3.1) 	<p>Review and revise orientation activities and information to ensure updates and changes are processed</p> <p>Work with New York City based colleagues to review pre-departure materials for accuracy</p>	Nov 2012- Jan 2013	Assistant directors and senior programme managers, Academic Affairs and Student Life; Wellness Counsellor; Graduate Programme Coordinator	Positive student evaluations; positive feedback from New York City based staff	Director/Associate Director/New York University Global	Student evaluations; staff reviews
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students receive helpful information, including detailed syllabi and course handbooks, during their time at NYUL (paragraph 3.4). 	Revise and update content on regular basis	Jan 2013	Faculty; Assistant Director and Senior Programme Manager, Academic Affairs; Graduate Programme Coordinator	Positive student evaluations; faculty providing positive feedback at regular meetings	Director	Student evaluations; Student Council reports
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The panel considers that it is desirable for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider formal means of providing feedback to students on actions taken as a result of their evaluations (paragraph 2.7) 	<p>Work with the Global Network University to examine ways of reporting to students post site exit</p> <p>Prepare executive summary of salient</p>	Spring 2013	Associate Director/assistant directors Student Life and Academic Affairs	Positive feedback from students on Student Council/those back in New York City	Director/New York University Global	Student Council

	points arising from evaluations to report to Global and Student Council of following semester					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> expand the ways in which staff development opportunities are identified (paragraph 2.11). 	<p>Increased engagement with faculty to identify needs that can be met externally and internally</p> <p>System of annual performance reviews for staff</p> <p>Increase allocated budget</p>	Sept 2013	Director; Associate Director; New York University Global; assistant directors	Positive staff appraisals; positive feedback from faculty at regular meetings	Director	Faculty meetings; staff appraisal forms

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to key terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. For more details see the [handbook](#)³ for this review method.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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.

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

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

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

³ www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/eo-recognition-scheme.aspx

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