City of London Academy

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

June 2012

Key findings about City of London Academy

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 **limited confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of Edexcel and the Institute of Commercial Management.

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 the awarding body and organisation.

The team considers that **reliance cannot** 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 systematic use of teaching monitoring processes (paragraph 2.4)
* the comprehensive and well structured student admissions and induction arrangements (paragraph 2.5)
* the process of consultation with students to create a high-quality teaching environment (paragraph 2.12).

Recommendations

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

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

* implement an internal verification process that ensures parity of treatment for all students and leads to secure assessment outcomes (paragraphs 1.7-1.9).

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

* ensure effective oversight of higher education awards (paragraphs 1.2 and 2.1)
* implement a programme to support and develop staff understanding of, and engagement with, relevant external reference points (paragraphs 1.4 and 2.2)
* implement effective systems for responding to the reports of external examiners (paragraph 1.6)
* devise and implement a definitive set of assessment regulations (paragraph 1.7)
* ensure that academic appeals are formally recorded and conducted in accordance with College policy (paragraph 1.8)
* review the conduct of assessment boards so that they are aligned with the expectations and regulations of the awarding body and organisation (paragraph 1.10)
* introduce a formal system for student representation (paragraph 2.6)
* provide students with essential information and guidance for each programme and module that they are studying (paragraphs 2.8 and 3.2)
* adopt a consistent approach to staff development (paragraph 2.9)

- ensure effective management of learning, teaching and assessment (paragraph 2.11)
- implement a system of version control for public information (paragraphs 3.3 and 3.5)
- review and enhance the system for checking and updating public information (paragraph 3.6).

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

- introduce a system of annual monitoring (paragraph 1.3)
- collect student feedback on the provision and use of public information (paragraphs 2.6 and 3.7)
- present all essential public information for students in one dedicated place on its intranet (paragraph 3.4).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)[1] (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at City of London Academy (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 Edexcel and the Institute of Commercial Management (ICM). At the time of the review, there were no students on the ICM programme so evidence was unavailable for this programme. The review was carried out by Mr Paul Chamberlain, Dr Helen Corkill, Professor Hastings McKenzie (reviewers), and Dr Anne Miller (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 the self-evaluation document, copies of policies and procedures, minutes of meetings and awarding body and organisation reports, awarding body and organisation agreements, and meetings with staff and students.

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

- the reports from the awarding body and organisation's external verifiers and examiners
- the regulations of its awarding body and organisation.

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

In July 2009, Dr Razi Uddin and Mr Nauman Mangi founded City of London Academy (the College). The aim of the organisation was to build a reputable college offering business education to international students in London. The College occupies one building of 7,000 square feet arranged over six floors in central London. It began trading in January 2010 and employs 12 administrative staff and 20 academic staff, 13 of whom are on part-time contracts.

At the time of the review, the College indicated that there were 135 students in seven cohorts studying full-time on four Edexcel BTEC Higher National Diploma programmes at levels 4 and 5. In addition, there were 56 students in six cohorts studying full-time on the Edexcel BTEC Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership at level 7. The College indicated that, at the time of the review, there were no students on the ICM Graduate Diploma in Management Studies at level 7.

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

Edexcel
- BTEC HND Diploma in Business
- BTEC HND Diploma in Business Management
- BTEC HND Diploma in Business Marketing
- BTEC HND Diploma in Computing & Systems Development
- BTEC HND Diploma in Creative Media Production
- BTEC Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership

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

Institute of Commercial Management (ICM)

- Graduate Diploma in Management Studies

The provider's stated responsibilities

In respect of the responsibility for academic standards, the awarding body and organisation are responsible for curriculum design, development and approval. The College is responsible for assessment and internal verification subject to external verification by Edexcel. The ICM retains responsibility for assessment and moderation. The awarding body and organisation delegate responsibility for maintaining the quality of the higher education they provide to the College. Public information is a shared responsibility.

The College is responsible for the recruitment of students, their induction and guidance throughout the programmes. It provides teaching that is delivered to groups of students at the central London premises of the College. The student assignments for Edexcel are marked by College staff, who provide both formative and summative feedback that is subject to external examining by the awarding body. The College is subject to annual monitoring reviews and inspection visits, and is responsible for responding to reports from external examiners. The awarding body is responsible for the quality assurance of the delivery by the College of Edexcel awards. For public information, the College is responsible for the completeness and accuracy of information in its online prospectus, learning materials and website.

Recent developments

While there are not yet any formal agreements with new awarding bodies and organisations, the College has taken steps to pursue its ambitions in three areas, the first of which is development of its provision in media studies. Secondly, it has recently signed an outline agreement with the Management Development Partnership, through which it aims to offer provision at level 6, in partnership with a university. Thirdly, it plans to offer ICM awards in maritime management.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. The submission was compiled by student representatives drawn from the Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership. The team found the student submission helpful and explored its content in meetings both at the preparatory stage and during the visit to gain a clear picture of the student learning experience.

Detailed findings about City of London Academy

1   Academic standards

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

1.1   The College has limited responsibility for the management of academic standards. It currently delivers business-related programmes at levels 4, 5 and 7 that lead to awards from Edexcel. The awarding body is responsible for curriculum design and approval, annual monitoring and review. The College is responsible for programme delivery, assessment and internal monitoring. It operates internal verification of assessment subject to external moderation by Edexcel. The ICM retains responsibility for standards and designing the curriculum, and undertakes assessment and moderation externally. At the time of the review, there were no students on the ICM programme, so evidence was unavailable for this programme.

1.2   The College does not operate sufficiently robust arrangements through its committee structure to ensure effective oversight of its delivery of higher education awards. Three main committees are specified: a Quality Assurance Board with responsibility for oversight of quality and standards, an Academic Board with a remit to manage the quality of academic delivery and maintain teaching standards, and an Assessment Board. Staff could not describe the interrelationship between the committees. Minutes of meetings were unsystematic and contained no evidence of formal communication between committees. The committees are not fully meeting their terms of reference. For example, there is no formal record of systematic consideration of reports from external examiners. It is advisable for the College to ensure effective oversight of higher education awards.

1.3   The College follows the annual monitoring arrangements of the awarding body and organisation and does not have its own separate arrangements for annual monitoring. The introduction of effective arrangements for annual monitoring would enable the College to evaluate and develop its own approach to the management of standards. To help fulfil its responsibilities for the management of academic standards, it is desirable that the College introduces a system of annual monitoring across all programmes.

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

1.4   The College makes limited use of external reference points. The guidelines and specialist papers provided by Edexcel and the annual reports of its external examiners constitute the main reference points. Edexcel aligns its provision with *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). In its specialist papers, Edexcel also directs centres to follow the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*) to inform practice. Despite this, staff were limited in their understanding of the content, purpose and use of the *Code of practice* and were unable to demonstrate an effective working knowledge of external reference points. There is no evidence in College documents of reference to the *Code of practice*. Lack of engagement with the *Code of practice* has adversely affected the College's procedures for management of standards, for example in relation to the security of assessment (see paragraph 1.8). It is advisable for the College to implement a programme to support and develop staff understanding of, and engagement with, relevant external reference points.

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

1.5 The College relies on feedback from the awarding body and organisation for the maintenance and assurance of its academic standards. The ICM will conduct assessment and external moderation. Edexcel appoints external examiners who moderate the assessment and internal verification processes of the College, make annual review visits and provide written reports. The College is expected by Edexcel to formally review and respond to these reports in a timely manner.

1.6 The College does not have effective systems for overseeing the consideration of and response to reports from external examiners. The Academic Board recorded receipt of external examiners' annual reports in May 2011, and noted positive comments. The three essential action points and two recommendations contained in the report for business programmes were not considered formally at institutional level. The College demonstrated that some of the required action had been implemented at programme level. Nevertheless, there was no formal record to this effect nor had the College made a formal progress report in response to the external examiner. It is advisable that the College implements effective systems for responding to the reports of external examiners.

1.7 The College does not consistently implement its assessment procedures. The mechanisms used to reach assessment decisions are informal and lack transparency. This results in a lack of transparency and fairness in the application of the College's grading and moderating mechanisms. It is advisable that the College devises and implements a definitive set of assessment regulations.

1.8 The management of assessment is not currently secure. The College permits moderated grades to be challenged in contravention of its own academic appeals policy. All assessed work is internally verified and moderated. Students are normally permitted two attempts at each item of assessment. According to the College quality assurance manual, any subsequent attempts are at the discretion of the Academic Board after an academic appeal. There was no evidence that the Academic Board had ever sanctioned third attempts at assessment. Conversely, a meeting of the Quality Assurance Board (18 December 2011) recorded that four students had been allowed to pass assessments at the third attempt. It is advisable for the College to ensure that academic appeals are formally recorded and conducted in accordance with College policy.

1.9 The internal verification process is not effective in assuring academic standards. It is undermined by an informal system whereby students may challenge their grades. Individual students can request that internally verified work be remarked. Senior academic staff may then regrade this work and the College does not review or modify the grades of other students in a cohort in light of the revision. Individual student grades are not considered nor confirmed at a formal meeting of an assessment board, and the point at which the College considers a mark to be confirmed is when the student accepts it. Students confirmed that the challenging of internally verified grades was accepted practice. This practice leads to disparities in the assessment process and that students are not treated equitably when grades are determined. It is essential for the College to implement an internal verification process that ensures parity of treatment for all students and leads to secure assessment outcomes.

1.10 The College's formal assessment boards are poorly administered, do not confirm the results of individual students and are not conducted in accordance with the Edexcel Specialist Paper 1 or the *Code of practice*, *Section 6: Assessment of students*. Specialist Paper 1 contains clear guidance on the requirements, purpose and operation of assessment boards. The College does not adhere to these requirements and staff could not provide an

accurate description of the nature, purpose and operation of assessment boards. The Edexcel external examiner's report for business programmes in May 2011 recommended that the College must 'set up a formal examination board in line with the QAA Code of Practice, Section 6'. The College was unable to demonstrate that it had responded to this requirement. It is advisable that the College reviews the conduct of assessment boards so that they are aligned with the expectations and regulations of the awarding body and organisation.

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

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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 is inconsistent in undertaking its responsibilities for the management of learning opportunities. While management responsibilities are articulated within a clear structure, their operation, as indicated in paragraph 1.2, is not supported effectively within the committee structure. A Quality Assurance Board was identified as the forum for oversight of all matters related to learning and teaching. The terms of reference and membership of this group are not clear. Minutes of a recent meeting show consideration being given to the planning of teaching sessions, matters related to late submission of assignments, plagiarism and the introduction of some basic action planning. Meetings are not effectively recorded and actions are not clearly identified or monitored. Decisions are made informally, without reference to any transparent management structure. There is no single point of management for the quality of learning opportunities.

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

2.2   As indicated in paragraph 1.4, management and teaching staff were unable to demonstrate an effective working knowledge of external reference points. Staff were able to identify some features of the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. Additionally, College admissions and guidance practice is strongly congruent with *Section 10: Admissions to higher education* and partly informed by *Section 8: Career education, information, advice and guidance.*

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

2.3   There is no formal strategy for assuring the quality of teaching and learning; the College stated that its approaches to learning and teaching are student-centred, involving lectures, case studies, practical exercises and current reference materials. The use of such approaches was confirmed by students. Lectures and associated materials are uploaded onto the College intranet. The College seeks to be diligent in addressing the requirements of its awarding body and organisation. External examiners confirm students' satisfaction with teaching and staff expertise.

2.4   The College has effective complementary systems for evaluating tutor performance. Students provide feedback on tutor performance through a robust and comprehensive questionnaire, which is administered regularly and consistently. Summative reports and

individual feedback are provided to tutors by the Course Leader or Director of Studies. Generic issues are shared through staff meetings. A peer observation scheme provides managers with a tool to evaluate teaching quality and provide developmental feedback. The systematic use of teaching monitoring processes is an example of good practice.

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

2.5   There is a robust and well designed student admissions system. Information from applicants is appropriately collected, analysed and tested at interview. The application process is meticulously recorded. Students confirmed the effectiveness and comprehensive nature of the admissions and induction arrangements. The Registrar is accountable to the Operations Director for student registrations and student records. The comprehensive and well structured student admissions and induction arrangements are an example of good practice.

2.6   Systems for the collection of student views exist, but are mostly informal. Apart from feedback on tutor performance, there is no formal system for the collection of student views on the quality of their support in teaching and learning. It is advisable that the College introduces a formal system for student representation.

2.7   Tutors monitor attendance and progress effectively and are supported in this by an efficient management information system. The College does not operate a structured personal tutorial system. Advice and guidance on academic and personal matters, including career progression, are available from tutors during published office hours in designated weeks.

2.8   There is little written guidance to support study at the higher education level. The College provides students with generic awarding body specifications, but does not provide students with programme specifications, as outlined in the Edexcel Specialist Paper 4 on programme specifications (see also paragraph 3.2). Verbal guidance is provided by staff and generic learning materials are provided by the awarding organisation. These are not supplemented by customised module handbooks published by the College. It is advisable that the College provides students with essential information and guidance for each programme and module that they are studying.

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

2.9   Approaches to staff development are not consistent with the College's policy. Staff development documents state that the College is committed to meeting the academic and training needs of staff and ensuring provision of relevant support and assistance. The self-evaluation acknowledges that staff development has not taken priority and that plans have yet to be determined. Staff differed in their understanding of the College's arrangements for staff development, with some staff outlining plans for the provision of development opportunities by the College, while others stating that development was a matter of individual tutor responsibility. It is advisable that the College adopts a consistent approach to staff development.

2.10   Arrangements for induction of new staff are effective. Recruitment and induction of staff are the responsibility of the Director of Studies. A recently appointed member of staff enthusiastically described the process of selection and induction. The College employs staff with a combination of first-hand business experience, teaching competence, and, in general, appropriate qualifications.

2.11 There is no formal process for identifying and addressing the development needs of academic managers in relation to current practices in learning, teaching and assessment. Formal and informal meetings of staff provide opportunities to discuss curriculum matters. Valuable feedback is provided to staff following peer observation of teaching and student feedback. Several staff members have recently received training in the use of interactive whiteboards. Despite this, a development need was identified in relation to management of assessment practice. It is advisable for the College to ensure effective management of learning, teaching and assessment.

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

2.12 The College provides a secure and stimulating physical environment for teaching. Considerable investment in teaching space, IT and library resources, combined with a student consultation exercise regarding the design of new facilities, have resulted in the provision of an excellent higher education teaching environment. The process of consultation with students to create a high-quality teaching environment is good practice.

2.13 Although students appreciate and actively engage with the College intranet, it is currently limited in scope. Resource allocations are decided by the senior management team. Students illustrated how they are currently using social networking as a way of enhancing their learning independently of tutors. Library resources are adequate and supplemented by other facilities accessible to students in London. Students, including those at level 7, were unaware of the value of accessing online journals. External examiner reports commend the quality of the current teaching environment in the College premises.

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

3   Public information

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

3.1 The College uses high-quality, professionally produced electronic and print-based materials to communicate effectively with external stakeholders and prospective students. The website is visually attractive, easy to navigate and current. Students commended and confirmed the accuracy of the information on the website and in the prospectus.

3.2 The College publishes accurate information for students about pre-admission, post-admission and teaching, which was confirmed by students. The College states that it meets its responsibility to the awarding body by providing students with the Edexcel Programme Manual, together with assignment briefs and timetables. Yet, it does not provide college-produced programme specifications or module handbooks. The purpose of the programme handbook is not clear, as it contains a significant amount of information which is not directly relevant to students. The generic student handbook focuses on compliance and health and safety, plus general living matters. Consequently, students are provided with little systematic information about studying and learning as a higher education student.

3.3   The College produces a wider range of documents for staff, including an induction pack, staff handbook, lecturer's quality manual, intranet manual, quality assurance manual, internal verification and moderation policy, and a health and safety policy. There were some inconsistencies in the information provided. For example, contradictory information was provided for staff about the nature and function of tutorials, assessment boards and the academic appeals process.

3.4   The College does not make optimum use of its intranet when providing information for students. Materials are difficult to navigate and access. The intranet functions solely as a list-based document repository with no functionality to support interactive teaching and learning activity. Students were using an external social networking site to facilitate group work and inter-cohort communication. Despite the limitations of the intranet, students were unanimous that the resources held on the intranet are useful. Nonetheless, there is no dedicated area where key documents for students, such as programme specifications and handbooks, can be located together for ease of access. It is desirable for the College to present all essential public information for students in one dedicated place on its intranet.

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

3.5   The reliability of information provided for students and staff is adversely affected by poor version control and inaccuracies. Poor version control leads to inaccuracies and inconsistency in some handbooks, policy documents and intranet postings. This affects titles, dates, content and indexes, such that multiple versions of a document can exist simultaneously and contain contradictory information. For example, the responsibilities and operation of the Academic Board and assessment boards as described in the Programme Handbook, the Internal Verification and Moderation policy and the Student Handbook are at variance with each other and with the practices adopted by staff. It is advisable for the College to implement a system of version control for public information.

3.6   The College does not always adhere to its published processes for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of public information. The College's policy for amending and updating materials specifies three stages during which formal drafts are checked and authorised, but this is not always followed for internal documents. Yet, the process is followed for making amendments to the external-facing website. Proposed amendments are formally approved by senior managers, then implemented quickly and effectively by an external webmaster. For example, the accuracy of information on academic appeals, as described in the Programme Handbook and the Student Handbook, is adversely affected; and information for staff on annual monitoring lacks clarity and contradicts procedures adopted by staff. It is advisable for the College to review and enhance the system for checking and updating public information.

3.7   The College does not survey its students about the accuracy and completeness of the public information provided by itself and its overseas agents. Students are encouraged to offer informal suggestions for improvements to the website. While such informal activity occurs, students are not surveyed systematically to secure information to enhance the accuracy and completeness of public information. It is desirable for the College to collect student feedback on the provision and use of public information.

The team concludes that **reliance cannot** 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]

City of London Academy action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight, June 2012						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date[4]**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation[5]**
The review team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
• the systematic use of teaching monitoring processes (paragraph 2.4)	Continue/review/ improve: • termly analysis of feedback from students • termly peer observations of lecturers with summative feedback	Oct 2012 Oct 2012	Course Leader, Operations Manager and Director of Studies	Feedback results and summative reports Individual feedback results remain positive Action on any issues arising	Quality Assurance Board	Termly analysis of all feedback mechanisms
• the comprehensive and well - structured student admissions and induction arrangements (paragraph 2.5)	Continue/review/ improve: • monitoring student admissions and registration • implementing current induction and progression	Oct 2012 Oct 2012	Registrar Course Leader/ Operations Manager and	Retention rates and completion rates satisfactory Attendance and progression on	Quality Assurance Board Quality Assurance Board	Analysis of retention and completion rates Analysis of attendance and

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[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 organisations.
[4] Most actions started in September 2012. For multiple actions, read the date alongside the action, or the last mentioned date.
[5] Evaluation process and/or evidence applies to all elements of the Action cell, unless otherwise specified.

			Director of Studies	track		progression
• the process of consultation with students to create a high-quality teaching environment (paragraph 2.12).	Continue/review/ improve: • monitoring termly student feedback on facilities and resources • maintain the college 'open door' policy • maintain summative and cumulative assessments	Oct 2012 Oct 2012 Oct 2012	Course Leader/ Operations Manager and Director of Studies	Termly student feedback/ summative feedback/ cumulative and individual feedback remain positive	Quality Assurance Board	Analysis of student feedback and summative and cumulative feedback
Essential	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**[6]	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team considers that it is **essential** for the provider to:						
• implement an internal verification process that ensures parity of treatment for all students and leads to secure assessment outcomes (paragraph 1.7 to 1.9).	No informal student appeals allowed - appeal procedure amended to reflect this Assignment briefs to contain unit content, descriptor, indicative resource materials as per Edexcel Programme Manual	Feb 2013 Jan 2013	Course Leader/ Director of Studies and Quality Assurance Board Course Leader and Director of Studies	No informal appeals Assessments meet Quality Code expectations and the external organisation's (Edexcel)	Assessment Board	Assessment Board outcomes and annual visit reports and examination results

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[6] Most actions started September 2012.

	Reinforcement with students and tutors that student work should be plagiarism-free and clearly aligned to learning outcomes, assessment criteria and unit descriptors	Feb 2013	Course Leader and Director of Studies/Quality Assurance Board	standards The annual inspection by Edexcel is successful	
	Internal verification policy to state 100% internal verification of assignments to continue	Mar 2013	Course Leader/ Internal Verifier/ External Moderator and Director of Studies	All students receive parity of treatment as checked by evaluations every six months	
	Assessment boards will follow the final submission deadlines where the internal verification and assessment process will be reviewed with actions points where necessary	Mar 2013		Information campaign to students on assessment rights and duties will be one mechanism that fosters parity of treatment (through student awareness) All assignments are reviewed by internal assessment board and external moderator	

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date[7]	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is **advisable** for the provider to:						
• ensure effective oversight of higher education awards (paragraphs 1.2 and 2.1)	Review/improve with: • two boards covering Quality (Quality Assurance Board), and Assessment (Assessment Board). Terms of reference and other formalities such as standing items	Mar 2013	Director of Studies	Assessments are verified as meeting the standards of the awarding organisation (Edexcel) and the Quality Code Assessment is based directly on learning outcomes approved by the awarding organisation	Assessment Board, Academic Board, Quality Assurance Board	Successful outcomes from the annual inspection visit from Edexcel
	• the main members sit on both boards	Feb 2013	Course Leader			
	• produce annual schedule for all boards	Feb 2013	Director of Studies/Course Leader			
	• boards have purpose statements clearly indicating the roles of each	Feb 2013				
	• all board meetings scheduled and recorded	Mar 2013				
	• the Assessment Board to include an external	Mar 2013				

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[7] Actions started September 2012.

	assessor drawn from higher education in conformity with the Quality Code					
• implement a programme to support and develop staff understanding of, and engagement with, relevant external reference points (paragraphs 1.4 and 2.2)	Produce annual scheduled faculty meetings to address this	Feb 2013	Course Leader and Director of Studies	Faculty are always up to date on awarding organisation issues	Quality Assurance Board/ Assessment Board.	All staffs are provided with up-to-date information and engaged with relevant external reference points as evaluated by external quality consultant and Academic Board enquiry
	Continue vetting of assignment briefs with faculty prior to issue to students	Feb 2013	Course Leader and Director of Studies	Assignment briefs always meet requirements of college regulations, the stipulations of the awarding organisation and the advice of the Quality Code		
	Assignment briefs to contain unit content and descriptor including Indicative resource materials list as per Edexcel manual	Feb 2013	Course Leader and Director of Studies.			No assignments issued with incomplete information/ criteria
	Student schemes of work aligned to Learning Outcomes/ Assessment Criteria/Unit Descriptors	Feb 2013	Course Leader/ Director of Studies/ Lecturers	Schemes of work always meet requirements		Student schemes of work and output always current
	Course Leader to attend Edexcel briefings and report back to Quality Assurance Board and	Mar 2013	Course Leader/ Operations Manager	Updates from external reference points are always current		

	faculty for any changes/updates					
	Annual calendar of benchmarking meetings (Quality Assurance Board) to monitor College practice against the Quality Code	Mar 2013	Course Leader/ Director of Studies			
• implement effective systems for responding to the reports of external examiners (paragraph 1.6)	Review/improve: • encourage awarding organisation to amplify usefulness of the feedback meetings with the Edexcel external verifier at conclusion of annual visits	Jan 2013	Course Leader/ Operations Manager and Director of Studies	Actions required by external verifier are implemented on time Confirmation report issued to Edexcel	Assessment Board	Completed action report to external verifier Confirmation report shows actions taken and acknowledgement received
	• add to College routine Assessment Board consideration of annual external verifier visit report	Jan 2013	Course Leader/ Operations Manager and Director of Studies			
	• actions arising from external verifier annual visit report to be recorded and actioned within shorter of two	Jan 2013	Course Leader/ Operations Manager and Director of Studies			

	months or awarding organisation's time-frame					
	• record of completion and confirmation of recommendation and condition action points given by awarding organisation	Jan 2013				
• devise and implement a definitive set of assessment regulations (paragraph 1.7)	Continue/review/ improve: • assessment boards (where this will be the only forum where assessments and internal verifier outcomes are confirmed) • the assessment board will include an external moderator and internal verifiers • assessment boards scheduled to sit following assignment submission deadline each term • assessment	Mar 2013	Course Leader/ Operations Manager/internal verifiers/external moderator/ Director of Studies	Assessments are verified as meeting the standards by the awarding organisation (Edexcel) following the annual Edexcel external verifier inspections	Assessment Board	Assessment Board minutes/ published results/Edexcel confirmation

	decisions will be confirmed and recorded • following the assessment board, results will be published and awarding organisation informed • establish routine of convening a teaching staff meeting to discuss general pattern of student achievement and enhance practice, and evaluate feedback for lecturing staff					
• ensure that academic appeals are formally recorded and conducted in accordance with College policy (paragraph 1.8)	Review/improve current system which is in place with documented evidence: • all appeals will be re-assessed by an external assessor • establish routine for reminding students and staff of the requirements of the formal appeals	Mar 2013	Course Leader/ Director of Studies	Appeal decisions are soundly based on factual evidence Decisions are confirmed by nominated third party where applicable	Assessment Board	Appeal decisions are upheld

	process • the Academic Board will review the assignment and the re-assessment of the assignment in full • where it is felt to add to the appeal process the assessor (lecturer) concerned may be called to give an explanation for their grading • following the appeal hearing the result will be conveyed to the student with the reasons for the decision • the decision of the Academic Board of the appeal will be final					
• review the conduct of assessment boards so that they are aligned with the expectations and regulations of the awarding body and organisation (paragraph 1.10)	Review/improve: • submission process including deadlines will be published each term in addition to deadlines being contained in all assignment briefs	Mar 2013	Course Leader/ Operations manager/ Director of Studies	Assessments are verified and confirmed as meeting the standards by the awarding organisation (Edexcel)	Assessment Board	Assessment Board minutes/ published results/Edexcel confirmation of awards

	• assessment boards will be the only forum where assessments and internal verifier outcomes are confirmed • the assessment board will include an external assessor (drawn from higher education in conformity with the Quality Code) and internal verifiers • assessment boards are scheduled to meet following assignment submission deadlines each term • assessment decisions will be confirmed and recorded • following the assessment board results will be published and awarding organisation				

				informed		
• introduce a system for student representation (paragraph 2.6)	Produce policy and procedure, arrange elections, train representatives	Mar 2013	Director of Studies	Student representatives elected, trained and attending Evidence of flows of communication between representatives and students Representatives' participation in meetings for which they are eligible, as specified by the new policy	Programme boards	Quality Assurance Board through annual monitoring
• provide students with essential information and guidance for each programme and module that they are studying (paragraphs 2.8 and 3.2)	Continue to review and improve all necessary information and guidance provided for each module studied Following advice from Edexcel the College has amended all assignments' structure The amended assignments have been issued for the	Feb 2013	Course Leader/ Operations Manager/ Director of Studies	All students receive and understand their assignments on time Students' task progression is on schedule Formative assessments are conducted Schemes of work are issued on	Quality Assurance Board.	Spot checks always reveal material is current and available

	October 2012 intake This is accomplished by: • extensive briefing during the induction programme • provision of detailed assignment briefs • explanation and guidance when assignments are issued • progression monitoring on a task by task basis • timetabled formative assessments • detailed schemes of work for each module • teaching material for each module available for all students on college intranet • access to Edexcel Programme Manual • comprehensive assignment briefs containing:	Feb 2013 Feb 2013	Course Leader/ Operations Manager/ Director of Studies Course Leader/ Operations Manager/	time Teaching material uploaded to intranet weekly Module Descriptors/ Operations Manual/ Edexcel Programme Manual available on website Schemes of work always current and available on the College intranet		

	- course title - centre no - unit title/unit no - batch no/no's - assessor's name - assignment title - term dates - no of LOs/ ACs - date of issue - submission deadlines unit descriptor containing: unit content; Tutor Delivery Guide; learning plan; suggested learning plan/activities; assessment methodology; essential/ indicative resources; recommended reading, journals and websites		Director of Studies			
• adopt a consistent approach to staff	Develop a fresh strategy and process	Mar 2013	Operations Manager	Staff understanding	Quality Assurance Board	Staff views

development (paragraph 2.9)	Brief staff Conduct needs and practice audits Implement new approach			and participation Fit between practice and College needs		Management information on needs/practice fit
• ensure effective management of learning, teaching and assessment (paragraph 2.11)	Review/improve with: • two boards covering Quality (Quality Assurance Board), and Assessment (Assessment Board). Terms of reference and other protocols • ensure a useful degree of cross-membership of committees • produce annual schedule and minutes for all boards • boards have purpose statements clearly indicating the roles of each. The Assessment Board to include an external assessor drawn	Mar 2013	Course Leader/ Operations Manager/Director of Studies	Faculty members are always relevant and skilled in delivery of their modules	Quality Assurance Board	Peer observations and student feedback are positive Outcomes are achieved from agreed individual action plan

	from higher education in conformity with the Quality Code					
• implement a system of version control for public information (paragraphs 3.3 and 3.5)	Review/improve: • current College procedure for managing the production and issuing of public information covering all published materials • current system where all documents are stored on our shared server with file name conventions including date • amendments are always clearly indicated by the date on which any document was last modified • create system for editorial rights in college documents	Feb 2013	Dean/ Operations Director/ Marketing Director/Course Leader/ Operations Manager/Director of Studies	Staff understanding and consistent practice in version control, as evidenced by (a) improved file naming; (b) lack of staff reports of version confusion Effectiveness in maintaining version control and up-to-date information	Quality Assurance Board	Report to Quality Assurance Board
• review and enhance the system for	Review/improve: • the College	Feb 2013	Dean/ Operations	Confirmation by external reviewer	Quality Assurance Board	Report to Quality Assurance Board

			Director/ Marketing Director/Course Leader/ Operations Manager/Director of Studies	of published information Ensure procedure is effective and secure		

procedure for managing the production and issuing of public information (to cover all published materials, the website, posters and other material)

checking and updating public information (paragraph 3.6).

- check working of password protection of intranet materials

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:						
• introduce a system of annual monitoring (paragraph 1.3)	Review/improve • annual review following the yearly Edexcel visits (Assessment Board to review external verifiers feedback after each Edexcel visit) • convene a Quality Assurance Board on receipt of Edexcel visit report	Feb 2013	Dean/ Operations Director/ Marketing Director/Course Leader/ Operations Manager/Director of Studies	Awarding organisation endorses assessment and academic outcomes	Quality Assurance Board	Academic standards are maintained and are aligned to awarding organisation's standards

	• use action plans plus reporting and evaluation of actions completed					
• collect student feedback on the provision and use of public information (paragraphs 2.6 and 3.7)	Review/improve • termly student feedback form, results and analysis • amend form to include more specific questions regarding provision and use of public information	Feb 2013	Course Leader/ Operations Manager/ Director of Studies	Success indicators: feedback results remain generally positive, with little negative comment and take necessary actions	Quality Assurance Board	Feedback forms and personal feedback
• present all essential public information for students in one dedicated place on its intranet (paragraph 3.4).	• Consider the technical possibilities and desirability of configuring the College intranet to provide public information for students in a dedicated area	Feb 2013	Operations Manager/Course Leader/Director of Studies	Optimum accessibility for students within the technical constraints of the system	Quality Assurance Board	Feedback forms and personal feedback

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*[8]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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[8] 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.