Tech Music School

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

November 2012

Key findings about Tech Music School

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in November 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 West London.

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**:

- analysis and use of student achievement statistics in programme and module leaders' reports (paragraph 1.5)
- provision of a comprehensive system of student support (paragraphs 2.7-2.10)
- provision of comprehensive and well presented programme documents (paragraphs 2.15 and 3.3).

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:

- develop a rigorous procedure for the accreditation of prior learning (paragraph 1.7)
- review the policy for, and monitor the use of, the virtual learning environment (paragraphs 2.16 and 3.8)
- develop a more formal mechanism for updating the virtual learning environment (paragraphs 2.16 and 3.8).

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

- complete the mapping of management policies and procedures against the Quality Code (paragraphs 2.3 and 3.9)
- consider the time allocated to academic tutorials to allow students sufficient time for discussion (paragraph 2.8)
- clarify, in pre-admission materials, all compulsory costs to be incurred during the programme of study (paragraph 3.7).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the Review for Educational Oversight[1] (REO) conducted by QAA at Tech Music School (the provider; the School). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of the University of West London through the BIMM Group and the London School of Music. The review was carried out by Dr Gwynne Harries, Ms Patricia Millner, Dr Frances Wiles (reviewers),and Dr Margaret Johnson (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 meetings with staff and students, evidence supplied by the School and reports of reviews by the validating university.

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

- the 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.

The Tech Music School (the School) was established as a private provider in Acton in 1983, when it specialised in contemporary music performance. A partnership with the University of West London (then Thames Valley University) started in 1995. The School was acquired by the BIMM Group, backed by Sovereign Capital, in June 2010. Concurrently, the academic contract with the University of West London was not renewed and the BMus (Hons) Popular Music Performance was validated by Bath Spa University. Within two years, the partnership with the University of West London was renewed and the provision with Bath Spa University ceased in 2012.

The School currently offers four full-time programmes at degree level and enrolled 455 students in 2012, of whom 28 are international students. The provision is based in four buildings located near to each other in the west of London with further external buildings hired for rehearsal, performances and recording. The vision of the School is to 'strive for musical innovation, originality and technical excellence', which it achieves through a holistic approach to music education.

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

University of West London
- BMus (Hons) Popular Music Performance (franchised)
- BMus (Hons) Popular Music Performance (validated)
- BA (Hons) Music Production (validated)
- BA (Hons) Songwriting (validated)
- BA (Hons) Music Business (validated)

---

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

The provider's stated responsibilities

Overall responsibility for the quality and standards of awards, student appeals and the provision and accuracy of public information rests with the University of West London. For the validated awards, the School has significant autonomy to manage academic standards and it undertakes curriculum development, all aspects of assessment, student admissions, monitoring of recruitment, retention and completion, and completes annual quality reviews. It is responsible for the assurance of staff capability and development, the provision and adequacy of learning resources, all aspects of student support and public information.

For the franchised provision, there is a shared responsibility for the development of programme specifications, student admissions, monitoring of recruitment, retention and completion, induction, annual quality review, and learning resources.

Recent developments

The validation arrangements with Bath Spa University ceased in 2012 and three new degree programmes, validated by the University of West London, recruited students in September 2012. The final year of the University of West London BMus Honours franchise provision will complete in June 2013 and this has been replaced with a BMus Honours offered as validated provision. The School will relocate to a large, single building in Fulham in September 2013.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. A group of student representatives was asked to coordinate a submission, which took the form of student interviews across a wide range of the student population. After the results were collated by the students, the Head of Higher Education at the School helped design two newsletters that have been made available to all students on the virtual learning platform. An enthusiastic group of students met the coordinator at the preparatory meeting and the team during the review. They confirmed the claims made in the self-evaluation and the student submission.

Detailed findings about Tech Music School

1   Academic standards

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

1.1   The School fulfils effectively its responsibilities for the management of academic standards through the close and supportive relationship with its awarding body. The School adheres to the requirements of the University of West London (the University) and to its delegated responsibilities for the management of academic standards. These are appropriately understood and correctly implemented for the validated and franchised programmes it offers.

1.2   A coherent management and committee structure, implemented for 2012-13, operates with clear terms of reference, membership and frequency of formal meetings. The Senior Executive Committee receives reports from the Higher Education Management Group and oversees strategic operational management. The Academic Board considers matters relating to academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement. To ensure the business, management and academic elements of the School are effectively managed, the Principal chairs both the Senior Executive Committee and Academic Board. He reports monthly to the BIMM Group Management Board.

1.3   Formal reports to the Academic Board from the examination boards, boards of study for validated programmes, and from programme committees for the franchised provision, were introduced in spring 2012. There is also a formal student representatives meeting and a Mitigation Committee. Informal, but regular, communication between the Principal and staff ensures the two-way dissemination of all important developments and information. This forms a potentially robust framework for the oversight of academic standards and quality.

1.4   A Head of Higher Education, who has recently been appointed to a newly established post, manages academic standards and the quality and enhancement of learning opportunities, and reports directly to the Principal. Day-to-day management is undertaken by four programme leaders supported by heads of performance departments.

1.5   Comprehensive annual programme reports are compiled by programme leaders using a wide range of programme information. Reports and their action plans are discussed at the relevant Programme Committee or boards of study meetings. The analysis and use of student achievement statistics in programme and module leaders' reports, to enhance outcomes and the quality of student experience, is impressive and good practice. The Academic Board, with student representation, actively oversees the development and monitoring of annual reports, external examiner reports, National Student Survey outcomes and their subsequent action plans.

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

1.6   The School has a clear awareness of external reference points and uses them successfully in the development of the curriculum and the maintenance of academic standards. In the recent development of new programmes and revalidation of the BMus Honours Popular Music Performance, significant and effective use was made of the subject benchmark statement Music and General business and management, to formulate programme specifications aligned with the Academic Infrastructure.

1.7   The School follows the regulations of the University to admit students with advanced standing or the accreditation of prior learning. However, in an example of an applicant requesting entry to level 6, the process of matching previous learning outcomes to those of the programme was not fully implemented and documented. The highly regarded reputation of the institution the student attended before transferring was taken as sufficient endorsement of the candidates' credentials. It is advisable that the School develops a rigorous procedure of mapping learning outcomes for accreditation of prior learning aligned with the guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning.

1.8   The School operates effectively a clear policy on marking, moderation and double marking. Students are provided with appropriate assignments which are marked fairly and normally returned within the stipulated timescale of 15 working days. Students are normally provided with in-depth, constructive feedback, which is often supplemented with further valuable comments from the second marker. The School is fully aware, from student surveys and external examiner comments, of some instances of cursory feedback. It has undertaken training sessions with staff to improve the quality of feedback.

1.9   The School has recently compiled an appendix to the students' Programme Handbook that clearly sets out policies and procedures found in the Higher Education Regulations Annex. This is made available to staff and students on the virtual learning environment. To date, the School has relied on the University's guidelines and regulatory framework to produce academic policies and it is commendable that mapping of the School's management processes against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) is identified as a priority during 2012-13.

1.10   Senior academic staff, with designated responsibilities for academic standards and quality, are expected to have a detailed knowledge and understanding of the Quality Code. Part-time staff are required to have a general awareness of the principles of the Quality Code. The School has held training days and has planned further briefing sessions to facilitate this.

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

1.11   The School operates effective procedures to ensure that external examiner comments are received and responded to by relevant staff to assure academic standards. For the validated programmes, examination boards are held at the School, chaired by the Principal and are operated efficiently. The external examiners are nominated by the School, but are appointed by the University.

1.12   Examination boards for the franchised provision are administered and chaired by senior staff of the London College of Music, as part of the University. The University appoints the external examiner, approves staff to teach university modules and requires an annual programme report.

1.13   External examiners' reports are received simultaneously by the Principal, the Head of Higher Education and the programme leaders. Each report and a written response is discussed at programme committees or boards of study and is captured in the annual programme reports submitted to the University and Academic Board. The autumn term Academic Board discusses both annual programme reports and external examiners' reports and agrees or amends action plans. Action plans are monitored at subsequent programme meetings and Academic Board meetings.

1.14   The School has a clear Marking Policy, which sets out appropriate procedures for moderation and second marking. The Programme Leader manages the assessment

procedure and ensures that University regulations are met. Moderation and second-marking procedures are thorough. The steps taken by the Programme Leader to mentor and oversee staff new to teaching higher education, and those engaged to carry out assessment where the module tutor is unavailable, are appropriate and sufficient to ensure that marking is at the correct standard.

1.15 There are opportunities to share good practice across higher education programmes at the Higher Education Management Group meetings and training days. The Head of Higher Education has a cross-school responsibility for the development of teaching and learning. Together with programme leaders, he is responsible for promoting good practice. This is disseminated at departmental meetings during training days and through the peer observation process.

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 School has effective mechanisms in place for the management and enhancement of learning opportunities that reflect those outlined for academic standards in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.6. The processes are overseen by the Academic Board, which is informed by the Programme Committee, the higher and further education boards of study and examination boards.

2.2 The annual programme monitoring and action planning process provides for the evaluation of the quality of learning opportunities. This is focused on the student experience, learning resources, staff development and equal opportunities. The student written submission, endorsed by the students in their meeting with the team, confirms that they are happy with the learning environment, teaching and resources.

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

2.3 The School makes effective use of the Academic Infrastructure in support of its management and enhancement of learning opportunities. It is supported by the University to ensure that the validated programmes use external reference points and align appropriately with the University course provision. The School is currently undertaking a systematic mapping of its higher education practice against the Quality Code.

2.4 There are effective processes of continuous monitoring and feedback through external verification and moderation processes. This ensures that the School complies with the University's requirements in the delivery and development of programmes.

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

2.5 The School has effective mechanisms to monitor and report on the quality of learning and teaching. It is committed to the collection and use of student feedback and students' views are sought formally through module surveys and reviews. Students are represented on committees at all levels. They also maintain regular informal contact with

staff. The minutes of meetings are circulated and made available on the virtual learning environment. Students confirmed that the School is responsive to their feedback. As an example of this, they referred to the reduction in size of the extensive Programme Handbook by limiting its content to essential information, unavailable elsewhere.

2.6   For each programme, there are clear expectations of tutor responsibilities for lesson planning and the delivery of an agreed scheme of work. Tutors are regularly monitored by the Programme Leader to ensure that planned teaching and learning activities are delivered. The teaching of all staff is observed once a year and all new staff are observed shortly after joining the staff team. Areas for development are noted during the observation and discussed with the member of staff being observed.

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

2.7   An appropriate range of procedures ensures that students receive a high level of support. Pre-entry guidance is effective and all students are interviewed. The interview process includes helpful guidance and practical feedback on how to improve when starting their programme. They undertake an induction and are provided with a comprehensive Student Handbook. Students confirmed that they found the pre-entry guidance and induction helpful.

2.8   Academic support for students is thorough and addresses a range of needs. Regular academic tutorials are provided to assist students in the development of their assignments and practical performance skills. Students praised the easy access to tutors, although expressed concern that the time slots for tutorials were too brief. It is desirable that the School considers the time allocated to academic tutorials to allow students sufficient time for discussion to address their concerns.

2.9   A comprehensive programme of careers information, advice and guidance, and a range of pastoral support is also available. Careers advice is often practical and the students find it very helpful. Online forums, social events and other community relationships assist students in adapting to life in higher education and prepare international students for life in a foreign country. Charity fund-raising events are also organised and the team noted arrangements for an event for cancer research in honour of a former student.

2.10   The School augments careers support with masterclass events involving leading professionals in the music industry and has established its own record label. Both activities significantly extend the student experience and learning opportunities. The provision of a comprehensive system of student support, that addresses the academic, pastoral and professional needs of all higher education students, represents good practice.

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

2.11   There is an effective combination of School, University and staff-led activity in the management and delivery of staff development. A recent reorganisation and appointment of the current Principal resulted in a significant increase in available funds. Support for full-time staff development is driven by the strategic priorities identified by the School, individual proposals from staff, lesson observation and associated performance triggers. All part-time staff meet their Head of Department annually to discuss and identify personal training needs. The School encourages all staff to engage in external events, such as those organised by the University and other external providers, and holds regular tutor training days and meetings that contribute to staff development.

2.12   Lecturing staff are well qualified and experienced. They combine teaching with ongoing professional careers and provided a variety of examples of engagement in higher-level academic study at master's level and in scholarly projects, appropriate to support higher education teaching and learning. The School encourages lecturers to undertake formal teacher training where this is appropriate. All new members of staff receive an induction.

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

2.13   There are suitable and sufficient resources for programmes. They are developed and confirmed as part of validation. Regular formal monitoring by the School Executive Committee and day-to-day management by the Head of Estates and Facilities ensures that resources are maintained.

2.14   All students on validated higher education programmes have full access to the University library facilities and to electronic library resources provided by the School. The strong and effective links with music industry professionals provide students with the opportunity to enhance their learning and gain realistic experience of performing and industry through masterclasses and auditions. Students confirmed that they are satisfied with the level of resources provided, and have the opportunity, in formal meetings, to discuss perceived shortfalls.

2.15   There is effective use of the new virtual learning environment that is being developed to support teaching and learning and to communicate information. Students report favourably on the availability of assignment details and other study materials posted to the electronic platforms. The provision of such comprehensive and well presented programme documents, in both electronic and hard copy format, make a significant contribution to the student learning experience and is considered to be good practice.

2.16   Currently, there is no formal mechanism to amend or update programme content on the virtual learning environment. The School is able to articulate the collegial, but informal, processes that have developed; however, there are some inconsistencies in the way updates are monitored. This has the potential to introduce disparity of support for students across programme areas. The team considers it advisable that the School reviews the policy for, and monitors the use of, the virtual learning environment. It is also advisable for the School to develop a more formal mechanism for the notification of updates made to programme content on the virtual learning environment.

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

3   Public information

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

3.1   The School produces comprehensive and relevant information for potential and current students, made available in hard copy, a website, and a virtual learning environment.

3.2   The website is the primary source of information for applicants and provides accessible and full details about programmes. It clarifies the School's arrangements for meeting the needs of disabled students, and provides information for international applicants in seven languages. The School offers printed versions of brochures and course leaflets on request. The team noted particularly that students greatly appreciate the provision of additional material, such as songs to be learned, on flash drives.

3.3   The recent introduction of a virtual learning environment helps to ensure the currency of internal documents used by staff and students. The platform provides comprehensive and easily accessible documentation to support and communicate with full and part-time teaching staff, including up-to-date programme material, relevant policies and the Employee Handbook.

3.4   At induction, students value the clear and accessible School Handbook, that contains accurate and comprehensive general information about the School, its facilities and processes. In addition, students are issued with an informative and well presented Programme Handbook with an overview of all academic and music-related arrangements relevant to their specific qualification. A further important document is the annually reviewed Programme Book, which is tailored to each music specialism and provides more detailed schemes of work for each term and, at level 4, a comprehensive set of course notes.

3.5   The School communicates effectively with students, both in person and by email, and through regular meetings with student representatives. The virtual learning environment has been well received by all students. They have access to a series of course-related online forums, moderated by programme leaders. There is also a forum for the student representatives to consult the wider student body.

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

3.6   The School has effective processes for ensuring that its public information is accurate and complete. The University approves, annually, all publicity and marketing information. The Principal approves all digital and printed documentation within the School and ensures the completeness and accuracy of specific information, such as marketing and academic programmes, although initial monitoring is delegated to designated senior managers. The Higher Education Management Group audits and updates electronic information before the start of each term.

3.7   The pre-application information on the School website is accurate, detailed and current. However, some students were unclear, from the initial information, which facilities and materials are covered by their fees. It is desirable to clarify in pre-admission materials all compulsory costs and charges to be incurred during the programme of study to ensure that students are fully informed.

3.8   Teaching staff have received training in using the virtual learning environment, and are encouraged to regularly upload and amend their lesson plans and teaching materials. Programme leaders are responsible for monitoring such materials, but there are currently some variations in practice and the School intends to develop policy guidance to regularise amendments.

3.9   The School has an effective system for reviewing its academic policies and procedures that are developed with guidance from the awarding body and in accordance with the Academic Infrastructure. Further alignment with the Quality Code will take place in a planned project during 2013. Non-academic policies are reviewed and approved by the School Executive Committee. All academic policies and procedures are currently being

systematically reviewed before approval, and will then be reviewed annually by the Academic Board.

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

Action plan[3]

Tech Music School action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight November 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:						
• analysis and use of student achievement statistics in programme and module leaders' reports (paragraph 1.5)	Student achievement statistics incorporated consistently into all annual programme leaders' reports	September 2013, then annually	Head of Higher Education	Analysis of student achievement statistics incorporated consistently within every annual programme leaders' reports	Academic Board	Annual quality assurance action plan Annual learning and teaching report Annual programme reports Academic Board minutes
	Data to inform annual quality enhancement action plan	January 2013, then annually in October	Head of Higher Education			
	Student achievement data to inform annual learning and teaching report and action plan	July 2013, then annually	Head of Higher Education	Student achievement data to inform annual quality enhancement action plan and annual learning	Academic Board	

---

[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.

				and teaching report		
• provision of a comprehensive system of student support (paragraphs 2.7-2.10)	Engage student voice to support reflection of good practice achieved	January 2013 and then termly	Head of Academic Administration and Student Support	Annual student support report	Principal	Minutes of student representative meetings and focus groups
	Monitor student satisfaction with student support services through student representative meetings, focus groups and annual student satisfaction questionnaire	January 2013 and then termly/ annually as appropriate	Head of Academic Administration and Student Support	Appointment of additional student support specialists in the area of learning support and English language support	Academic Board	Results of annual student satisfaction surveys

Academic Board minutes

School Executive Committee minutes |
	Expand learning support provision through the appointment of a specialist in this area	September 2013	Head of Academic Administration and Student Support	Improved student satisfaction with student support systems	School Executive Committee and Academic Board	
	Increase English language support for non-UK native students	September 2013	Head of Academic Administration and Student Support	Improved student achievement, retention and attendance statistics	School Executive Committee and Academic Board	
	Produce annual student support report and	July 2013, then annually	Head of Academic Administration	Increased student satisfaction with academic	Academic Board	

	undertake annual review of the services offered		and Student Support	tutorials		
	Develop and implement any revisions to the academic tutorial system arising from the review of the current system	May 2013	Head of Higher Education	Increased tutor and management satisfaction with academic tutorial system	Academic Board	Revised academic tutorial policy and procedure in School Handbook
• provision of comprehensive and well presented programme documents (paragraphs 2.15 and 3.3).	Engage student voice to support reflection of good practice achieved	March 2013	Head of Higher Education	Revised programme documentation	Academic Board	Programme documentation Academic Board minutes
	Monitor student satisfaction with programme documentation via student representative meetings, focus groups and annual student satisfaction survey	January 2013, then termly/ annually as appropriate	Head of Higher Education	Improved student satisfaction with programme documentation	Academic Board	Student representative and focus group meeting minutes Annual student satisfaction survey results
	Review programme documentation annually to ensure fitness for purpose and ensure compliance with awarding body programme	July 2013, then annually	Head of Higher Education	Improved content, presentation and accessibility to programme documentation	Academic Board	

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	documentation, policies and procedures					
The team considers that it is **advisable** for the provider to:						
• develop a rigorous procedure for the accreditation of prior learning (paragraph 1.7)	Develop and implement a new procedure for the accreditation of prior learning, liaising closely with the University of West London to ensure compliance with its requirements	March 2013	Head of Higher Education	New procedure for accreditation of prior learning approved and implemented	Academic Board	Academic Board minutes Annual programme reviews
	Train all admissions staff and higher education programme leaders on the new procedure	March 2013	Head of Higher Education	All accreditation of prior learning applicants undergo systematic and recorded mapping of experiential attributes against relevant higher education programme specifications and module learning outcomes	Academic Board	Accreditation of prior learning applications records
	Analysis of accreditation of prior learning applications in annual programme reviews	September 2013, then annually	Programme leaders	This mapping will be presented to the awarding body University Accreditation Committee		

				Analysis of accreditation or prior learning statistics undertaken in annual programme reviews	Academic Board	
				Accreditation of prior learning policy and procedure reviewed annually prior to the commencement of every academic cycle to ensure accordance with university process and procedures for accreditation	Academic Board	
• review the policy for, and monitor the use of, the virtual learning environment (paragraphs 2.16 and 3.8)	Establish a working group, chaired by the Head of Higher Education, to oversee and review the use of the virtual learning environment, including students and teaching staff	January 2013	Principal	Virtual learning environment policy approved and implemented	Academic Board	Academic Board minutes
				Increased teaching staff engagement with the virtual learning environment	Academic Board	

	Develop and implement a formal policy to govern the use of the virtual learning environment, consulting with all stakeholders including students and teaching staff	March 2013	Virtual Learning Environment Working Group	Increased student engagement with the virtual learning environment	Academic Board	Virtual Learning Environment Working Group minutes
	Report on virtual learning environment to be a standing agenda item for the Academic Board	January 2013	Principal		Principal	
	Establish a clear locus of responsibility for the virtual learning environment	January 2013	Principal	Clearly defined management responsibility for the virtual learning environment set out in appropriate job descriptions		Management job descriptions
• develop a more formal mechanism for updating of the virtual learning environment (paragraphs 2.16 and 3.8).	Establish a working group, chaired by the Head of Higher Education, to oversee and review the use of the virtual learning environment, including students	January 2013	Principal	Virtual learning environment guidance notes disseminated to all teaching staff

Increased teaching staff engagement with | Principal

Academic Board | Academic Board minutes

Virtual Learning Environment Working Group |

	and teaching staff			the virtual learning environment		minutes
	Develop and implement a formal policy to govern the use of the virtual learning environment, consulting with all stakeholders including students and teaching staff	March 2013	Virtual Learning Environment Working Group	Increased student engagement with the virtual learning environment	Academic Board	Management job descriptions
	Produce guidance notes on the use of the virtual learning environment and disseminate to all teaching staff	March 2013	Virtual Learning Environment Working Group	Consistent approach to updating of the virtual learning environment which complies with the formal policy	Academic Board	Virtual Learning Environment Guidance notes
	Report on virtual learning environment to be standing agenda item at Academic Board	January 2013	Principal	Clearly defined management responsibility for the virtual learning environment set out in appropriate job descriptions	Academic Board	
	Establish a clear locus of	January 2013	Principal			

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	responsibility for the virtual learning environment					
The team considers that it is **desirable** for the provider to:						
• complete the mapping of management policies and procedures against the Quality Code (paragraphs 2.3 and 3.9)	Senior Academic Management Team to review all higher education management policies and procedures and identify areas of misalignment with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)	July 2013	Head of Higher Education	Report on policy review presented to Academic Board Revised policies and procedures approved and implemented	Academic Board Academic Board	Academic Board minutes School Executive Committee minutes Revised policies and procedures
	Revise higher education management policies and procedures as appropriate in the light of the outcome of the initial review, liaising with the University of West London as appropriate	December 2013	Principal			

	Progress report on mapping process to be included as a standing agenda item at Academic Board meetings	January 2013	Principal			
• consider the time allocated to academic tutorials to allow students sufficient time for discussion (paragraph 2.8)	Review current tutorial system including consultation with teaching staff and engaging the student voice, through student representative meetings, to support reflection on current practice	March 2013	Head of Higher Education	Tech Music School academic tutorial review report Revised academic tutorial policy and procedure approved and implemented Increased student satisfaction with academic tutorials	Academic Board Academic Board Academic Board	Academic Board minutes Revised academic tutorial policy and procedure in School Handbook Student satisfaction survey 2013-14
	Develop and implement any revisions to the academic tutorial system arising from the review of the current system	May 2013	Head of Higher Education	Increased tutor and management satisfaction with academic tutorial system Improved student retention and achievement statistics	Academic Board Academic Board	

• clarify, in pre-admission materials, all compulsory costs to be incurred during the programme of study (paragraph 3.7).	Remove all additional compulsory costs from the student fee structure	Completed	Principal	Pre-admission costs abolished for the academic year 2012-13	School Executive Committee	School Executive Committee minutes

About QAA

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

QAA's aims are to:

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

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

More information about the work of QAA is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk.

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

Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

---

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

quality See **academic quality**.

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

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

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