



Redcliffe College

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

June 2012

Key findings about Redcliffe College

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in June 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 the University of Gloucestershire.

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

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

Good practice

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

- research-informed teaching effectively supports postgraduate study (paragraph 2.3)
- the use of online submission and the detailed electronic marking of student work (paragraph 2.10)
- the website provides comprehensive and accessible information for students (paragraph 3.2).

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:

- establish an overarching senior academic committee, with clearly defined terms of reference, to make decisions on academic matters (paragraph 1.3)
- make use of relevant external reference points to further secure academic standards and quality (paragraph 1.7).

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

- develop a quality manual to provide a central point of information on the policies and procedures for quality assurance (paragraph 1.5)
- develop formal processes for sharing good practice (paragraphs 1.11 and 2.4)
- implement the proposed peer observation scheme at the earliest opportunity (paragraph 2.5)
- provide appropriate guidance to applicants with a disability in line with the *Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students* (paragraph 2.9)
- develop a policy to support placement learning, which reflects the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* (paragraph 2.12)
- encourage staff to obtain a teaching qualification (paragraph 2.15)
- include details of the University appeals process in course handbooks (paragraph 3.3).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Redcliffe College (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 Gloucestershire. The review was carried out by Dr Elaine Crosthwaite, Mr Mark Irwin (reviewers), and Dr Daniel Lamont (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).² Evidence in support of the review included documentation supplied by the College and its awarding body, meetings with staff, students, and the awarding body.

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

- Academic Infrastructure.

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

Redcliffe College (the College) was founded in 1892 as the YWCA Testing and Training Home. It moved in 1995 to Wotton House, Gloucester, where all teaching is carried out. It has been offering undergraduate programmes since 1997 and postgraduate degrees since 2002, recruiting students from both overseas and the UK. The College provides residential accommodation for students on-site. There are nine permanent members of the academic staff and 14 support staff. In addition, the College employs associate lecturers and has a visiting scholar programme in order to provide cross-cultural expertise and experience. There is a student body of 133, representing 86 full-time equivalents.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes listed beneath their awarding body, which are both full-time and part-time:

University of Gloucestershire

- CertHE in Intercultural Studies
- Cert HE in Applied Theology in Intercultural Contexts
- DipHE in Applied Theology in Intercultural Contexts
- BA (Hons) in Applied Theology in Intercultural Contexts
- MA in Global Issues in Contemporary Mission
- MA in Intercultural Studies in Asian Contexts
- MA in Global Leadership in Intercultural Contexts
- MA in Bible and Mission
- MA in European Mission and Intercultural Christianity
- MA in Member Care.

The provider's stated responsibilities

The College is a partner institution of the University of Gloucestershire which validates all its courses. The College delivers all teaching, and sets, approves and marks assessments. From September 2012, the University's link tutor will attend the College's Faculty meeting

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

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

where assessment briefs are discussed and will moderate the College's marking. From 2012-13, the University intends to moderate marked assessments. All examination boards are chaired by a representative of the University with the link tutor in attendance. The College has its own quality processes that have been approved by the University, the outcomes of which are reported to the University.

Recent developments

The College plans to recruit additional students from overseas. It has approved substantial plans to upgrade the College building. These include the creation of additional student space, the development of a new library and study facilities, and 'easy access' en suite living space for disabled students. The work is planned to be completed by the end of 2012.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education courses at the College were invited to present a submission to the review team. The submission was written by an MA student. The method involved a completed questionnaire, drawing on the National Student Survey, circulated to all students. There was a high response rate. Students were present at both the preparatory meeting and review visit, and were enthusiastic about their learning experience at the College. The review team found the student contribution most informative.

Detailed findings about Redcliffe College

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The College works with a single validating body, the University of Gloucestershire, which delegates to the College responsibility for setting, marking and moderation of assignments, and giving feedback to students, in accordance with University Academic Regulations. The College is responsible for the preparation of programme specifications, and holds joint responsibility with the University for ensuring that teaching is based on current validated specifications and module descriptors, at the start of each delivery period. Responsibility for reviewing and responding to monitoring reports and module evaluations is shared with the University. External examiners for all programmes are appointed and regulated by the policies of the University.

1.2 There is an established structure for reporting and managing academic standards. The Academic Dean has overall responsibility for academic management, and, together with the Principal and Bursar, is a member of the Executive Team, which manages the College and reports to the Board of Governors. There are two course committees, serving respectively undergraduate and postgraduate provision, responsible for ensuring academic standards and that the awarding body's requirements are met. Their terms of reference include responsibility for the currency of the curriculum, and course and module review and evaluation. Membership comprises course leaders, full-time academic staff and an elected student representative for each course level. The draft terms of reference for the College Faculty Committee indicate that it is an advisory subcommittee of the course committees, and agenda matters can include academic, quality assurance and professional development. The team noted that the format of minutes could be improved to enable tracking of actions by showing timescales for completion.

1.3 The course and faculty committees report to the Executive Team through the Academic Dean, and meeting minutes show that the team considers academic matters, including staff development and curriculum policy. There is, in consequence, considerable overlap in the remit of the committees, and decision-making appears to be an iterative process which can delay the resolution of matters, such as the policy on moderation and referencing. The team is unclear where final responsibility lies for academic matters. The team welcomes the College's intention to review the committee structure. It is advisable for the College to establish an overarching senior academic committee, with clearly defined terms of reference, to make decisions on academic matters.

1.4 The College maintains satisfactory oversight of higher education through its committee structure and boards of examiners, in collaboration with the University. The University chairs the boards of examiners, and the link tutor attends course committees, providing advice on University regulations and procedures. The College also participates in a range of validating body processes, including institutional re-approval every three years, course validation, and annual monitoring in conjunction with the University's link tutor, which provide a sound framework for, and augment, the oversight of provision. The University has expressed confidence in the academic soundness of College courses and the way in which the College exercises its delegated responsibilities.

1.5 Members of the academic staff obtain information on College procedures primarily through new lecturers' induction, mentoring, attendance at faculty meetings, and the course handbooks. The College does not have a quality manual containing its academic policies

and procedures, University regulations or external requirements. The Executive Team has indicated an intention to draw all policies into a single location, enabling gaps and amendments to be identified. It is desirable that the College develops a quality manual to provide a central point of information on the policies and procedures for quality assurance.

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

1.6 The College has engaged with relevant sections of the Academic Infrastructure, primarily through addressing the requirements of the University. It makes regular use of the University's Quality Assurance Handbook, and has designed its quality assurance processes to be consistent with the Handbook. The programme specifications for new courses for validation reflect *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*, subject benchmark statements, and *Master's degree characteristics*. In particular, programme specifications have been devised to reflect sector standards.

1.7 However, the College recognises that use of these external reference points in curriculum development could be strengthened. There is no formal training for academic staff on the application of the Academic Infrastructure. The *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*) has not been utilised to inform procedures, except in the case of the provision of a placement handbook. The College relies on University assurance processes, in order to manage academic standards effectively. It is advisable for staff to develop greater understanding of the Academic Infrastructure in order to make use of relevant external reference points to further secure academic standards and quality.

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

1.8 The partnership agreement delegates responsibility to the College for setting, marking and moderating assessment. The College adheres to the assessment policy and regulations of the University, which are set out in the course handbooks. Tutors mark their own course assessments, and marked work is moderated and returned to students within four weeks of its submission. The College policy provides for sample second marking of module assignments and for all dissertations to be second-marked. Assessments that have attained a mark below 40 per cent or above 70 per cent are automatically second-marked, under the oversight of the Academic Dean. Procedures for offences and appeals are operated in line with the University regulations. Any academic offences are dealt with on an individual basis, normally by means of an investigative interview, the outcome of which is reported to the relevant examination board. Appeals are considered first within the College, but with a final stage of appeal to the University.

1.9 A major external reference point for the College is provided by external examiners through their attendance at boards of examiners and their reports to the University. In addition, College staff have external links with theological organisations, and some have undertaken external examining and validation activity at other institutions. This enables staff to draw on external experience, which helps to assure academic standards.

1.10 External examiners consider new proposals or modifications to courses or modules, thus ensuring that College programmes draw on models of good practice. The examiners produce an annual report, as well as informal comments on marking practices, during the academic year. The College receives the reports from the University and considers them at both the Faculty Committee and the course committees, where actions on any recommendations are agreed. The actions taken are reported in annual monitoring reports to the University. The external examiners' reports confirm the appropriateness of the

standards of the awards, and that the College has taken action on their recommendations. This process is operating effectively.

1.11 The College evaluates the effectiveness of its structures and processes through the review process which informs annual monitoring reports to the University. Good practice is identified and shared in staff and other meetings, with assessment practice considered through discussion in each semester of assessment briefs and by undertaking marking exercises. However, there is no body within the committee structure with a brief regarding the dissemination of good practice. It is desirable for the College to consider developing formal processes for sharing good practice on academic standards.

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

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 College processes outlined in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.5 enable the College to fulfil its responsibilities to the awarding body.

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

2.2 The College's engagement with various elements of the Academic Infrastructure, including key sections of the *Code of practice*, is outlined in paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7. This applies equally to the management and enhancement of learning opportunities provided.

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

2.3 Staff are research-active and at the forefront of their discipline. Their scholarly activity informs teaching and learning practice and ensures currency within the subject. Scrutiny of course documents, students' work and discussion with the staff confirms that all teaching is research-led. Members of the teaching staff are also enriched through the visiting scholars programme and the Redcliffe Lectures Scheme. The College's research-informed teaching is good practice and underpins postgraduate study effectively.

2.4 The College does not have an overarching teaching and learning strategy or a policy for the professional development of teaching. Staff use a wide range of delivery methods and it is clear from student feedback and comments made in the student meeting that much of the teaching is of a high quality, in line with contemporary pedagogical practice. However, the team agrees that reflecting on and articulating this practice in a formal way would be beneficial to students and staff. It is desirable that the College develops formal processes for sharing good practice about teaching and learning.

2.5 There is no tradition of regular peer observation of teaching. The College is seeking to address this with the development of a peer observation scheme. It is desirable that the College implements the peer observation scheme at the earliest opportunity.

2.6 Course committees are an effective mechanism for students to provide feedback about their learning experience in addition to completing module questionnaires. Students reported that teaching staff and managers are accessible and responsive to questions or concerns they raise. They gave examples of how the College had responded to issues raised and where their feedback had led to an improved learning experience. The Academic Dean confirmed that problems raised had been addressed.

2.7 The College's processes for assuring itself of the quality of teaching and learning, especially by seeking student views, are effective. The Annual Monitoring Report cycle provides further opportunities to reflect on the quality and enhancement of learning opportunities. The annual reports are shared with staff and students at course committees, where academic and student support mechanisms are evaluated. Reports are then reviewed by the University, whose concerns and comments are fed back to the College through the link tutor and institutional reports.

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

2.8 The College provides a highly supportive and inclusive environment for students by creating a close-knit learning community. Students commented that the application process was effective and well supported by the College staff, who provide detailed information and guidance. Clear policies for admissions are available to applicants. There is also a College Bursary Fund that provides up to 50 per cent of fees for eligible students. Applications for accreditation of prior and experiential learning are submitted to course leaders, who make a recommendation to an approval committee. The College is reviewing this process in order to align it with the University's procedures.

2.9 The Academic Dean provides individual support and guidance to disabled applicants, negotiating reasonable adjustments in line with current legislation. The College does not provide applicants with guidance outlining this process on their website. The team considers it desirable to provide appropriate guidance to applicants with a disability in line with the *Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students*.

2.10 The assessment process is an important means whereby the College assures itself that students are supported effectively. Scrutiny of student work confirms that all assignment tasks are accompanied by full assessment briefs, which link the task in hand to the module intended learning outcomes. Each assignment coversheet was completed in great detail, relating the students' work to the level expected. All work scrutinised had been submitted electronically and the detailed commentary is also provided electronically. Assessment aims are primarily formative and the very detailed and constructive feedback on all assignments meets this aim. The use of online submission and the detailed electronic marking of student work is good practice.

2.11 The student submission indicates some dissatisfaction, particularly from part-time and distance-learning students, with timeliness of feedback. This appears to be a matter of effective communication with students, especially those studying off-campus. As the College grows, communicating to students in good time may be problematic and alternative means of communication may have to be considered.

2.12 The College has effective mechanisms for the oversight of placements, including a dedicated Placement Coordinator and a detailed placement handbook, which sets out clearly the responsibilities of all parties. These opportunities are enthusiastically endorsed by students. However, discussion with the Placement Coordinator revealed that there is no procedure to ensure that placement opportunities are risk-assessed in terms of health and safety. It would be desirable for the College to develop a policy to support placement learning, which reflects the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*.

2.13 Initial study skills training has been identified as a concern. For example, the Postgraduate Committee records the need for improved study skills guidance for MA students and, as a result, a revised approach to skills training has been implemented. Discussions with students confirm that this is working well. This development should be sustained.

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

2.14 Many staff have been supported in studying for doctorates or master's degrees, and both academic and administrative staff are encouraged to engage in continuing professional development, at the discretion of the Principal and governors, with generous support in the form of sabbaticals. Thus, staff are well equipped to teach at both undergraduate and postgraduate level. The appointment of former students to teaching posts, who have also brought with them experience of mission work, contributes substantially to the development of all staff.

2.15 There is some evidence of engagement with professional development provided by the University. The College could make more use of the University's professional development activities and the opportunity to share College good policy with the wider academic community. Although applicants for posts are asked to demonstrate teaching ability and are observed during their probationary period, there is no College policy requiring tutors to have teaching qualifications. It is desirable for the College to encourage staff to obtain a teaching qualification.

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

2.16 The College provides a supportive learning environment which is in line with expectations for the sector. Resources are appropriate and reviewed regularly by the Executive Team. There is a well-stocked library. The College has a broadband wireless system for staff and student use. Students also have access to the electronic resources of the University library.

2.17 The development and implementation of a virtual learning environment over the last two years has allowed the College to extend academic support to students at a distance in flexible and part-time study modes, while further supporting and enhancing learning on more traditional attendance modes. The College might consider using the virtual learning environment as a more interactive resource rather than as a document archive. Students commend the development of this additional support and its use for the digital submission of coursework. Resources are ratified at programme validation and periodic review, and at institutional accreditation. The annual monitoring process reviews continuing resource needs and module leaders keep resources under close review, and report specifically on gaps in requirements.

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 fulfils the responsibilities for public information delegated to it by the University. The College is responsible for the promotion, marketing and advertising of courses. All promotional material referring to the University, both in print and online, must be approved in writing by the link tutor in conjunction with the Marketing Department before being published. The College publishes complete and comprehensive information about all courses for potential and current students.

3.2 The College website is an attractive and informative source of public information for prospective and current students. A comprehensive range of documents can be downloaded, using the clearly labelled tabs. This includes valuable advice and guidance for prospective students on the courses available and the College approach to learning. There are links to download programme specifications, to order a copy of the prospectus and application form, and to arrange a visit. Students praised the ease of obtaining information, especially when applying from overseas, the helpfulness of admissions staff, and information provided at open days. The website provides comprehensive and accessible information for students. This constitutes good practice.

3.3 For students and staff, the College virtual learning environment provides access to course information and assignment briefs, timetables, course handbooks with hyperlinks to University assessment regulations, the placement handbook, and other learning resources. It does not indicate information on the arrangements for students with disabilities or learning needs, as these matters are dealt with on an individual basis after applications are made (see paragraph 2.9). The course handbooks provide information on College appeals processes but not those of the University. It is desirable that details of the University appeals processes are included in course handbooks.

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

3.4 The College has detailed procedures for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the information for which it is responsible. The Communications Manager and the Academic Registrar share primary responsibility for the accuracy of publications, working in consultation with relevant staff, including the Principal, Academic Dean, Bursar, and tutors. A table in the Marketing Handbook identifies staff who are involved in proofreading and signing off marketing information. The Academic Registrar takes a lead role in collating and updating changes to information in course handbooks. These documents are sent to the Communications Manager to update the website and prospectus.

3.5 The University link tutor annual report confirms that the University's requirements for approval of publicity are met. The arrangements for checking the accuracy of information with the University operate smoothly, with a fast turnaround. Written copy for the prospectus and leaflets is emailed for checking after internal College approval. New web pages go live pending confirmation of approval, but, as these are normally drawn from validation documentation, the College is able to prepare the information with confidence in its accuracy.

3.6 The College monitors the response of students to the public information it publishes. The Communications Manager holds focus groups regarding revisions to the website and prospectus, and, periodically, conducts a survey of new students to measure

the effectiveness of marketing materials. Students indicate that the pre-enrolment information they received was an accurate representation of college provision.

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

Action plan³

Redcliffe College action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight June 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> research-informed teaching effectively supports postgraduate study (paragraph 2.3) 	Course leaders to report to MA Course Committee instances in which this is the case and the evidence they have to support this	31/08/2013 (end of MA academic year)	MA course leaders	Use by students of research-informed teaching in their assignments	MA Course Committee	Provision to MA Course Committee of examples of students' use of research-informed teaching in their assignments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the use of online submission and the detailed electronic marking of student work (paragraph 2.10) 	Check that staff and students use this for all submitted work	31/07/2013 for undergraduate work and 30/09/2013 for post-graduate work	Academic Registrar who is also the virtual learning environment administrator	All submitted and marked work appearing and being accessible to students on the College's virtual learning environment system	Faculty meeting	The appearance of marked work in ways accessible to students on the College's virtual learning environment system, as monitored by the Academic Registrar

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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the website provides comprehensive and accessible information for students (paragraph 3.2). 	Conduct annual survey of new students' opinions on this subject	31/12/2012	Marketing Manager	Annual survey carried out and analysed in a timely manner with a report of any actions needed	Executive Team and Faculty meeting	Students reporting to the Marketing Manager that they have found accessible all they have reasonably needed
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is advisable for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish an overarching senior academic committee, with clearly defined terms of reference, to make decisions on academic matters (paragraph 1.3) 	<p>Naming such a committee and agreeing its position in the Committee Structure of the College</p> <p>Proposing and agreeing terms of reference</p>	30/09/2012	Academic Dean	The establishment and working of such a committee	Executive Team	Publication by the Academic Dean and Registrar of the name, terms of reference and minutes of this committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make use of relevant external reference points to further secure academic standards and quality (paragraph 1.7). 	Cross-reference relevant policies to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) in documents produced for the periodic reviews and revalidations of all Redcliffe courses	31/03/2013 for post-graduate courses and 31/03/2014 for under-graduate courses	Course leaders	Cross-references to the Quality Code in documents	Faculty meeting and course committees	Publication of these cross-references in the documents for the periodic reviews and revalidations and, subsequently, in the Students' Handbook
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation

The team considers that it is desirable for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a quality manual to provide a central point of information on the policies and procedures for quality assurance (paragraph 1.5) 	Compile and approve a quality assurance handbook and publish it in ways accessible to students and staff	31/08/2013	Academic Dean	The Quality Assurance Handbook is available on the College's virtual learning environment facility	Faculty meeting	<p>Staff use the Quality Assurance Handbook and find it useful as a central source of guidance</p> <p>To be checked by the Academic Dean at a Faculty meeting</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop formal processes for sharing good practice (paragraphs 1.11 and 2.4) 	Identify, discuss, approve, publish and practise such processes	30/09/2012	Academic Dean	Such processes published to tutorial staff and carried out by them	Faculty meeting	<p>Formal processes are accessible to and used by staff</p> <p>Examples of sharing of good practice are seen in the minutes of the Faculty meeting</p> <p>To be checked by Academic Dean</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement the proposed peer observation scheme at the earliest opportunity (paragraph 2.5) 	<p>Agree on which possible ways of carrying it out to implement</p> <p>Carry them out</p>	<p>10/09/2012</p> <p>31/12/2012</p>	Academic Dean	Agreed processes being carried out	Faculty meeting	Reports to Faculty meeting on processes being carried out, this being checked by Academic Dean
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide 	Write, agree and	01/09/2013	Academic Dean	Written guidance	Faculty meeting	Guidance is

appropriate guidance to applicants with a disability in line with the <i>Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students</i> (paragraph 2.9)	publish to the College's website such appropriate guidance			on website		considered appropriate by relevant applicants as evidenced by the Marketing Manager's annual survey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a policy to support placement learning, which reflects the <i>Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning</i> (paragraph 2.12) 	Write, agree and publish such a policy on the virtual learning environment	31/03/2013	Placement Director	Written policy	Faculty meeting	Written policy accessible to staff and students in relevant documents on the virtual learning environment and sent to placement supervisors; Academic Dean checks that this is so
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> encourage staff to obtain a teaching qualification (paragraph 2.15) 	Send to academic staff information regarding the University of Gloucestershire's relevant qualification and the College's willingness to support them in gaining it	31/09/2012	Academic Dean	Email to all academic staff containing the relevant information	Executive Team and Faculty meeting	Some academic staff are encouraged to consider taking up training; Academic Dean to check that this is so by asking academic staff
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> include details of the University appeals process in course handbooks 	Publish such details in course handbooks	10/09/2012	Academic Registrar	Course handbooks containing these details available on the virtual	Faculty meeting	Students have access to both sets of processes Academic Dean to

(paragraph 3.3).				leaning environment		check this is so
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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.

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: Handbook⁴](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

quality See **academic quality**.

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

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

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

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