QAA

Forbes Graduate School

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

December 2012

Key findings about Forbes Graduate School

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 **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of the Accrediting and Assessment Bureau for Post-Secondary Schools; the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants; the Association of Tourism and Hospitality Executives; BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT and the Institute of Administrative Management.

The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the quality and enhancement of the learning opportunities it offers on behalf of these awarding 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 the following **good practice**:

- robust mechanisms for gathering and responding to student feedback ensure the student voice informs developments (paragraph 2.8)
- comprehensive pastoral student support (paragraph 2.9)
- detailed individual learning plans and tutorial records effectively support student achievement (paragraph 2.10)
- the weekly system for ensuring that published information is accurate and complete (paragraph 3.6).

Recommendations

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

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

- review the management and committee structures and terms of reference to more clearly differentiate roles and responsibilities (paragraph 1.1)
- formalise its annual monitoring procedures and documentation (paragraph 1.2).

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

- continue to map policies and procedures against external reference points (paragraph 1.3)
- further develop systems for the identification and dissemination of good practice (paragraph 1.7)
- formalise the review of teaching and learning practices (paragraph 2.4)
- continue to develop the student intranet as a virtual learning environment (paragraph 2.14)
- review the range of information in the student handbook (paragraph 3.2).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](url)[1] (REO) conducted by [QAA](url) at Forbes Graduate School (the provider; the School). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of the Accrediting and Assessment Bureau for Post-Secondary Schools, the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants; the Association of Tourism and Hospitality Executives; BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT, and the Institute of Administrative Management. The review was carried out by Mr Mark Irwin, Ms Ann Kettle, Mr Brian Whitehead (reviewers) and Mrs Mandy Hobart (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the *[Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](url)*.[2] Evidence in support of the review included external and internal reports, School policy documents, minutes of meetings, handbooks and meetings with staff and students.

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

-       the National Qualifications Framework
-       the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

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

Forbes Graduate School (the School) was founded in 2010 with the mission to be 'an outstanding School within the community, realising opportunities through partnership and innovation'. The School has been delivering programmes since November 2011, when the students transferred from St Stephen's College, another private provider. The School has recruited 95 students in total, and had 74 students enrolled at the time of the review.

The School is located on a single campus in Slough in the same building as its sister provider, London College of Finance and Accounting. Both providers share the same owner, teaching staff, management structures and most policies and procedures. The School offers qualifications in administration, business and management, accounting and finance, and healthcare management.

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

Accrediting and Assessment Bureau for Post-Secondary Schools (AABPS)
-       Diploma in Business Management Studies Level 5 (8)
-       Diploma in Business Management Studies Level 6 (0)

Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)
-       Financial Accounting Level 6 (6)

Association of Tourism and Hospitality Executives (ATHE)
-       Diploma in Healthcare Management Level 6 (2)

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

- Diploma in Healthcare Management Level 7 (1)
- Diploma in Management Level 6 (0)
- Diploma in Strategic Management Level 7 (4)
- Extended Diploma in Management for Health and Social Care Level 4 (0)
- Extended Diploma in Management for Health and Social Care Level 5 (0)
- Extended Diploma in Management Level 4 (7)
- Extended Diploma in Management Level 5 (0)

BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT (BCS)
- Diploma in Information Technology Level 5 (22)
- Professional Graduate Diploma in Information Technology Level 6 (3)

Institute of Administrative Management (IAM)
- Extended Diploma in Business and Administrative Management Level 6 (21)

The provider's stated responsibilities

The School follows the guidelines set by its awarding organisations in relation to academic standards and assessments. Assessments are externally set and marked by ACCA, BCS and IAM. The School sets and marks assessments for AABPS and ATHE, which are externally verified. All programme syllabi are devised by the awarding organisations, and school-devised programme specifications are integrated into student handbooks. The School is responsible for the recruitment of students in accordance with the Admissions Policy and Procedure and all appropriate legislation and regulations. Student attendance is monitored closely.

Recent developments

The Strategic Plan is being kept under review to ensure that changes to UK Border Agency regulations on the recruitment of international students are fully reflected. The School is accredited by the Accreditation Service for International Colleges (ASIC) in July 2011 and received its sponsor licence in the same month. The School has ceased to offer qualifications accredited by the Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative (SFEDI), which were part of the initial range of programmes.

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 School provided support to the Student Committee with the collation of information gained through questionnaires. The final document was agreed by the student representatives. The coordinator met students during the preparatory meeting, and the team had a very informative meeting with students during the review visit.

Detailed findings about Forbes Graduate School

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The School manages academic standards effectively. Responsibility for academic standards lies with five awarding organisations, and the School fulfils its delegated responsibilities in accordance with the individual awarding organisation requirements. The School is responsible for staff development, student admission, induction and support, assignment feedback, provision of learning resources and gathering student opinion on all programmes. The responsibilities and procedures for upholding the academic standards are set out in the terms of reference of both the Board of Directors and the Academic Board. In view of the small number of academic staff, with most programmes delivered by a single lecturer, there are as yet no separate programme committees. Monthly meetings of the academic staff have recently been instituted to fulfil such functions of programme committees as consideration of student feedback and reporting on assessment matters. The Senior Management Team, reporting to the Board of Directors, is responsible for the development and operation of policies and procedures. The Academic Board approves and reviews policies and strategies, which are ratified by the Senior Management Team. Terms of reference and minutes of committee and board meetings indicate considerable overlap both in membership and responsibilities between the Academic Board and the Senior Management Team. The minutes of committees suggest a more formal management system is in the course of development. While the current system ensures delegated responsibilities for academic standards are effectively managed, there is some duplication of roles. In view of the intention of the School to increase the number of programmes offered, it is advisable that the School reviews the management and committee structures and terms of reference to more clearly differentiate roles and responsibilities.

1.2 The School acknowledges that, while external processes for accreditation of programmes are formal and well documented, internal procedures for the proposal and approval of new programmes are informal and mostly unrecorded. Annual monitoring takes the form of a brief annual report presented to the Board of Directors by the Senior Management Team. This report is descriptive rather than reflective, and does not include detailed consideration of student feedback or external verifier reports. No action plan is attached to the report to support the monitoring of actions to address concerns on such matters as retention rates. However, the School uses its management information system to monitor and improve student attendance and progression and to introduce improvements at programme level. The School has, as yet, no internal procedure for the periodic review of programmes. However, the Academic Board considers reviews by accrediting organisations and awarding organisations and ensures that any changes are reflected in programme management. It is advisable that the School formalises its annual monitoring procedures and documentation to support consistent and effective monitoring of improvements.

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

1.3 The main external reference points accessed by the School have been those used by its awarding organisations, the Accreditation Service for International Colleges (ASIC) and national regulatory bodies. The School has begun the process of benchmarking its policies, practices and procedures in the management of standards against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). The School has commissioned external advice on benchmarking its practices and policies in the management of standards, in areas

such as annual monitoring, admissions and student support to ensure systems meet external requirements. It is desirable that the School continues to map policies and procedures against external reference points.

1.4	The School has been developing summary programme specifications based on the QCF and *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) levels and descriptors provided by the awarding organisations, with the addition of its own entry requirements. Academic staff are made aware of the importance of subject benchmark statements in informing teaching and of the importance of externality in assessment. The School has developed a comprehensive Admissions Policy and Procedure covering enrolment, interviewing, confirmation of acceptance for studies, admissions and induction. This policy reflects the relevant awarding organisation requirements and those of other external agencies.

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

1.5	The School has clear mechanisms for complying with awarding organisation requirements to assure academic standards. Academic standards in assessment are secured by operating the systems of its awarding organisations. Where the School is a centre for externally set and marked examinations, staff are briefed and trained as invigilators. Where the School is required to set and mark summative assessments, it is the School policy to use assignments set by the awarding organisation. Such assignments are marked by a member of the teaching staff and internally verified prior to external verification by the awarding organisation. Issues raised by external verifiers, or through 'health check' monitoring visits by the awarding organisations, are considered and appropriate actions approved by the Academic Board, as outlined in paragraph 1.2.

1.6	The School has developed guidelines on the marking of formative assessments and the provision of feedback to students on their progress, which complement the regulations of the awarding organisations. Students report that they usually receive feedback on formative assessment within one to two weeks and that feedback is helpful and constructive. In the case of summative assessment, students know that marks are provisional until externally verified. Students are aware of the appeals procedures of both the School and the awarding organisation. The School's elaborate academic appeals procedure has not yet been used, although students know that it is available. The School issues guidance to students on academic misconduct, which includes a definition of plagiarism and anti-plagiarism software. Students confirmed that they had been warned about the penalties for plagiarism, and that they receive help with correct referencing and English for academic purposes.

1.7	Evaluation of the processes and structures for assuring academic standards are effectively managed. The School evaluates the effectiveness of its own management structures and processes in relation to moderation and examining relatively informally. The terms of reference of the Academic Board state that it should act as the assessment board for each programme, approving assessment arrangements and individual student marks. However, as summative assessment is mainly the responsibility of the awarding organisations, the School's Assessment Board does not deal with individual results, but considers general matters, such as assessment schedules and student attendance at examinations. The terms of reference of the Academic Board include the identification and dissemination of good practice. However, other than informal contacts between academic staff and participation in meetings, there are no systems or processes to facilitate the sharing of good practice across programmes. It is desirable that the School further develops systems for the identification and dissemination of good practice in maintaining academic standards.

The review team has **confidence** in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding 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   Clear and well understood responsibilities are in place for the management of the quality of learning opportunities. Oversight and management rest with the Academic Board. Operational management of the quality of learning lies with the Principal and Head of Programmes, who have regular contact with the teaching staff. However, the School has no formal programme committees (see paragraph 1.1), and staff meetings are the only forum for the regular oversight of learning opportunities. While the current procedures have grown organically, the School needs to ensure that, as the size of the provision grows, more formal systems and defined responsibilities are in place to ensure consistent oversight of the quality of learning opportunities. Management and committee structures should be reviewed to reflect responsibilities as discussed in paragraph 1.1.

2.2   The Academic Board is responsible for the delegated management of learning opportunities, as set out in the awarding organisation agreements. The School has limited responsibility for the setting and marking of assessments and, where marking is undertaken by the teaching staff, ensures that all programmes comply with the awarding organisation requirements. The Academic Board is responsible for the formulation of policies and procedures, the annual review of provision, consideration of external verification reports and student feedback from surveys and reports from the Student Representative Committee. The Academic Board has begun to develop its minutes to include action planning to ensure clear recording and monitoring of improvements.

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

2.3   The programmes offered by the School are accredited to the QCF, and staff are encouraged to make reference to subject benchmark statements to inform the quality of teaching and learning. The School has begun the process of engagement with the Quality Code and has engaged the services of a consultant to brief managers on the implications of its operations and policies. A set of policy documents, including a Quality Assurance Manual and a Teaching and Learning Policy, have been devised with some reference to external codes of practice, including those of the awarding organisations. These documents broadly support quality assurance and quality enhancement, but would benefit from further development and alignment to external reference points.

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

2.4   Lecturers make use of a range of delivery methods, and it is clear from student feedback that much of the teaching is of a high quality, in line with contemporary pedagogical practice. Lesson observations are conducted regularly by the Principal, utilising well developed and detailed pro formas, which facilitate feedback and continued development of teaching strategies. The School also encourages lecturers to engage in peer observation. Academic staff meetings provide a forum for teachers to share and disseminate good practice. However, the current mechanisms for sharing good teaching practice remain

largely informal, and it is desirable that the School formalises the review of teaching and learning practices.

2.5   The School has begun to review its provision annually. However, the current annual review report does not fully evaluate the quality of learning opportunities, or include clear and full consideration of external examiner/external verifier reports, staff and student feedback, external body reports and comparative progression, retention and achievement data.

2.6   All staff are suitably qualified for the programmes on which they teach, and the School seeks to recruit staff with previous teaching experience. External speakers do not currently contribute to programmes, but the School sees this as an area that it would like to develop. The recent business award received by the School, along with its planned application for ACCA Gold Status, is part of the strategy for raising the School's profile locally and attracting local industry speakers. Work placements are not currently made available to students at the School due to visa restrictions. The School is planning to offer Edexcel programmes in future, which will provide an opportunity to develop a work experience placement scheme.

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

2.7   Information provided to students on enrolment is detailed and comprehensive. Students are provided with a student handbook, which provides a range of useful information on key policies and sources of information on living in the UK. Students reported that induction was helpful and a checklist is used to ensure that all key information is provided to students on arrival. The School recognises the need to further develop its support and information for disabled students and that the information should be made available to applicants, as well as current students. There is a recognised lack of expertise in the identification and support of unseen disabilities, and the School relies on external support alongside student self-disclosure.

2.8   The School has a Student Representative Committee chaired by an elected student president, who also sits on the Academic Board. Membership of the Student Representative Committee is inclusive and students reported that School management is highly responsive to issues that have been raised. The School utilises student feedback forms and students are also able to use an anonymous complaints and suggestions box to raise issues with the management. The robust mechanisms for gathering and responding to student feedback ensure that the student voice informs developments in the quality of the learning experience. This consistent consideration of student feedback represents good practice.

2.9   The School provides an exceptionally supportive environment for students and actively fosters a sense of community through the inclusive pastoral and academic student support. Classes are small and provide opportunities for extensive individual attention. Pastoral support is provided by teaching staff, administrators and the Principal as appropriate. Students are also provided with e-mail addresses, mobile phone numbers and a round-the-clock emergency number to ensure help at all times. They are further supported by the provision of free additional English language tuition, with classes twice each week. The comprehensive pastoral student support systems represent good practice.

2.10   Well established mechanisms are in place for providing constructive feedback to students on their assessments. Formative and summative assessments marked by lecturers are accompanied by detailed written feedback commenting on positive aspects and areas for improvement. Detailed individual learning plans are formulated for all students and are highly effective in monitoring student attendance and progress, and in supporting students to

submit work to the level required. The detailed individual learning plans and tutorial records effectively support student achievement and are good practice.

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

2.11   The majority of academic staff hold teaching qualifications and the School assists staff in gaining a recognised teaching qualification as required. Professional training opportunities are supported and staff are able to access online seminar sessions. Staff who are members of professional organisations, such as the Institute for Learning, share key updates on the development of good teaching practice.

2.12   Annual reviews are conducted with all full-time staff to identify development needs. The appraisal forms are effective in recording strengths of practice and development needs. Lesson observations are conducted for all lecturers, including part-time staff who are not part of the appraisal process, and outcomes inform staff development activities. Peer observation further supports the sharing of effective teaching practices, as outlined in paragraph 2.4.

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

2.13   The School provides a supportive learning environment, which is in line with expectations for the sector, and there are plans to develop further teaching and learning resources. There is a small library and the School is investing in the provision of an e-books and e-journals service. The School helps students to enrol at Slough central library, which students reported provides a useful range of resources. The School has a broadband wireless system for staff and student use, and students also have access to 14 computers. Resources provision is reviewed regularly by the Academic Board and reported to the Senior Management Team.

2.14   The School is in the early stages of developing a web-based student intranet. The current student portal works as a document repository for lecture notes and assignment briefs. Plans are in place to provide a portal for student submissions and the return of feedback and marks, as well as a range of learning resources. Students are also able to access awarding organisations' online resources through the School intranet. It is desirable that the School continues to develop the student intranet as a virtual learning environment.

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

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3   Public information

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

3.1   The School communicates effectively with potential and current students through its website, student handbooks and programme information handouts. The awarding organisations provide information on their programmes, which the School customises where necessary, after confirming that the information complies with the awarding organisation's regulations and requirements. The main channel for publishing information is the School's

website, which provides students with copies of programme specifications, learning outcomes, modes of study, teaching and assessment methods. More informally, the School benefits from personal recommendations, which alert students both in the UK and abroad to the provision offered.

3.2 Once enrolled, students have access to the School's student intranet, which, although embryonic, provides further detailed information on programmes, including assessment schedules and, in some cases, lecture notes. Students are provided with a handbook containing essential policies and guidance, as outlined in paragraph 2.7. However, the Handbook would benefit from the inclusion of information on student support and disability, resources, assessment and course work submission, mitigation and reasonable adjustments, intermission and data protection. The policy and procedure for cases of academic misconduct would also benefit from further development to ensure it provides clear and comprehensive guidance to students. It is desirable that the School reviews the range of information in the student handbook.

3.3 The student's first class acts as programme induction, in which students are provided with handbooks, syllabus information, schemes of work, and assessment criteria. Information on progression opportunities is available both through the awarding organisations' documents and the School website. The School has produced a progression chart adopted from ATHE to demonstrate progression in terms of levels and also application to professional roles, for example supervisor, junior manager, middle manager, and so on. The students reported that they were clear as to both the value of their programme and opportunities for further study.

3.4 The School is considering the use of social media as a means of communicating with current students, as well as a potential marketing tool. The current students are involved with a trial media page, which limits access to this group. The purpose is to support community aspects of the School, such as broader communications, and to provide a channel for key messages or to raise awareness of events. Students reported that they found this new development both interesting and useful.

3.5 Information on the School's policies and programme documentation is available for staff, students and other stakeholders through the website. Additional information to support students is also provided informally by academic and administrative staff.

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

3.6 The School's arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information are effective. All material is initially produced by the Head of Programmes, and referenced to appropriate awarding organisation materials and guidance. All public information produced by the School is checked and authorised by the Principal through a formal sign-off process. Once approved, the material is made available on the website and in handbooks by the School administrator. The website is checked at least weekly and any changes agreed by the Principal. The weekly system for ensuring that published information is accurate and complete represents good practice.

3.7 The School deals directly with enquiries from potential students and does not use any external agents. Students confirmed that, in addition to published material, they are able to gain information and advice directly from the Student Advisory Team. Student feedback is considered to be important in ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the information the School produces, and students are invited to comment on the information made available to them both during their induction period and through student surveys. Student representatives are also invited to comment on any proposed changes to published

information in committee meetings. Students confirmed that they had been given sufficient, clear and concise information prior to enrolment, and they are very satisfied with all aspects of the information provided.

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

Action plan[3]

Forbes Graduate School 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:						
• robust mechanisms for gathering and responding to student feedback ensure the student voice informs developments (paragraph 2.8)	Continue and strengthen student feedback, for example in feedback to students on actions taken	June 2013	Academic Board	Increased student satisfaction scores and expression of opinions Consistency with the indicators of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)	Principal	Annual monitoring of the strength prescribed by the Quality Code and making use of both objective and subjective evidence
	Further use of the student representative system (for example in consultations over possible university partnership)	October 2013	Academic Board	Student contribution to any university partnership application Consistency with the indicators of	Principal	

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

				the Quality Code		
• comprehensive pastoral student support (paragraph 2.9)	Extend support for integrating into UK life	May 2013	Dean of Students Welfare and Registrar	Success in comprehensive pastoral student support systems leading to increased student satisfaction	Principal	Student questionnaire
	More social events and trips	August 2013	Dean of Students Welfare and Registrar	Success in student participation and satisfaction	Principal	Student questionnaire
	Greater English language support	March 2013	Academic Board	Success in improved English in assignments	Principal	Summative results and lecturer perceptions
	Increase expertise in the identification and support of unseen disabilities, and have the School rely on student self-disclosure	July 2013	Registrar, heads of programmes and Dean of Students Welfare	Success in increasing expertise in the identification and support of unseen disabilities leading to early realisation of student difficulties	Principal	
• detailed individual learning plans and tutorial records effectively support student achievement (paragraph 2.10)	Continue, strengthen, and monitor the systems	September 2013	Academic Board	Success in continuing, strengthening and monitoring the systems hence availing fuller information	Principal	Annual monitoring of the strength prescribed by the Quality Code, and making use of both objective and subjective evidence

• the weekly system for ensuring that published information is accurate and complete (paragraph 3.6).	Continue and reinforce mechanisms for regular checks (for example of website information)	April 2013	Principal	Success in continuing and reinforcing mechanisms for regular checks (for example of website information) leading to the identification and gradual reduction in errors	Board of Directors	Annual School report

Completion of the reinforcement mechanisms for the identification and reduction of errors |
| **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: | | | | | | |
| • review the management and committee structures and terms of reference to more clearly differentiate roles and responsibilities (paragraph 1.1) | Review and rewrite committee structure documents as the School expands in student numbers and programmes: greater differentiation to be sought as staff complement increases | October 2013 | Registrar, heads of programmes and Dean of Students Welfare | Clear evidence of actions taken and outcomes to support improvements in reviewing and rewriting committee structure documents as the School expands in student numbers and programmes: greater differentiation to be sought as staff | Principal and Board of Directors | Annual School report

Completion of the committee structure documents and terms of reference to differentiate clearly roles and responsibilities |

				complement increases Committee operations to be proportionate in size and complexity to size and nature of the School		
• formalise its annual monitoring procedures and documentation (paragraph 1.2).	Expand the currently brief annual reports presented to the Board of Directors by the Senior Management Team Make reports more analytic and reflective Include in reports detailed consideration of student feedback and external verifier reports Produce actions attached to the reports to support the monitoring of actions to address concerns on such matters as retention rates	September 2013	Principal, Registrar and heads of programmes	Satisfaction of Board of Directors Clear evidence of actions taken and outcomes to support improvements	Board of Directors	Annual School report Completion of actions and improvements in course retention and quality

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:						
• continue to map policies and procedures against external reference points (paragraph 1.3)	Standing activity of gap analysis of School documents against the Quality Code and other external reference points (for example, awarding body regulations) Start with annual monitoring, admissions and student support	Start March 2013, complete first annual cycle October 2013	Academic Board	Clear evidence of actions taken and outcomes to support improvements in policies and procedures in line with evolving external reference points	Principal	Annual School report Completion of mapping of policies and procedures against external reference points
• further develop systems for the identification and dissemination of good practice (paragraph 1.7)	Institute standing Academic Board agenda item and staff workshops for identification and dissemination; more use of student feedback	July 2013	Academic Board	Clear evidence of actions taken and outcomes to support improvements captured in teaching observation and increased student satisfaction	Principal	Annual monitoring of the strength prescribed by the Quality Code, and making use of both objective and subjective evidence
• formalise the review of teaching and learning practices (paragraph 2.4)	Continue, strengthen and monitor teaching observation; more Academic Board use of results	July 2013	Academic Board	Clear evidence of actions taken and outcomes to support improvements in	Principal	Annual monitoring of the strength prescribed by the Quality Code, and making use of

				teaching, in marks and increased student satisfaction		both objective and subjective evidence
	Institute standing Academic Board agenda item and staff workshops for identification and dissemination; more use of student feedback	July 2013	Academic Board	Clear evidence of actions taken and outcomes to support improvements in teaching, in marks and increased student satisfaction	Principal	Annual monitoring of the strength prescribed by the Quality Code, and making use of both objective and subjective evidence
• continue to develop the student intranet as a virtual learning environment (paragraph 2.14)	Implement plans to provide a portal for student submissions and the return of feedback and marks, as well as a range of learning resources	July 2013	Academic Board	Clear evidence of actions taken and outcomes to support increased size and number of functions of the portal	Principal and Board of Directors	Annual monitoring of the strength prescribed by the Quality Code, and making use of both objective and subjective evidence and annual School report
• review the range of information in the student handbook (paragraph 3.2).	Improve the handbook with the inclusion of information on student support and disability, resources, assessment and course work submission, mitigation and reasonable	August 2013	Academic Board	Clear evidence of actions taken and outcomes to support enlarged information	Principal	Annual monitoring of the strength prescribed by the Quality Code, and making use of both objective and subjective evidence

	adjustments, intermission and data protection Improve the policy and procedure for cases of academic misconduct to ensure it provides clear and comprehensive guidance to students				

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:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.