



The Institute of Ismaili Studies

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

April 2012

Key findings about The Institute of Ismaili Studies

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in April 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 Institute of Education and The Institute of Ismaili Studies.

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**:

- the highly effective operation of the committees and boards together with strong governor involvement (paragraphs 1.3, 1.4, 2.1)
- the contribution of a worldwide perspective to underpin specialist curriculum development by academics from international universities (paragraphs 1.9, 2.5)
- the rigorous and thorough admissions process (paragraph 2.2)
- the preparation, support and supervision for students on field studies (paragraph 2.11)
- the substantial web-based information and resources on Ismaili studies underpins the curriculum (paragraph 3.1)
- the clarity and rigour of the processes and policies used to ensure the accuracy and currency of public information (paragraph 3.5).

Recommendations

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

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

- clarify assessment outcomes by indicating both the percentage and equivalent grade on assessed work (paragraph 1.5)
- create a single point of reference for quality assurance policies and procedures (paragraph 2.6)
- implement peer observation of teaching, as stated in the strategic plan (paragraph 2.8).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at The Institute of Ismaili Studies (the provider: the Institute). 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 Institute delivers on behalf of the Institute of Education and itself. The review was carried out by Mr Paul Monroe, Professor Donald Pennington (reviewers), and Mr Mike Ridout (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: strategy documents, key policies and procedures, committee terms of reference and records, programme annual reports, role descriptions and staff profiles, assessed student work and handbooks. The team looked at physical resources and held meetings with staff and students.

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

- the Institute of Education Memorandum of Agreement
- Articulation Agreement with the School of Oriental and African Studies
- the Academic Infrastructure
- British Accreditation Council standards
- the Academic Steering Committee.

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

The Institute of Ismaili Studies (the Institute) was established in 1977 and is located within three floors of a building on Euston Road, London. The Institute focuses on the object of encouraging a perspective that is not confined to the theological and religious heritage of Islam, but seeks to explore the relationship of religious ideas with broader dimensions of society and culture. Within the Islamic tradition, the Institute's programmes seek to promote research on those areas which have had relatively little attention devoted to them in scholarship to date. These include the intellectual and literary expressions of Shi'ism in general, and Ismailism in particular.

In seeking to achieve its object, the Institute offers two postgraduate programmes. The Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP) extends over two academic years and culminates in two postgraduate awards: a Master of Teaching (M Teach) and Master of Arts, Education (Muslim Societies and Civilisations). The Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities (GPISH) has the principal aim of cultivating intellectual leadership for the Ismaili community. This three-year postgraduate programme includes a two-year residential component, comprising a course of study at the Institute followed by a third year non-residential component. During the final year of the programme, students pursue a master's degree in a field of study aligned with the goals of GPISH. The third year of study is undertaken at universities such as: London School of Economics and Political Science, Goldsmiths, University of London, University of Oxford and the School of Oriental and African Studies (an articulation agreement is in place with this latter institution). Students are supported for the cost of their study by the Institute.

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

² www.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 its awarding organisations and with full-time equivalent student number in brackets:

Institute of Education

- The Secondary Teacher Education Programme (81)

The Institute of Ismaili Studies

- The Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities (33)

The provider's stated responsibilities

The Institute fulfils its responsibility for the delivery of the STEP in accordance with the Institute of Education Memorandum of Agreement. This is achieved through the Joint Programme Management Committee, which includes representation from the Institute and the Institute of Education, and is responsible for the academic standards, quality and management of both master's level degrees within the STEP.

The Institute is responsible for the development, delivery, quality, management, evaluation and externality of the GPISH. This includes student recruitment, admissions, guidance, teaching and learning, assessment and transition onto a master's degree at a degree-granting university in the UK in the third year of the programme. The Institute is responsible for staff development, library and learning resources, student feedback and the accuracy of public information.

Recent developments

Plans are in place to relocate the Institute to purpose-built facilities, which will also raise the profile of the Institute and the Ismaili heritage within the local community. Students at the Institute were involved in meeting with architects as part of this development.

The Institute is undertaking research into the experience of STEP teachers in the field. The outcomes from this research will help inform the future development of STEP in meeting the mission of the Institute. The first cohort from the STEP will be attending a one-week continuous development event in June 2012. The GPISH is undergoing a five-year curriculum review.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on the higher education programmes were invited to present a submission to the review team. A student submission was submitted after a briefing about its purpose. The submission was produced and sent alongside the self-evaluation. It was very well written and structured, and used the headings of orientation, student support, academics and resources. The student submission proved a very useful starting point for the team to identify matters to be discussed with staff and students during the visit.

Two students, one from each programme, prepared the submission. Input was gathered from the student body by providing posters, under the identified headings, outside of the classrooms and students were requested to post their feedback on these. After all the feedback was compiled, a final draft was sent out to the students for the review and approval. A group of students met the coordinator at the preparatory meeting in advance of the visit and they also participated in a meeting during the review. Their contribution was constructive, well presented and helpful.

Detailed findings about The Institute of Ismaili Studies

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The Institute fulfils its responsibilities effectively through a memorandum of agreement with the Institute of Education and an articulation agreement with the School of Oriental and African Studies. The former confers the award of Master of Arts in Education and Master of Teaching, and the latter recognises the GPISH as a suitable entry qualification to their level 7 master's programmes.

1.2 Strategic direction is clear, purposeful and effective. Responsibility for the management of higher education programmes resides with the Co-Director, the Head of the Department of Graduate Studies, and the Course Director. The Strategic Plan for 2011-2025 informs a five-year strategic plan and annual operational plans.

1.3 Clear and effective use is made of quality procedures and committee meetings to maintain and enhance high academic standards. Terms of reference for committees, together with associated quality processes and procedures, are clearly and effectively detailed in the Lecturer Handbook, Student Handbook and Programme Handbook. The team considers that the highly effective operation of the committees and boards, together with strong governors' involvement, represents good practice.

1.4 Programme management is overseen by the STEP Joint Programme Management Committee and the GPISH Programme Board. They report to the Academic Management Committee, which reports to the Board of Governors through the Oversight Committee.

1.5 There are clear performance criteria for the grading of all student work in a Grade Related Criteria for Master's Degrees document, and the Student Handbook explains the equivalence of percentages and grades, and how this relates to the final module grade. The system could be made clearer to students by indicating both the percentage and the equivalent grade on the assessment feedback forms. The team recommends that it is desirable for the Institute to clarify assessment outcomes by indicating both the percentage and equivalent grade on assessed work.

1.6 There are effective systems in place, overseen by the Academic Steering Committee, to maintain the currency of the provision, which ensure delivery, operation and administration are consistent with best practice elsewhere. An audit of the GPISH is undertaken every five years and a review of the STEP is being undertaken.

1.7 The student voice is captured in a variety of ways, both formal and informal. The STEP Joint Programme Management Committee and the GPISH Programme Board include student representation; operational quality assurance is discussed at the Academic Management Committee, which also receives the outcomes of student surveys. Decisions taken at the committee are fed back to the individual programme committees and hence to the student representatives.

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

1.8 The Academic Infrastructure is used to manage academic standards, but the use made of subject benchmark statements as a reference point for the Graduate Programme in

Islamic Studies and Humanities has not yet been fully realised. The Institute is aware of the generic guidance in the Master's degree characteristics: March 2010 and has made use of the same.

1.9 The Curriculum Review Committee is responsible for the STEP curriculum, and reports to the Academic Steering Committee, which deals directly with curriculum development for the GPISH. Membership of the Academic Steering Committee includes senior academics from leading international universities. The team considers the contribution of a worldwide perspective to underpin specialist curriculum development by academics from international universities to be a very useful external reference point, which represents good practice.

1.10 Many of the academic staff of the Institute are either visiting lecturers, or work for the Institute on a part-time basis, and are simultaneously employed on programmes at other higher education institutions. The team considers that the experience offered by such staff represents another useful external reference point.

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

1.11 The Institute is responsible for designing assignments, first marking and giving feedback to their students on the STEP. The Institute of Education is responsible for approving the assessments set by the Institute and for moderation and second marking of student work.

1.12 The Institute currently uses only one external examiner for the GPISH. The appointment of additional external examiners is currently under consideration.

1.13 The Institute has specific policies for external examiners and assessment, and is committed to the principle of external peer involvement in maintaining standards. This is evidenced in the process for external examining, and programme approval and review. External examiners for the STEP have commented, in both formal student surveys and discussions, upon the lack of detailed feedback in some units. The Institute has addressed this issue and students consider the actions taken to have led to improvements in feedback.

1.14 Academic staff members are required to attend meetings at the beginning of each academic year. A wide range of assessment methods is discussed together with the purpose and practice of internal verification/moderation. Comments made by external examiners are incorporated into teaching and learning strategies for use in the following year. A representative of the Institute of Education attends, and processes are referenced against the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*), *Section 4: External examining* and *Section 6: Assessment of students*.

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 The Institute enjoys strong governors' involvement, highly effective management and committee structures, and helpful programme handbooks. These help the Institute meet its responsibility for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. For the STEP, the memorandum of agreement with the Institute of Education delineates the responsibilities of each institution. There is effective involvement, at all levels, from the Institute of Education. The Institute manages its responsibilities for STEP through the Joint Programme Management Committee, which meets termly and has the Institute of Education membership. The fortnightly meetings of the Oversight Committee and the Academic Management Committee ensure that student matters are quickly acted upon.

2.2 For the GPISH, the Institute has responsibility for admissions and conducts this in a thorough and rigorous manner. Admissions to the STEP are thorough and jointly managed by the Institute and the Institute of Education. Both institutions make the final decision on student admissions. Potential students are given clear information concerning admissions criteria for both programmes. The team considers the rigorous and thorough admissions process to be good practice.

2.3 Programme monitoring and review is conducted in a comprehensive manner. For example, mid-year and annual reports are produced, which are considered at boards and committees and, additionally, by the Institute of Education for the STEP. Reports incorporate a range of information, including feedback from students and analysis of external examiners' reports.

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

2.4 Both programmes have programme specifications conforming to the Academic Infrastructure. The STEP has been developed in collaboration with, approved and awarded by the Institute of Education. Implementation of recommendations from regular visits made by the British Accreditation Council demonstrates enhancement of learning opportunities.

2.5 Rigorous external reviews take place for the GPISH. It is monitored and reviewed each year at two meetings of the Academic Steering Committee, which includes academic specialists in Islamic studies from well regarded universities round the world.

2.6 The *Code of practice* has been used by the Institute to review admissions procedures, student assessment, External Examiner Policy and to develop a policy for disabled students. For example, the Institute's External Examiner Policy provides criteria for appointment, guidance on reports and how the Academic Management Committee responds to issues. The Institute of Education also responds to issues raised through their quality assurance mechanisms. Although the Institute has a full range of quality policies and procedures, these are published as separate documents. The team recommends that it would be desirable for the Institute to create a single point of reference for quality assurance policies and procedures.

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

2.7 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy is developed and operationalised by the Academic Management Committee with guidance from the Oversight Committee.

Full-time teaching staff are well qualified and active in their research areas, providing teaching which is highly valued by students.

2.8 The Institute takes care with the recruitment of visiting lecturers to ensure they are well qualified and experienced teachers. A policy for teaching enhancement through peer observation of teaching has recently been developed, and will be implemented in the 2012-13 academic year. The Institute has implemented a policy for new teaching staff to take a programme in teaching and learning. The team recommends that it is desirable for the Institute to implement peer observation of teaching, as stated in the strategic plan.

2.9 There are good opportunities, through a range of mechanisms, for students to provide feedback about the quality of their teaching and learning experience. These include: module evaluation questionnaires, meetings between students and staff, and student representation on committees. Student feedback is discussed and acted upon at the fortnightly Academic Management Committee. Programme boards discuss student feedback and act upon issues that arise. Feedback from students is listened to and changes made, for example the length of the home practicum was extended.

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

2.10 There is a comprehensive range of academic and pastoral mechanisms ensuring that students are well supported throughout their studies at the Institute. Students on both programmes are assigned an academic adviser who mentors, supports and monitors their progress. The fortnightly meeting of the Academic Management Committee considers individual student matters and recommends appropriate supportive actions.

2.11 Effective student support is provided to students in preparation and supervision for field trips, the Research Practicum and the Field Research Project. All students are provided with a Programme Handbook. The GPISH Student Handbook provides students with full information about the programme, as well as information about academic and pastoral support that is available. The team considers the preparation, support and supervision for students on field studies to be good practice.

2.12 Effective pre-sessional and in-sessional support is provided to students for English and academic writing. Students on STEP have full access to student support services at the Institute of Education, which includes the Academic Writing Centre. The Institute has an agreement with the University of Westminster for GPISH students to access their counselling services. The Institute provides careers support to students through Career Pathways seminars, which are offered to the GPISH students twice or three times a year.

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

2.13 Staff at the Institute report that staff appraisal is effective and linked into wider strategic objectives. All full-time staff undergo a formal appraisal with their manager on a twice-yearly basis. The Institute has also recently developed an appraisal process for visiting lecturers. The Human Resources Committee, which has three governors as members, regularly reviews staff development procedures and policies.

2.14 The Institute provides funding to promote staff development, especially in the areas of information technology and attending academic conferences. Newly appointed full-time teaching staff attend a module at the Institute of Education on student assessment. A significant proportion of lecturer staff development is provided by the Institute of Education. The GPISH Staff Handbook provides information about how teaching staff can use the virtual learning environment, together with a range of academic policies that help

new and experienced staff with how the Institute operates its academic programme. Teaching staff that do not have a recognised teaching qualification are now required to take a course in Teaching and Learning in Higher Education at the Institute of Education.

2.15 The Institute aims to promote high levels of support for research in the Ismaili tradition. It supports academics to develop their capacity to teach in their specialist area. Its library, together with access to the Institute of Education and other libraries, provides excellent resources to support and further develop their research skills and specialist research profile. Full-time academic staff are encouraged and supported by the Institute to publish in appropriate academic journals and attend specialist conferences.

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

2.16 The library offers a unique and extensive range of learning materials, including books, manuscripts, films about Islamic traditions and heritage. Students find the materials valuable for their studies, especially the GPISH Field Research Guide. Students would like to see opening hours extended and better provision for study space, especially informal learning space. Students have access to the School of Oriental and African Studies library and STEP students have access to the Institute of Education library and enjoy full borrowing rights. Student feedback shows high levels of student satisfaction with learning resources.

2.17 Student learning is well supported through the Institute's virtual learning environment. Both GPISH and STEP students can access the virtual learning environment directly and STEP students also have access via a hypertext link at the Institute of Education. The students make extensive use of the virtual learning environment and value both the wide range of information available and the high level of support provided for users. The minimum content of the virtual learning environment follows a recommended checklist, but the style used is at the discretion of individual members of staff. Students make good use of the learning support offered, particularly programme information, such as handbooks, timetable, lecture notes and additional reading. There is a checklist for members of staff which provides guidance on the minimum content for each module.

2.18 The GPISH Student Handbook provides a full range of information concerning support available. Information technology support is provided to students through an Information Technology Service Help Desk, and students report satisfaction with the responsive service that is available to them.

2.19 Teaching rooms at the Institute are well equipped, providing audio-visual facilities, networked computers and interactive whiteboards. These facilities provide learning resources which enhance the student experience and facilitate more interactive classes, which students value.

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

3 Public information

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

3.1 The website is informative and accessible, with hypertext links to useful sites and separate gateways for staff, students, teachers, alumni and visitors. There is substantial information on research, publications, interviews, presentations, speeches, academic institutions, journals, libraries, museums, publishers and affiliated organisations. This is effective in supporting the broader mission of the Institute to develop the curriculum of the Institute. The information on the website is presented in five languages (English, French, Arabic, Persian and Russian). This is a highly effective tool for accessing the information provided. The team considers that the substantial web-based information and resources on Ismaili studies underpinning the curriculum is good practice.

3.2 The student handbooks are clear and comprehensive, and contain effective programme specifications. The handbooks are reviewed and extended each year and include extra materials suggested by the students.

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

3.3 The information published is accurate, and reflects the nature and quality of the educational experience that students can expect if they enrol for a specific course. Details of responsibilities are represented to varying degrees in the memorandum of agreement or articulation agreement. The Institute complies with its delegated responsibilities as set out in the agreements made with the Institute of Education and the School of Oriental and African Studies.

3.4 The information provided is factual and complete, and there are clearly defined policies to support what is done. Responsibility for programme and module information and public information provision is shared between the awarding body and the Institute. The delegated responsibilities require the Institute to produce the public information associated with the STEP. This needs the endorsement of the Institute of Education and is signed off by the Head of Department of Graduate Studies. There is no requirement for the School of Oriental and African Studies to endorse changes made to the website.

3.5 There are clear procedures for checking inaccuracies and signing off of all marketing materials. The Institute information is published in hard copy and online, and is timely, accurate, complete and accessible. Effective oversight of the website is undertaken on a departmental basis and signed off by the Course Director for both the STEP and the GPISH. The clarity and rigour of the processes and policies used to ensure the accuracy and currency of public information represents good practice.

3.6 The prospectuses, programme leaflets and marketing brochures are reviewed on an annual basis. The content is generated by academic staff and collated by Student Services. The process is driven by the relevant course director or head of department, checked and endorsed by a representative of the Institute of Education and signed off by the Head of Department of Graduate Studies.

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| <p>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.</p> |
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Action plan³

| The Institute of Ismaili Studies action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight April 2012 | | | | | | |
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| 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: | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the highly effective operation of the committees and boards together with strong governors' involvement (paragraphs 1.3, 1.4, 2.1) | The Institute will continue to maintain and enhance its committee structure through an annual review | <p>We consider this as an ongoing project</p> <p>However, by December 2012 we will submit an annual review report to the Board of Governors</p> | Chair of the Academic Management Committee | <p>Monitoring of action logs to track progress</p> <p>We expect to resolve or address 100 per cent of actions during the calendar year</p> | Board of Governors | Annual Review to be submitted to the Board of Governors |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the contribution of a worldwide perspective to underpin specialist curriculum development by academics from international universities | The Institute will continue to work closely with international academics to review the curriculum via two meetings annually | Meetings in July and December annually | Secondary Teacher Education Programme (STEP) and Graduate Programme in Islamic Studies and Humanities | Success will be measured by the performance of students satisfying the learning outcomes annually | <p>Academic Steering Committee</p> <p>Programme Board</p> <p>Board of Governors</p> | Through the review by the Academic Steering Committee |

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.

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| (paragraphs 1.9, 2.5) | | | (GPISH) Course Director | We expect 80 per cent of our GPISH students to attain an A average | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the rigorous and thorough admissions process (paragraph 2.2) | The Institute will continue to maintain and enhance our admissions processes and procedures through a formal review conducted annually | October 2012 | STEP/GPISH Course Director Senior Academic and Student Support Services Manager | 80 per cent of GPISH students gaining admission to Russell Group and Group of 94 institutions 15 per cent of STEP students gaining distinctions for the STEP MA | Board of Governors Academic Management Committee | Student feedback on the support given, the clarity of information and communication during the admissions process |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the preparation, support and supervision for students on field studies (paragraph 2.11) | The Institute will continue to prepare and support students on various field trips by revising the guidance given to students to ensure they are fit for purpose | Annually in September | STEP/GPISH Course Director Senior Academic and Student Support Services Manager | Feedback from students on how well the guidance prepared them for the various field trips We expect a satisfactory rating in excess of 80 per cent | Academic Management Committee | Feedback on preparation and supervision, which is done during our annual survey Revised guidance notes |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the substantial web-based information and resources on Ismaili studies | The Institute will continue to add relevant resources that would be useful for the Institute's | This is an ongoing project with feedback on progress annually in | Website Unit (led by Communications and Development | Feedback from students and staff will be integral to that audit | Website Committee Academic Management | Feedback from stakeholders on the quality and quantity of online resources |

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| underpins the curriculum (paragraph 3.1) | students as well as others interested in Ismaili studies As such, we will undertake annual audit to assess if the current resources available on the web (both quantity and quality) are sufficient for students and staff | June | Manager) | We expect to see a satisfactory rating in excess of 80 per cent on questions relating to the quantity and quality of the resources available online | Committee | Also evidence of the articles added to the website |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the clarity and rigour of the processes and policies used to ensure the accuracy and currency of public information (paragraph 3.5). | The Institute will regularly review public information about the Institute's graduate programmes to ensure accuracy and currency | This is an ongoing project with a review to be conducted annually in June | STEP and GPISH coordinators in collaboration with the Website Unit (Website Administrator) | <p>Feedback from applicants on clarity, accuracy and completeness of information provided to them</p> <p>We expect at least an 80 per cent satisfactory rating</p> | Academic Management Committee | Feedback from students on clarity, accuracy and completeness of information during annual survey |
| 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"> clarify assessment outcomes by indicating both the percentage and equivalent grade on assessed work | The Institute will provide both percentages and grades on assessed work | September 2012 | STEP and GPISH coordinators | Assessment outcomes will be indicated by percentage and equivalent grade of all assessed | Academic Management Committee | <p>Feedback from students on the new assessment outcomes</p> <p>Updates in</p> |

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| (paragraph 1.5) | We will update the student handbook accordingly | | | work | | handbook and effective implementation |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> create a single point of reference for quality assurance policies and procedures (paragraph 2.6) | <p>The Institute will determine the best single point of reference for quality assurance and will prepare it</p> <p>This may be a location on the intranet, website or a quality manual</p> | September 2013 | Senior Academic and Student Support Services Manager | Single point of reference for quality assurance policies and procedures exists and is available to and used by all staff and students | Board of Governors Academic Management Committee | <p>Feedback from students and staff</p> <p>Production of single reference point</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement peer observation of teaching as stated in the strategic plan (paragraph 2.8). | <p>The Institute will implement a peer review process as outlined in the self-evaluation document</p> <p>We will undertake an annual audit followed by a report on the effectiveness of the process</p> | <p>Implementation of peer review - September 2012</p> <p>Annual Audit - August 2013</p> <p>Report to be produced by December 2013</p> | <p>STEP/GPISH Course Director</p> <p>STEP Coordinator</p> <p>GPISH Coordinator</p> | <p>The successful implementation of the peer review process</p> <p>80 per cent of the staff to be observed</p> <p>This would be measured by at least 80 per cent of staff finding the process useful in terms of professional development</p> | <p>Academic Management Committee</p> <p>Programme Board</p> | Annual report on the effectiveness of the process |

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: Handbook⁴](#)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

quality See **academic quality**.

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

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

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

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