



Williams College

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

December 2012

Key findings about Williams College

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in December 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 the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, Edexcel, University of Gloucestershire, Association of Business Executives, Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality and Institute of Administrative Management.

The team also considers that there can be **limited 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 organisations.

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 no items of **good practice**.

Recommendations

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

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

- systematically record the minutes and actions arising from the deliberations of all academic committees, including relevant meetings of the Senior Management Team (paragraphs 1.3 and 2.12)
- develop and implement a robust strategy for the management of assessment to secure academic standards (paragraphs 1.4 and 1.10)
- develop and implement a systematic approach to programme approval and regular monitoring to include rigorous data analysis (paragraphs 1.5, 1.6 and 2.9).

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

- further develop existing College policies to reflect the *Code of practice* (paragraphs 1.8 and 2.3)
- review the terms of reference of committees to ascribe clear lines of accountability (paragraphs 2.1 and 2.4)
- adopt a more formal process for considering and tracking responses to student concerns and complaints (paragraphs 2.2 and 2.6)
- develop a coherent process for teaching observation, appraisal and staff development (paragraphs 2.5 and 2.10 to 2.11)
- significantly enhance the quality and timeliness of feedback provided to students on University programmes with clear links made to intended learning outcomes (paragraph 2.8).

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

- adopt a more formal process for considering and assessing the effectiveness of external input into the management of academic standards (paragraph 1.9)
- fully develop and implement an integrated approach to assuring public information which involves academic staff and international student recruitment agents (paragraph 3.3)
- implement a new social media policy (paragraph 3.7).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Williams College (the provider; the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of the University of Gloucestershire (the University), Association of Business Executives, Edexcel, Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality, Institute of Administrative Management and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants. The review was carried out by Dr Elizabeth Briggs, Mr Philip Price and Ms Deborah Trayhurn (reviewers) and Mrs Suzanne Richardson (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 a wide range of College documents supplied by the provider and the awarding body, reports prepared by the awarding body and awarding organisations, meetings with staff, students and representatives from the awarding body and one awarding organisation. During the visit, the College presented the team with recently produced student data and some updated documents on areas such as mid to long-term strategy, assessment, appraisal, tutorial records and international agent recruitment information. The team also scrutinised student work and tutor feedback.

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

- the Academic Infrastructure
- the guidelines provided by the awarding organisations
- the regulations of the awarding body
- the Qualification and Credit Framework.

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

Williams College is the trading name of Williams College UK Ltd, a private company. It was founded in 2002 as an English language school for overseas students and while this provision remains it has also developed and expanded considerably as a provider of higher education at levels 4 to 7 in the business and information technology related areas. In August 2012 the College effected a partial merger with Belgravia College which resulted in the transfer of students on both Edexcel and professional awarding organisation qualifications from Belgravia College to Williams College. The College now operates from its original site at Thavies Inn and at the former Belgravia College site in Oxford Street and works with one awarding body and five awarding organisations.

A strategic aim of the College is to be a centre of excellence for the provision of undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes in the private higher education business and related sectors in London. Student enrolment on higher education programmes has increased significantly from about 100 in 2002 to the current number of 1,845 students with recruitment three times per year.

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

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

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath their awarding body and organisations with full-time equivalent student numbers in brackets representing numbers for 2011-12 as no data for 2012-13 is available.

Association of Business Executives

(being phased out in 2013)

- Business Information Systems (level 4-6) (18)
- Business Management (level 4-6) (50)
- Human Resource Development (level 4-6) (26)
- Marketing (level 4-6) (17)
- Travel, Tourism and Hospitality (level 4-6) (39)

Association of Chartered Certified Accountants

- Advanced Diploma in Accounting and Business (level 6) (204)

Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality

(being phased out in 2013)

- Hotel Management (level 4-5) (8)
- Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism Management (level 6) (49)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism Management (level 7) (7)

Edexcel

- HND Business (Finance) (level 5) (57)
- HND Business (Management) (level 5) (534)
- HND Hospitality Management (level 5) (170)
- HND Tourism Management (level 5) (86)
- HND Computing (level 5) (218)
- HND Fashion and Textile (level 5) (27)
- HND Health and Social Care (level 5) (77)
- Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership (level 7) (127)

Institute of Administrative Management

(being phased out in 2013)

- Extended Diploma in Business and Administrative Management (level 6) (20)

University of Gloucestershire

(no further recruitment is planned beyond October 2013)

- Master of Business Administration (level 7) (8)
- BA (Hons) Business Management and Strategy (level 6) (51)
- BA (Hons) Strategic Hospitality Management (level 6) (7)
- BA (Hons) Strategic Tourism Management (level 6) (19)
- BA (Hons) Accounting and Financial Management (level 6) (7)
- BSc (Hons) Information and Communication Technology (level 6) (12)
- BSc (Hons) Health, Community and Social Care (level 4, 5 and 6) (7) (no further recruitment is planned for this award)

The provider's stated responsibilities

The College has the following responsibilities in all programmes: recruitment and selection, monitoring retention and completion, staff development, learning and teaching, student support and learning resources. The College is also responsible for collecting and acting on student feedback and opinion, as well as public information, including programme and module details, the prospectus and the website.

In the case of programmes from the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, Association of Business Executives, Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality, and Institute of Administrative Management, the awarding organisations are responsible for setting, marking and moderating assignments with a shared responsibility for providing feedback to the students. For Edexcel awards, the College has responsibility for the setting of assignments, marking, moderation and providing feedback to the students. The University is additionally responsible for the setting of assignments, moderation of student work and the preparation of annual monitoring reviews. The University and awarding organisations provide programme specifications, the curriculum, course modules and intended learning outcomes as part of their collaborative partnership agreements.

Recent developments

The College has recently concluded agreements to lease additional teaching space at both Cranford College in West London and Regal College in East London with the intention to deliver Edexcel business programmes at these two locations. In the 2012-13 academic year, the College has expanded student numbers for both UK and EU students with the review team advised that an additional 230 students were enrolled onto the HND Business programme from October 2012 at Cranford. The College additionally advised that approximately 500 students are in a delayed registration situation mainly due to Student Loans Company funding issues. Delivery for these students is expected to begin in early January 2013. At the time of the review, there were no students registered at Regal College.

The University has issued notice of termination under the Partnership Agreement which will see the partnership terminate in September 2014. The College is currently working with the University to ensure all existing students registered on University awards at the College have the opportunity to complete and achieve their awards.

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 brief written submission based on feedback to questionnaires prepared by the student representative was produced using responses coordinated by the student representative. Students met reviewers during the review visit and the coordinator at the preparatory meeting.

Detailed findings about Williams College

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The College is not fulfilling its responsibilities effectively for the management of standards for University programmes in the School of Business and Information Technology. There are areas which require further development to provide the necessary oversight of provision. The College has no overarching operational strategy in which management responsibilities are clearly defined and against which the effectiveness of management is evaluated. The arrangements with the University lack effective oversight and course teams do not work consistently to University policies and procedures. Academic standards are more successfully managed for the Edexcel and professional programmes.

1.2 Terms of reference for the Academic Board and Boards of Studies are stated, but are insufficiently focused or detailed to guide the activities of the Board to ensure academic standards are maintained. The Academic Board has oversight of the management of academic standards and is ultimately responsible to the Senior Management Team, but its terms do not fully relate to the existing College systems for managing academic standards. The new Quality Enhancement Committee has met once, in November 2012, to agree terms of reference and the focus of activity (see paragraph 2.1). The College anticipates this Committee to be the forum for the sharing of good practice between programme teams.

1.3 Daily management of higher education provision is structurally sufficient in the professional and vocational programme areas, but in practice the structure is not adhered to across the College. The Director of Studies is responsible for ensuring appropriate assessment arrangements, staffing and resources. At programme level, course leaders are supported by module leaders. The course leader chairs the Board of Studies for each programme, but reporting of minutes to the Academic Board and Senior Management Team is limited. The deliberations of the formal committees are not properly recorded. They do not address strategic matters or maintain oversight of academic standards. Action plans do not evidence clear monitoring or communication. Course leaders across programmes inconsistently hold meetings with the Director of Studies to address issues of mutual concern and to share good practice. Actions taken in response to negative comments raised are not recorded formally. It is essential for the College to systematically record the minutes and actions arising from the deliberations of all academic committees, including relevant meetings of the Senior Management Team.

1.4 The professional awarding organisations have external assessment arrangements. For Edexcel the delegated responsibility for assessment is considered appropriate. The management of responsibilities to the University has been problematic in some areas including marking and student feedback. As a result, the University has redrafted the agreement with the College which now requires all assessment to be second marked by the College and then moderated by the University. Despite this change, issues of inconsistency and serious concerns noted in moderator and external examiner reports continue. The College has no formal process in place to consider University external examiner or moderator reports to manage assessment and secure academic standards. The reports refer to weak management of academic standards with staff not effectively engaged in monitoring and enhancing academic standards sufficiently to address concerns raised. Until the recent revision of the partnership agreement, the College had not received external examiners' reports from the University, which has contributed to the lack of formal analysis and reporting of matters arising. The College acknowledges evidence of the issues being raised at that

time but with no record of significant action taken to address the concerns. In January 2012, the College introduced plagiarism detection software with limited staff development to support students with appropriate referencing practice. Plagiarism continues to be a feature in ongoing and very recent external examiner reports and University moderator comments. There is no formal system in place to identify unfair practice and while the College has a Plagiarism Policy, staff are confused when asked to identify what might be considered acceptable practice. It is essential for the College to develop and implement a robust strategy for the management of assessment to secure academic standards.

1.5 There is no systematic approach to programme approval and formal processes are not being used to consider programme development or review. College course annual monitoring reports contain minimal qualitative information and limited statistical analysis of quantitative data on enrolment, assessment and achievement resulting in action plans of variable quality with little measurement of impact (see paragraph 1.6). There is no formal process in operation that enables course reports to be collated and developed into a college-wide action plan and no consideration to address poor performance issues or programme review and approval in general. The institutional monitoring report for the University is considered by the Academic Board and the Senior Management Team but is not comprehensive and does not result in detailed action planning. Management does not have effective oversight for reviewing and managing academic standards on University programmes. For awarding organisations, practice is satisfactory.

1.6 The Senior Management Team does not analyse or evaluate statistical records effectively, existing programmes are not regularly reviewed and the use of external reports to safeguard academic standards is limited. There is no collation and use of cohort data to monitor success and progression. Recent University annual monitoring reports highlight difficulties with gaining accurate information regarding students' status. The formal oversight at senior management level is not sufficiently deliberative. It is essential for the College to develop and implement a systematic approach to programme approval and regular monitoring to include rigorous data analysis.

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

1.7 The College implements University and awarding organisations' assessment guidelines. College programmes are related appropriately to the levels of *The Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* or the Qualifications and Credit Framework. The University and awarding organisations devise programme specifications related to relevant subject and professional benchmarks, with intended learning outcomes. The College meets relevant professional and accreditation frameworks, for example, the Association of Certified Chartered Accountants Gold approval rules.

1.8 College policies do not always adequately address or consistently apply the precepts of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*). For example, complaints and appeals issues raised are not handled consistently or responses clearly documented (see paragraph 2.2). No evidence was available in programme approvals to confirm standards, or that staff and resources were considered in relation to anticipated growth. The application process and levels required is inconsistent in both International English Language Testing System and Accreditation of Prior and Experiential Learning processes. The College has benchmarked its policies for international students against QAA's publication *International students studying in the UK - Guidance for UK higher education providers* but the process has yet to be fully completed. It is advisable for the College to further develop existing College policies to reflect the *Code of practice*.

1.9 The College has recently employed a number of external consultants who are providing ongoing input to College activity in developing approaches to meet *Code of practice* requirements. Advice has been provided concerning assessment development and practice, including contextualisation of assignment briefs. However, the impact of this consultancy is not monitored, nor is progress checked when managing academic standards. External consultants have commented on the need to develop clear sampling processes to demonstrate internal verification, but this does not happen consistently. It is desirable for the College to adopt a more formal process for considering and assessing the effectiveness of external input into the management of academic standards.

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

1.10 External moderation, verification and examining processes for Association of Chartered Certified Accountants, Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality, Institute of Administrative Management and Association of Business Executives are the responsibility of the awarding organisations. The College uses mock examinations as formative assessment to prepare students for the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants final examinations. The College follows awarding organisation rules for progression between levels and programmes. Edexcel awards are assessed using the College assessment policy, with external verification by the external examiners who confirm and support these processes and standards achieved. The Examination Board considers outcomes for all modules and external examiners' comments. It is intended that boards of studies track reports and external examiners' comments, which are then incorporated in annual monitoring reports presented to the Academic Board, but this does not happen consistently or comprehensively (see paragraphs 1.4 to 1.6 for use of external examiners and moderation of University provision).

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 organisations.

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 has systems and an evolving committee structure that supports learning opportunities for students, but the alignment and coherence of the systems and committees are not clear. The Academic Board does not effectively assure compliance with the University's expectations (see paragraph 1.2). The key tasks of the Quality Enhancement Committee include the design and oversight of quality enhancement and overseeing the quality manual which consists of incomplete policies and processes that are not accurately aligned. This committee has met only once with very limited deliberations. It is advisable for the College to review the terms of reference of committees to ascribe clear lines of accountability.

2.2 The College does not handle student concerns and complaints effectively or consistently. The terms of reference for the College's management groups indicate responsibilities for responding to issues raised by students, yet the terms are not embedded or evident within the Teaching and Learning Strategy. Management does not follow its own stated practice when considering and responding to student complaints. There is little indication of any tracking and monitoring by the boards of studies, course leader meetings,

Academic Board or Senior Management Team which would lead to actions being followed through or fully reported. A review of issues raised by students and staff through various media suggests there are limited actions taken or proposed to address concerns. Issues raised by students and others at boards of studies meetings are not consistently recorded as being effectively managed by subsequent meetings or other more senior committees. It is advisable for the College to adopt a more formal process for considering and tracking responses to student concerns and complaints.

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

2.3 Mapping to the Academic Infrastructure is incomplete and sections of the *Code of practice* have not been used effectively to review policies, their content or application. Annual review practices are insufficiently developed to enable review of each course and each cohort, but the College is beginning to use external reference points in its management and enhancement of learning opportunities for professional awards. Paragraphs 1.8 and 1.9 apply to the use of external reference points in the management and enhancement of learning opportunities.

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

2.4 The Teaching and Learning Strategy is not sufficiently aligned to the key priorities of the College and is not applied in practice. The Strategy does attempt to set the strategic direction for the College within the context of its responsibilities for the University and awarding organisations, but the recently established Teaching and Learning Committee has yet to meet. The terms of reference do not reflect the current needs of the students at every level across the higher education provision. There is no systematic collation and analysis of any information on teaching and learning, and detailed progression and completion rates for the College's programmes are incomplete. Course leaders have responsibility for monitoring student progress but this is not undertaken systematically or appropriately recorded. (See paragraph 2.1.)

2.5 Teaching observations and appraisals are carried out but these are not linked strategically to the staff development programme. Feedback from peer observations is not effectively considered at boards of studies or other committees with no clear plans prepared to address issues identified. The appraisal record has no action points and no direct relationship to the peer observation or staff development needs. The peer report form is detailed in nature, and provides opportunity for informal feedback to staff on their practice, but is not sufficiently focused on higher education practice to contribute to an identification of staff development activity or training. The scheme does not include elements of opportunity to share good practice. (See also paragraphs 2.10-2.11.)

2.6 The terms of reference and minutes from the Academic Board and boards of studies make only oblique and insufficient detailed references to managing and responding to student feedback with no formal records maintained. Student views on teaching and learning are sought in a variety of ways, including student representation on boards, speaking directly to the communications and/or welfare social officers and completion of module evaluations. The College collates student module evaluations into a single document, but does not evaluate results effectively in a timely manner. There are student concerns expressed through the feedback process which have persisted since the annual student feedback the previous year. Results collated in August 2012 have yet to be evaluated. Student feedback indicates insufficient resources, including staffing in some areas, and late notification of assessment and module study guides. This feedback has not been systematically addressed (see paragraph 2.2).

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

2.7 The College provides students with academic and personal support and programme handbooks that contain helpful guidance. Students are informed of their personal tutor entitlement at induction. Students are appreciative of the pastoral and academic support that they receive and feel they are adequately supported and that, generally, staff are readily available. However, a new tutorial policy is not yet embedded and tutorials are not regularly taking place.

2.8 For University programmes, feedback on summative assessment provided to students is not appropriately benchmarked to intended learning outcomes and assessment tasks are not always adhered to. Recent University external examiner reports indicate serious concerns about inadequate marking, inappropriate grading and insufficient feedback. These concerns are a feature in a number of University moderator comments, which refer to high referral and low completion rates for some University awards. Similar concerns apply to a small amount of Edexcel work, where an external examiner identified potential unfair practice that had been overlooked by the assessor and the internal verifier. Feedback to students on Edexcel programmes is more clearly referenced to assessment criteria. It is advisable for the College to significantly enhance the quality and timeliness of feedback provided to students on University programmes with clear links made to intended learning outcomes.

2.9 Use of cohort data to underpin enhancement activities and ongoing course monitoring is not established, with very limited use of student achievement data to develop and monitor effective processes that support student learning. The course monitoring reports do identify some areas of good practice, but with little rationale provided or details of how it will be disseminated (see paragraphs 1.5 and 1.6).

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

2.10 The College's approach to managing and evaluating strategic staff development is not structured and the identification of staff training needs is not coherent (see paragraph 2.5). A staff development policy exists and the Senior Management Team has responsibility for the professional developmental review of staff. The Strategic Policy mid and long-term (September 2012) proposes a development programme for staff to gain postgraduate qualifications and develop a limited research degree programme, but this is not mapped to the training needs of staff. The College recognises the need for increased staff development, but the process is not formalised and appropriate staff updating is undertaken on an irregular basis. The College is providing staff training opportunities to address issues raised by Edexcel reports on assessment practice. These are yet to be fully evaluated.

2.11 A condition from the last University approval visit was that the College should develop a strategic approach to staff development, but this has not been sufficiently addressed or considered. The staff development plan for 2012-13 is not aligned to strategic objectives. Publication of the staff development plan for the review team visit was the result of an oversight by the Senior Management Team. The College response to areas of weakness raised by the University and awarding organisations is limited, unfocused and ineffective (see paragraph 2.5). The uptake of training opportunities with University staff on assessment practice in the last academic year was insufficient to address the major concerns raised in monitoring reports. It is advisable for the College to develop a coherent process for teaching observation, appraisal and staff development.

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 There is a College policy for resources but this was not made available at the time of the review. It is not thoroughly used to determine, review or evaluate the resources required to deliver higher education provision. The Senior Management Team gives only limited consideration to these issues with no formal record of discussions or outcomes agreed. Student concerns are raised in several forums with few actions taken to resolve concerns about information technology, the virtual learning environment, computers and the library. Inadequate consideration has been given to ensure appropriate and sufficient resources are available for the anticipated significant growth in student numbers from January 2013. Current staff will be expected to deliver on these programmes with no workload considerations or quality assurance mechanisms. It is unclear how this growth will be accommodated. (See paragraph 1.3.)

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

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 is effective in communicating public information. It shares responsibility for provision of public information with the University and awarding organisations. The College is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the information for the University and Edexcel provision, but shares this responsibility with the other awarding organisations. The College is responsible for the prospectus; external website; virtual learning environment; internal publications (policies, handbooks and learning materials); noticeboards; and email communications. Students receive a College handbook, a programme specification and module guides. Students on University awards receive a University handbook. The College does not produce programme specifications itself, but shares responsibility for publishing them with the University and awarding organisations.

3.2 The comprehensive and accurate website is the College's main public interface. Materials on the website are clearly laid out. At the time of the visit, the prospectus for 2012-13 had not been published. The most important sources of internal communication and information for staff are a set of handbooks and policies. The virtual learning environment is used for student information and teaching materials and is sufficiently populated. The College supports students' use of the system with online questions and answers.

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

3.3 The College has a public information policy which details processes to be followed for publishing documents, but these do not include the involvement of any academic staff. Only the Principal and the Marketing Director have responsibility for publication. Once materials are confirmed as approved they are published on the website via a single point of control. All communication with international recruitment agents is monitored by the Marketing Director, but there is no evidence that the agents are regularly consulted or updated. The agents are provided with feedback on student attendance in the early stages of their studies, but not for ongoing student academic performance and achievement. It is desirable for the College to fully develop and implement an integrated approach to assuring public information which involves academic staff and international student recruitment agents.

3.4 Steps are taken by the student communications and welfare officers to ensure accuracy and responsive student engagement with information about academic and pastoral support. Students are not involved in any procedures for ensuring accuracy and completeness of the information. Students confirm they find the website helpful during the application process and welcome the recent production of a College newsletter. The newsletter includes recent developments of social activities and other events arranged by the Student Communications Officer and is one of the key communication channels for students.

3.5 External examiner reports indicate the need for the University and the College to review their communication to ensure transparency. The recent change to the validation arrangements with the University has caused some uncertainty about the impact of these discussions on College programmes, which are likely to result in significant change over the coming year. The College has recently informed the students affected and the website was updated to reflect the changed circumstances.

3.6 Action is currently being taken by the College to improve document and version control, and management procedures. The Senior Management team were aware of some inconsistency and lack of formal documentary evidence to confirm decisions. The College intends to review all materials on a regular basis to ensure accuracy and completeness of printed information. The College's set of staff handbooks contain collections of policies with overlapping, and sometimes contradictory, information. The College handbook for students includes the assignment, assessment and appeals policy which allows for the late submission of assignments on payment of a fee.

3.7 The College is increasingly using social media. At present, there is no policy for the management of this communication. Student communication officers and student welfare officers are responsible for updating and monitoring the College social networking pages and social media accounts, with ultimate responsibility for the published information resting with the Marketing Manager. It is desirable for the College to implement a new social media policy.

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

Action plan³

| Williams College action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight December 2012 | | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---------------------------------|--|--|---|
| Good practice | Action to be taken | Target date | Action by | Success indicators | Reported to | Evaluation |
| The review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider: | | | | | | |
| The team has identified no features of good practice. | | | | | | |
| Essential | Action to be taken | Target date | Action by | Success indicators | Reported to | Evaluation |
| The team considers that it is essential for the provider to: | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop and implement a robust strategy for the management of assessment to secure academic standards (paragraphs 1.4 and 1.10) | <p>Comprehensive review of existing management, policies and procedures for assessment to be undertaken</p> <p>Comments from awarding body and organisations</p> | <p>Review by end of March 201</p> <p>Strategy for the management of assessment and revised plagiarism detection methods - by end of April</p> | Director of Quality Enhancement | <p>Regular semester reports from course leaders, staff consultation sessions and awarding body and organisation reports</p> <p>Positive comments from external</p> | <p>Senior Management Team, Learning and Quality Committee</p> <p>Academic Board</p> <p>Boards of Studies</p> | <p>Views of appropriate awarding body and organisations to be sought</p> <p>Comments sought from external examiners, external</p> |

³The 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 organisations.

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| | <p>external examiners and external verifiers to be taken into account</p> <p>From this develop strategy for the management of assessment to include principles, revised policies and procedures for assessment that are fully aligned to the relevant parts of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)</p> | <p>2013</p> <p>Implementation of strategy for the spring 2013 semester</p> | | <p>moderators, external examiners, external verifiers</p> <p>Briefing external moderators and awarding bodies of revised plagiarism procedures</p> <p>Improved feedback from students about their experience of the assessment process</p> | <p>Student body and student representatives</p> | <p>moderators and external verifiers</p> <p>Student feedback through regular semester surveys and student representatives</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> systematically record the minutes and actions arising from the deliberations of all academic committees, including relevant meetings of the Senior Management Team (paragraphs 1.3 and 2.12) | <p>Development of structured approach to agendas, action plans and minute taking for all academic committees including the Senior Management Team</p> <p>Staff development for agenda setting and minute taking</p> | <p>End of March 2013 for full implementation in spring semester</p> <p>End of March 2013</p> | <p>Principal and Vice-Principal</p> <p>Operations Manager</p> | <p>Minutes and action plans systematically and accurately recorded</p> <p>Signed off by the Chair</p> <p>Agreed actions and responsibilities clearly understood by all members of the relevant committee/board</p> | <p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Academic Board</p> | <p>Discussion of enhancements at Senior Management Team</p> <p>Report written by Principal or Vice-Principal for Academic Board evaluating progress and adherence to house style</p> |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|--|--|---|---|--|
| | | | | All minutes and action plans to the agreed format and house style Appropriate staff trained to take minutes | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop and implement a systematic approach to programme approval and regular monitoring to include rigorous data analysis (paragraphs 1.5, 1.6 and 2.9). | <p><i>Chapter B1: Programme design and approval and Chapter B8: Programme monitoring</i> of the Quality Code will be used to inform revisions to review and monitoring of courses to include, qualitative data, quantitative data and action plans with due consideration of resource requirements</p> <p>A student record and management system will be developed and implemented to enable analysis of cohort data (student admissions,</p> | <p>End of March 2013</p> <p>Software system developed for end of April 2013</p> <p>Full implementation</p> | <p>Director of Quality Enhancement</p> <p>Chief Executive, College Director, Principal, Vice-Principal, Operations Manager</p> | <p>Semester and annual course quality monitoring reports, and overall annual monitoring reports considered by deliberative structures in the college</p> <p>Student record and management system implemented with staff development for key users</p> <p>Data inputted for present and previous cohorts (up to two years ago)</p> <p>Resource requirements assessed for new</p> | <p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Academic Board, Course Board of Studies, Learning and Quality Committee</p> <p>Appropriate awarding body and organisations</p> | <p>Evaluation and enhancement of semester and annual reports by Senior Management Team and Academic Board</p> <p>Reports from and discussions with awarding body and organisations</p> |

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|---|---|-----------------------------|--|--|--|--|
| | progression, withdrawal and achievement) to inform review and monitoring by deliberative structures at the college and for annual reports to awarding body and organisations | complete by end of May 2013 | | course delivery and/or delivery at another location | | |
| Advisable | Action to be taken | Target date | Action by | Success indicators | Reported to | Evaluation |
| The team considers that it is advisable for the provider to: | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> further develop existing college policies to reflect the <i>Code of practice</i> (paragraphs 1.8 and 2.3) | <p>All appropriate existing college policies will be reviewed against appropriate sections of the <i>Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education</i> (the <i>Code of practice</i>)</p> <p>New policies and procedures will be developed where needed to effectively manage</p> | End of July 2013 | <p>Director of Quality Enhancement</p> <p>Principal and Vice-Principal</p> | <p>New and revised policies related to the <i>Code of practice</i> approved by Senior Management Team and Academic Board</p> <p>Positive impact on staff with staff development</p> <p>Measured through feedback at end of staff development sessions and staff survey</p> | <p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Academic Board</p> <p>Learning and Quality Committee</p> <p>Awarding body and organisations as appropriate</p> <p>Feedback from appropriate awarding body and</p> | <p>Review and enhancement of new and revised policies and procedures on an annual basis</p> <p>Feedback from staff and students</p> <p>Discussion with appropriate awarding body and organisations</p> |

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| | academic standards, enhancing quality of learning opportunities and information about higher education | | | Positive impact on students measured by feedback from meeting with student representatives and student surveys | organisations | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the terms of reference of committees to ascribe clear lines of accountability (paragraphs 2.1 and 2.4) | <p>Review and enhancement of terms of reference and membership of all committees, including Senior Management Team, to be undertaken</p> <p>Clear statement of reporting lines with identification of staff responsibilities for all deliberative committees</p> | End of February 2013 | Director of Quality Enhancement | <p>Revised terms of reference and membership developed and approved by relevant committees and boards, with overall approval by Academic Board</p> <p>Staff development sessions to update on changes and responsibilities</p> | <p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Academic Board</p> | <p>Terms of reference and membership of each committee and board kept under constant review by each with any changes agreed by Academic Board</p> <p>Senior Management Team to evaluate changes</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> adopt a more formal process for considering and tracking responses to student concerns and complaints (paragraphs 2.2 and 2.6). | <p>The present policies and procedures will be reviewed against <i>Chapter B9: Complaints and appeals on academic matters</i> of the Quality Code and revisions made</p> <p>Staff development</p> | <p>End of March 2013</p> <p>April 2013</p> | Director of Quality Enhancement | <p>Revised policies and procedures approved by Quality review Committee and Academic Board</p> <p>Staff understand</p> | <p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Learning and Quality Committee</p> <p>Academic Board</p> | <p>Student feedback from student representatives and student survey</p> <p>Feedback from academic staff</p> <p>Feedback from appropriate</p> |

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| | to explain new procedures to ensure consistency across the College | | | and use new policies and procedures | | awarding body and organisations |
| | Regular semester reporting of student complaints with resolutions identified | Begin this for the spring semester going forward | Academic Registrar | Reports to staff and students | Learning and Quality Committee | Discussion and approval of reports by Learning and Quality Committee |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a coherent process for teaching observation, appraisal and staff development (paragraphs 2.5, 2.10 to 2.11) | Strategy and policy document to provide integrated approach reflecting good practice in the higher education sector | End of March 2013 | Human Resources Manager, Chief Executive, College Director Principal and Vice-Principal | Strategy and policy approved by Academic Board and Senior Management Team | Senior Management Team Academic Board | Annual report by the Human Resources Manager for consideration by Senior Management Team and Academic Board |
| | Revised staff appraisal scheme developed and implemented | End of March 2013 | Human Resources Manager | Staff development to ensure consistent approach across the College | | Feedback from staff |
| | Revised teaching observation scheme developed and implemented | End of April 2013 | Director of Quality Enhancement | Implementation of the revised appraisal scheme and teaching observation scheme; | Senior Management Team, Learning and Quality Committee and Academic Board | Enhancements as a result of the annual report |
| | Communication of good practice across the College from teaching observations; areas for enhancement across the College | For the end of April 2013 then ongoing | Director of Quality Enhancement and Human Resources Manager | production of cross-college reports for each | | |

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| | identified with specific staff development sessions, for example, developing varied learning experiences for students in the classroom | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> significantly enhance the quality and timeliness of feedback provided to students on University programmes with clear links made to intended learning outcomes (paragraph 2.8). | <p>Guidelines developed for academic staff on marking standards, feedback on assignments linked to learning outcomes and constructive feedback (positive and how to improve)</p> <p>Staff development on providing feedback to students with links to learning outcomes using good practice in the higher education sector and the Higher Education Academy</p> <p>This action is linked</p> | <p>End of February 2013</p> <p>End of June 2013</p> | <p>Director of Quality Enhancement and Director of Studies</p> <p>Director of Quality Enhancement and Human Resources Manager</p> | <p>Guidelines developed and staff given development sessions on implementation</p> <p>Positive comments from appropriate awarding body and organisations and external examiners/external verifiers</p> <p>Semester and annual quality monitoring reports by course leaders to provide monitoring and evaluation information</p> | <p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Learning and Quality Committee</p> <p>Academic Board</p> <p>Appropriate awarding body and organisations</p> | <p>Evaluation of comments from external moderators, external verifiers and external examiners</p> <p>Samples of feedback on assessments evaluated against guidelines</p> <p>Feedback guidelines to staff reviewed and enhanced as a result of staff and student feedback</p> |

| | to the action for the first essential recommendation | | | | | |
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| Desirable | Action to be taken | Target date | Action by | Success indicators | Reported to | Evaluation |
| The team considers that it is desirable for the provider to: | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> adopt a more formal process for considering and assessing the effectiveness of external input into the management of academic standards (paragraph 1.9) | <p>Senior Management Team will evaluate input and recommendations made by external consultants and decide on which to implement</p> <p>Responsibility for implementation delegated to appropriate member of Senior Management Team, who will report back on progress</p> | From end of January 2013 | Chief Executive, College Director, Principal, Vice-Principal, Director of Quality Enhancement, Director of Studies and Operations Manager | <p>Effective implementation of recommendations managed by identified member of the Senior Management Team</p> <p>Implementation of agreed recommendations</p> | Senior Management Team | <p>Implemented recommendations will be evaluated through appropriate mechanisms</p> <p>Arrangements with external consultants kept under regular review</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> fully develop and implement an integrated approach to assuring public information which involves academic staff and international student recruitment | Policy for public information to be reviewed against <i>Part C: Information about higher education provision</i> of the Quality Code | End of March 2013 | Principal, Vice-Principal and Director of Marketing | <p>Revised policy agreed and implemented</p> <p>Information about higher education revised where necessary</p> <p>Regular monitoring</p> | <p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Academic Board</p> <p>Learning and Quality Committee</p> | Feedback from staff and students about accessibility and trustworthiness of higher education information |

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| agents (paragraph 3.3) | | | | and evaluation of the policy by the Learning and Quality Committee | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement a new social media policy (paragraph 3.7). | Development of new social media policy for implementation | End of April 2013 | Marketing Director, Student Communications Officer, Student Welfare Officer and consultation with student representatives | <p>Agreement with student representatives</p> <p>Staff support for new policy and its implementation</p> | <p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Learning and Quality Committee</p> <p>Academic Board</p> | <p>Feedback from students</p> <p>Discussion at Boards of Studies</p> <p>Report submitted to Academic Board for discussion</p> |

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:

⁴www.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.

RG 1118 03/13

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ISBN 978 1 84979 805 1

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

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786