14 Stars (London) Ltd t/a European College for Higher Education

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

January 2014

Key findings about 14 Stars (London) Ltd t/a European College for Higher Education

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in January 2014, 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 programmes it offers on behalf of Pearson and ISA Education.

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 these organisations.

The team considers that reliance **cannot** be placed on the information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Good practice

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

- the system of formative tutorial feedback, academic and study skills support (paragraphs 2.5 and 2.8).

Recommendations

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

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

- adopt firm processes to ensure all information about learning opportunities is consistent, current and correct (paragraph 3.4).

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

- carry out effective programme monitoring and review (paragraph 1.3)
- implement fully its new quality management structures and processes (paragraphs 1.4 and 1.6)
- ensure it conforms fully to current awarding organisation assessment guidelines (paragraphs 1.5 and 1.7)
- ensure that contact with awarding organisations results in timely external verification (paragraph 1.8)
- implement planned support for improving written feedback on assessed work (paragraph 2.6)
- continue to develop the virtual learning environment to provide comprehensive and accurate learning information (paragraphs 2.15, 3.2 and 3.5)
- ensure that information on the website for marketing purposes is accurate (paragraph 3.3).

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

- implement plans to strengthen internal verification (paragraph 1.9)
- implement the proposed formal teacher appraisal system (paragraph 2.4)
- implement proposed enhancements for individual tutorials (paragraph 2.9)
- continue to enhance its support for the development of its staff (paragraph 2.13).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)[1] (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at 14 Stars (London) Ltd t/a European College for Higher Education (the College), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. 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 Pearson and ISA Education. The review was carried out by Ms Erika Beumer and Dr Frances Wiles (reviewers) and Dr John Hurley (Coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [*Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook*](#).[2] Evidence in support of the review included documentation supplied by the provider and awarding organisations, meetings with staff, students and reports of reviews by ISA Education and Ofsted.

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

- Pearson
- ISA Education
- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code).

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

The College can trace its origins to its registration in 2009 but it did not recruit its first students until 2012. It is located on the second floor of a shared 1960s block of offices and workshops in Tottenham, near to the Seven Sisters shopping area and transport links. The College administrative and teaching accommodation is based in one corridor within the building.

The College runs a small suite of business programmes at levels 4 to 7 with Pearson and with ISA Education, which is not on the Ofqual register, but is approved by ABC Education which is. There are currently 47 international students enrolled on programmes at the College.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath their awarding organisations with student numbers in brackets:

Pearson
- BTEC level 7 Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership (8 completed).

ISA Education
- Level 4 Extended Diploma in Business and Enterprise (4)
- Level 5 Extended Diploma in Business and Enterprise (10)
- Level 7 Extended Diploma in Management and Organisational Strategy (33 part-time).

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[1] www.qaa.ac.uk/educational-oversight
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

The provider's stated responsibilities

The agreement with Pearson gives the College primary responsibility for delivering and assessing programmes, assured by internal verification and quality assurance processes, which are subject to external scrutiny by the awarding organisation. The agreement with ISA Education is similarly subject, in principle, to greater scrutiny of assignment briefs and assessment by the awarding organisation.

Recent developments

The management team has been substantially strengthened by the appointment, in the months immediately prior to the review visit, of a new vice-principal, academic head, senior tutor and student welfare officer. The committee structure has been rationalised, with stronger lines of accountability, and policies reviewed and rewritten in the weeks preceding the review.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. The invitation was not taken up, but the Coordinator briefed students about their role in the process at the preparatory meeting and the review team met a representative group of students in an informative meeting during the review visit.

Detailed findings about 14 Stars (London) Ltd t/a European College of Higher Education

1   Academic standards

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

1.1   The recently revised management structure includes clear roles and mechanisms for the College to fulfil its delegated responsibilities for managing standards and enhancing learning opportunities. Overall responsibility lies with the College Principal advised by a well informed academic leadership team which is in the early stages of implementing new quality assurance structures.

1.2   The college has recently implemented a new committee structure, with clear terms of reference. Management decisions are informed by reports from the Academic Committee, the Assessment Board, Attendance Committee and the Resources Committee. The new committee structure is addressing a number of shortcomings that were admitted by the College. These include a lack of effective programme monitoring and review, or action planning.

1.3   A newly updated Quality Manual refers to guidelines from both awarding organisations and reflects revised policies and procedures produced by the new management team. An annual review procedure is documented. The College has not previously held formal annual reviews, but has indicated it will implement the process in 2014. In addition to considering student feedback and data about progression and attainment, the reconfigured management group will consider information obtained from tutor reports, teaching observations and from internal and external verification reports. It is **advisable** for the College to carry out effective programme monitoring and review.

1.4   The new management and committee structures show early signs of effectiveness. However, it is necessary that the College continues to maintain and develop them to improve the management of standards and learning opportunities. It is **advisable** for the College to implement fully its new quality management structures and processes.

How effectively does the College make use of external reference points to manage academic standards?

1.5   The curriculum is aligned with the specifications set by the awarding organisations. Assessment strategies are, in principle, developed and implemented in accordance with the awarding organisations' criteria. The College has operated differentiated grading at pass/merit/distinction for ISA Education qualifications, while the ISA Education programme specification and grading criteria suggest only a pass/fail can be awarded. The College could not explain how this situation arose. However, the awarding organisation has now adopted a differentiated grading system for 2013-14, but this decision was only made in January 2014. Further information to the College from the awarding organisation confirmed that it extended discretion to colleges for such departures from their guidelines.

1.6   The newly appointed management team has good awareness of the Quality Code. The College has recently revised its quality manual to ensure that processes for course monitoring and review, and assessment are aligned with the Quality Code. There is evidence of appropriate development of policy and practices for the management of academic standards, but little evidence yet of implementation.

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

1.7 External verification has so far been confined to a single external verifier visit in January 2014 from one of the awarding organisations. An initial centre visit was completed by ISA Education and identified no areas for improvement. The report finds no discrepancies between College procedures and ISA Education requirements. However, assignment briefs had not been verified prior to issue to students by the awarding organisation, which contradicts the guidelines in the programme specifications received from ISA Education. Other discrepancies are identified in paragraph 1.5. It is **advisable** for the College to ensure it conforms fully to current awarding organisation assessment guidelines.

1.8 Students completed their Pearson programme in August 2013, but the external verifier visit has not been arranged until March 2014, although there has been correspondence about this with Pearson since September 2013. This means that students only have a copy of the College marked outcomes, which is logged on the Pearson website, and that these outcomes may be changed by the external verifier, including the possibility of students failing their certificate. It is apparent that the students were only registered shortly before completing the qualification, which was not seen as a problem by the College. It is **advisable** for the College to ensure that contact with awarding organisations results in timely external verification.

1.9 There is an established process for internal verification, to approve assignment briefs and monitor assessment grading. Review of a sample of assessment revealed variable quality in internal scrutiny; in some early samples the verifier simply signed off assignments and marking. Some later examples were better. The College has further plans to strengthen internal verification to provide more detailed support for markers, thereby enhancing the quality of assessment and feedback to students. It would be **desirable** for the College to implement plans to strengthen internal verification.

> The review team has **limited confidence** in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of its awarding organisations.

2   Quality of learning opportunities

How effectively does the College fulfil its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities?

2.1 Learning opportunities are managed effectively within the recently implemented management and committee structures identified in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2. The College has established a well developed process of seeking student feedback on learning opportunities, which has resulted in significant improvements, particularly in learning resources. Student representatives also sit on college committees and have made effective contributions to enhancement.

How effectively does the College make use of external reference points to manage and enhance learning opportunities?

2.2 Use of the Quality Code has guided the recent revisions to College policies, particularly in the areas of learning and teaching, and student support. The recent ISA Education centre visit confirmed that learning opportunities meet the awarding organisation requirements.

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

2.3   Teaching approaches and areas of responsibility are clearly defined. These include requirements for teaching, lesson planning, and schemes of work. Student surveys confirm satisfaction with the quality of teaching, and there are examples of the College implementing enhancements in response to students' suggestions.

2.4   The College has carried out informal observations of teaching and these, with student feedback, have resulted in an informal system of appraisal. The College has now introduced a peer review process, including a teaching observation for all academic staff, resulting in a written report. The College has decided to link peer review with twice-yearly appraisals and to provide for identified team development needs. It would be **desirable** for the College to implement the proposed formal teacher appraisal system.

2.5   Students receive comprehensive and formative verbal feedback from tutors on drafts submitted for assignment work. This includes advice about developing academic skills. Students valued these opportunities and confirmed that this enhances their academic development.

2.6   Written feedback to students is variable in quality. The College has carried out an internal review, resulting in a plan for improving the quality of tutors' written feedback on formative and summative assessment, and strengthening internal verification to ensure this occurs. It is **advisable** for the College to implement planned support for improving written feedback on assessed work.

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

2.7   The College has introduced a number of mechanisms to ensure that students are well supported. The admissions policy requires that entrants have appropriate academic and language qualifications. New students, in addition to receiving a written pre-arrival guide, attend an induction week before their course begins, which orients them to College processes, academic requirements and support facilities. The induction process includes English and maths testing, which may result in additional sessions to support individual learning needs. Support for dyslexic students is available and includes reasonable adjustments, such as differentiated deadlines.

2.8   Academic support is provided by course tutors. The College provides a system of study skills support, comprising scheduled and open-door sessions every week. These are the mechanisms for delivering formative feedback and support identified in paragraph 2.5. Additional support is provided to students for whom English is not a first language, and to those whose computing skills only meet the minimum requirements of the course. The system of formative tutorial feedback, academic and study skills support is **good practice**.

2.9   The College has recently formalised its arrangements for allocating students to personal tutorial groups. Students welcomed this new development. A discussion paper proposes that individual tutorial will be available on a regular basis, and proposes enhancement through the introduction of individual learning plans with associated tracking and monitoring. It would be **desirable** for the College to implement proposed enhancements for individual tutorials.

2.10   The College's support for students' academic and personal development is a clear strength of the provision. Students know how to obtain advice from the student welfare officer. Student feedback confirms that they value the College's academic and pastoral support, and they praised the accessibility and helpfulness of tutors.

How effectively does the College develop its staff in order to improve student learning opportunities?

2.11   The Principal is responsible for staff development and the annual staff development plan. Teaching staff have relevant and appropriate academic and professional qualifications, and business experience. As this is a small college, the staff development policy requires its staff to take responsibility for their own personal development. A number of staff are currently pursuing teaching and other relevant postgraduate qualifications.

2.12   New staff receive induction information, and guidance on expected teaching methods. In future, newly appointed academic staff will be expected to hold a teaching qualification.

2.13   The College states that it will identify team development needs in part through the new staff appraisal process. Staff have recently received training to use the new virtual learning environment (VLE), and the College is in the process of updating all staff on the Quality Code. The College has also decided to explore training opportunities offered by awarding organisations. It would be **desirable** for the College to continue to enhance its support for the development of its staff.

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

2.14   The sufficiency and quality of resources are routinely monitored by the Resources Committee, which is chaired by the Principal and includes student representation. Students have access to appropriate and sufficient learning resources, including areas for classroom and private study, basic library facilities, and a recently replaced computer suite with internet access. Students confirmed that they were satisfied with the level of resources provided.

2.15   The recently introduced VLE will become the definitive source for learning materials. This resource is at a very early stage of development.

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.

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3   Information about learning opportunities

How effectively does the College communicate information about learning opportunities to students and other stakeholders?

3.1   Information about learning opportunities is published via the College website. The College prospectus and information about the college, policies and procedures for both local and international students is available to download from the site. Information on the website was reviewed by the new management team and updated shortly before the visit. Downloadable policies are now current and apply appropriately to the College. A number of inaccuracies still remained at the time of the visit, including a much-liked social media link that was not supported by an appropriate page. The link was removed during the visit. Students, however, stated that they were satisfied they had received appropriate information about the College.

3.2   The College is also in the process of implementing a VLE and planning to use it as the main communication forum with students. The demonstration showed a simple and accessible layout which allows it to become a definitive information source for students. However, at the time of the visit it contained little information beyond ISA Education programme specifications and tutorial times. Currently any changes of information are disseminated on notice boards, by email and classroom announcement. It is **advisable** for the College to continue to develop the virtual learning environment to provide comprehensive and accurate learning information.

How effective are the College's arrangements for assuring that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy?

3.3   The College has recognised the need to improve its management of public information. A new and detailed policy has been developed for the management of information with clearly assigned responsibilities, resulting in an initial review of the website being carried out. Despite the review, the website still offers a wide variety of courses, most of which are awarded by ISA Education, without stating clearly which courses are currently offered; which are available to international students; and which might be offered in the future. Other minor inaccuracies remained as noted in paragraph 3.1. It is **advisable** for the College to ensure that information on the website for marketing purposes is accurate.

3.4   Information given to students about assessment criteria on ISA Education programmes is not consistent and could cause confusion. The programme specification and assessment guidelines for ISA qualifications state that outcomes were a pass/fail. College assignment briefs state that outcomes would be differentiated at pass/merit/ distinction. In addition, assignment briefs give differentiated grading criteria whose origin could not be conclusively established. One assignment brief included the name of another college. Oversight of student information is not effective. It is **essential** for the College to adopt firm processes to ensure all information about learning opportunities is consistent, current and correct.

3.5   The College stated that information about learning opportunities will be reviewed at least twice per year. In future, changes will be reviewed by the management meeting prior to approval by the Principal. The college is planning to identify a specific information role to ensure accuracy of the information it publishes and in future, the VLE will become the definitive source of information.

The team concludes that reliance **cannot** be placed on the information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Action plan[3]

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14 stars (London) Ltd t/a European College for Higher Education action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight of January 2014						
Good practice	**Intended Outcomes**	**Action to be taken to achieve intended outcomes**	**Target date(s)**	**Action by[4]**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation (Process or evidence)[5]**
The review team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
• the system of formative tutorial feedback, academics and study skills support (paragraphs 2.5 and 2.8).	Students will demonstrate very few English language problems Students will show improvement in weak areas determined by tutors and highlighted in assessments feedback	The College intends to extend further support to students by increasing tutorial frequency and the use of the virtual learning environment	By start of 2014-15 academic year	Course leaders and Head of Operations	Vice Principal and Head of Academics	Formative assessment results, students' progress, class participation and students'/tutors' feedback

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[3] The College 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 College's awarding organisations.

Essential	Intended Outcomes	Action to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (Process or evidence)
The team considers that it is **essential** for the College to:						
• adopt firm processes to ensure all information about learning opportunities is consistent, current and correct. (paragraph 3.4).	All the information about learning opportunities and courses will be clearly indicated to our student audience, which will be available from the outset of the course (induction) and via the College website Students will be fully briefed to ensure awareness of assignment briefs and assessment criteria, which will be in line with programme specifications and Pearson/ISA education assessment guidelines	The College intends to review all the information provided on the website to ensure that the courses running and available are clearly presented with applicable terms and conditions, and, where necessary, will remove all those courses which are not expected to be run in the near future Pearson/ISA Education assessment criteria will be circulated to students and teachers and feedback will be solicited from students, teachers and internal verifiers to confirm understanding	By end July 2014	Vice Principal and Academic Board	Principal and Head of Academics	Induction sessions formally evaluated Confirmation of understanding from students and teachers which will be established via the virtual learning environment so that firm processes this will ensure all information about learning opportunities is consistent, current and correct

Advisable	Intended outcomes	Action to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date (s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers it is **advisable** for the College to:						
• carry out effective programme monitoring and review (paragraph 1.3)	A detailed overall review of students' work Internal verification of all assignment briefs to ensure that they meet learning outcomes External verifier report outcomes will be implemented and reviewed	Improve internal verification of assignment briefs, thus making assignment briefs more clear, transparent and concise, in alignment with awarding organisation assessment guidelines and criteria Introduce higher percentage of cross assessments by multiple assessors	By start of 2014-15 academic year	Board of Studies in the first stage then endorsed by Academic Board	Academic Head	Evaluated through overall review of students' feedback, surveys and tutors' comments through annual monitoring review reports and external verifier reports
• implement fully its new quality management structures and processes (paragraphs 1.4 and 1.6)	There will be no further delay in the implementation of new quality assurance policies and procedure as the College intends to place this as a priority action	The College intends to complete the implementation of all quality assurance policies and procedures before the summer of 2014, working with formal committee structure and making all staff and students aware of the changes	By end July 2014	Vice Principal, Management and Academic committees	Principal and Directors	Evidence of outcomes to be reviewed in quarterly and emergent management/ academic committee meetings Feedback from students and staff

						Annual monitoring reports
• ensure it conforms fully to current awarding organisation assessment guidelines (paragraphs 1.5 and 1.7)	All assessment and external verifier reports will confirm strict compliance with guidelines and criteria provided by awarding organisation	Pearson/ISA Education assessment criteria will be circulated to students and teachers and feedback will be solicited from students, teachers and internal verifiers Effective resources used, timely and planned internal verification on assessment instruments will enable compliance with awarding organisation requirements and this will be monitored by the Head of Academics/Vice Principal Submission of sample assignment briefs to assignment checking service of Pearson/ISA will ensure they are fit for purpose	20 March 2014	Vice Principal and Academic Board	Principal and Head of Academics	Effective standardisation policy and procedures Evidence of more frequent liaison reports, and updates from awarding organisation will be confirmed and recorded in the minutes of management meetings Assignment checking service outcomes
• ensure that contact with awarding organisations results in timely external verification (paragraph 1.8)	It will be expected that awarding organisation visits take place before or shortly after the completion of study periods, to ensure students' assessed work are externally	Timely registration of students with awarding organisations This will be implemented in accordance with their registration guidelines and policy	Ongoing and next intake	Head of Academics	Principal	Review of contacts and liaison with the awarding organisations by Head of Academics in management

	verified in a timely manner and that standards are in compliance with awarding organisation criteria	Although the College will have no control on available visit slots of awarding organisations, every effort will be made to ensure that external verifier visits take place at earliest available dates				meetings Annual monitoring report and external verifier visit reports
• implement planned support for improving written feedback on assessed works (paragraph 2.6)	It is planned that, as a result of professional development of tutors and cross-evaluation of assessments written feedback will be of higher quality Thus feedback will help the students understand aspects of their performance in order to reflect on, and, where necessary, improve their learning and practice	Senior tutors will be encouraged to review assessment feedback and provide guidance and advice where required Professional development for tutors to develop their written feedback skills on a self-learning basis	By start of 2014-15 academic year	Tutors and course leaders	Head of Academics	Review of assessed work by Head of Academics together with formal review of internal verifier and external verifier reports and documentation
• continue to develop the virtual learning environment to provide comprehensive and accurate learning information (paragraph	The virtual learning environment will offer an accurate, quick and easy mode of learning information for students	The College has already started training staff on the effectiveness and use of the virtual learning environment It is intended to provide more opportunities for students to visit College premises to use, train and	By end of April 2014	Course leaders and IT in-charge	Principal and Vice Principal	The College will monitor the effectiveness, access and utility of the virtual learning environment after each semester Academic and

2.15, 3.2 and 3.5)		familiarise themselves with the virtual learning environment Virtual learning environment policy will provide a guide to provide procedural implementation of purpose, timing, content, and accuracy, thus providing framework for effective implementation				Physical Resources Committee will review the effectiveness Virtual learning environment policy and procedures
• ensure that information on the website for marketing purposes is accurate (paragraph 3.3).	As a result of changes in the website and filtered information, the intended audience and students will have no ambiguity and be clear about which programmes are offered, its purpose and achievable outcomes Clarification about which programmes are on the Ofqual register and thus open to international students	The College has already taken actions to improve the coverage of the website and its effectiveness, by changing its contents to eradicate the chances of misguidance about learning outcomes offered Vice Principal has been assigned to review and implement the public information policy in consultation with Principal and Management Committee	End March 2014	Vice Principal and Management Committee	Principal	Review and evaluation of public information policy twice a year Review and monitoring of website as and when needed, that is, any addition or deletion of courses and awarding organisations or their terms of references

The team considers it would be **desirable** for the College to:	Intended outcomes	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation
• implement plans to strengthen internal verification (paragraph 1.9)	Internal verification of all assignment briefs that meet learning outcomes will be in accordance with awarding organisation guidelines and criteria, established process of verification, approval and monitoring of assessment grading More detailed feedback on students' work	In-house briefing to assessors and internal verifiers by Head of Academics on established process of internal verification, approval and monitoring of grades Improve internal verification of assignment briefs by making them more rigorous and standardised	End March 2014	Head of Academics and course leaders	Principal	Evaluated through students' feedback, sampling of assessment briefs duly internally verified, and tutors' comments through annual monitoring review reports
• implement the proposed formal teacher's appraisal system (paragraph 2.4)	Formal appraisal and monitoring will identify weak and strong areas of tutorial skills and as a result will prove to be helpful in generating a realistic development plan for the teaching staff	The College has revised and strengthened the teaching observation and peer review process by enhancing the frequency of appraisals and reviews to make them more effective The College intends to make such observations more frequently, that is, during every semester rather than twice a year, and as a process of tutors induction	End April 2014	Vice Principal, Head of Academics and course leaders	Principal	Evaluation of formative and summative result, observation sessions of teaching and the success rate of students and the quality of assignment briefs Annual monitoring and external verifier reports

• implement proposed enhancements for individual tutorials (paragraph 2.9)	Student response to assignment briefs and their subject understanding has already shown the usefulness of the personal tutorials and will provide opportunities of better interaction between tutors and students	Where needed, increase the built-in days for personal tutorials to three days instead of two	End April 2014			Evaluation of feedback from students and students' interest and participation in tutorials will be monitored by weekly attendance, and reviewed in quarterly Academic Committee meetings
• continue to enhance support for the development of staff (paragraph 2.13).	The staff will be able to show more command in performing the functions in their defined areas of responsibility	The College has already conducted more detailed training for use of the virtual learning environment and is in the process of developing this plan for tutors and staff to implement and deliver	End July 2014	Vice Principal and Head of Academics	Principal	Better quality of assignment briefs and positive feedback from students and tutors Feedback will be evaluated in management meetings

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/educational-oversight.

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 quality A comprehensive term referring to how, and how well, higher education providers manage teaching and learning opportunities to help students progress and succeed.

academic standards The standards set and maintained by degree-awarding bodies for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standards**.

awarding body A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the power to award degrees, conferred by Royal Charter, or under Section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or under Section 48 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, or by Papal Bull, or, since 1999, granted by the Privy Council on advice from QAA.

awarding organisation An organisation authorised to award a particular qualification; an organisation recognised by Ofqual to award Ofqual-regulated qualifications.

designated body An organisation that has been formally appointed or recognised to perform a particular function. QAA has been recognised by UKBA as a designated body for the purpose of providing educational oversight.

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

enhancement The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in QAA's review processes.

external examiner An independent expert appointed by an institution to comment on student achievement in relation to established academic standards and to look at approaches to assessment.

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

good practice A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's review processes.

highly trusted sponsor An organisation 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.

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[4] www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

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

learning outcomes 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 reviews and reports.

programme (of study) An approved course of study that 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 (s) (of higher education) Organisations that deliver higher education. In the UK they may be a degree-awarding body or another organisation that offers programmes of higher education on behalf of degree-**awarding bodies** or **awarding organisations**. In the context of Review for Specific Course Designation 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').

quality See **academic quality**.

Quality Code Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of reference points for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the Expectations that all providers are required to meet.

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.

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 standards The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national **frameworks for higher education qualifications** and **subject benchmark statements**. See also **academic standards**.