



Inchbald School of Design

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

May 2012

Key findings about Inchbald School of Design

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in May 2012, the QAA review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of the University of Wales and the Inchbald School of Design.

The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the quality and enhancement of the learning opportunities it offers on behalf of this awarding body and the Inchbald School of Design.

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 comprehensive feedback and support provided to students, which contributes to the formative and summative stages of assessment (paragraph 2.3)
- the enhancement opportunities available to students through the use of external practitioners and industrial and commercial links to enable them to gain employability skills (paragraph 2.8)
- the effective use and integration of information technology to support online and School-based teaching and learning (paragraphs 2.10, 2.14)
- the extensive range of opportunities for students and graduates to obtain valuable work experience, opportunities to gain internships, and share current work (paragraph 3.3).

Recommendations

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

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

- update course documentation to ensure that it aligns with the awarding body's regulations (paragraph 2.5)
- review and update course documentation as part of the annual review process (paragraph 3.4).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at the Inchbald School of Design (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 School awards in relation to the Inchbald diplomas, which are set at level 6 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), and the postgraduate and master's awards delivered on behalf of the University of Wales (the University). The review was carried out by Mrs Claire Blanchard, Professor Geoffrey Elliott, Dr Steve Hill (reviewers), and Mr Bob Saynor (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the School and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).² Evidence in support of the review included documentation supplied by the School and awarding body, meetings with staff, students, reports of reviews by the University of Wales and British Accreditation Council (BAC) reports.

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

- the Academic Infrastructure
- BAC
- the University
- NQF.

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

Inchbald School of Design (the School) is an independent institution, which was founded in 1960 to provide training for interior design, interior decoration and garden design, offering courses ranging from master's and postgraduate diploma courses to short introductory courses. In 1972, the Garden Design Faculty was launched. In 1999, the postgraduate and master's programmes were validated and approved by the University. The online delivery mode for the postgraduate courses were validated and approved by the University in 2010. The Inchbald diplomas are delivered in parallel to the University awards and follow the same quality and standards procedures. However, the awards are made on behalf of the School and not the University.

The School is located in central London on two sites: the Interior Design Faculty at Eaton Gate and the Garden Faculty at Eccleston Square. The School is ideally located to gain access to renowned galleries, museums and professional facilities. It draws its students from the UK and overseas, and across a wide age range and a disparate professional and educational background.

Currently, the School has 86 students, of whom 55 are studying on higher education programmes on a full-time basis. There are four students enrolled on master's, and 13 on postgraduate awards. The remaining 38 students are enrolled on the Inchbald diploma courses, 31 on the Diploma in Architectural Design, and seven on the Diploma in Garden Design. There are five full-time and seven part-time academic staff who teach on higher education programmes. The School also engages with numerous affiliates, who contribute to

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

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

the quality of education provided by the School through guest lectures and teaching commitments.

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

University of Wales

- MA in Architectural Interior Design
- MA in Garden Design
- Postgraduate Diploma in Architectural Interior Design
- Postgraduate Diploma in Garden Design

Inchbald School of Design

- Diploma in Architectural Interior Design
- Diploma in Garden Design

The provider's stated responsibilities

The School states that it is committed to the practical and theoretical education of students in the fields of interior design and garden design, providing comprehensive curricula for the promotion of responsible and professional design. The programmes encourage students to be both enquiring and creative, equipping them with the knowledge and philosophy to take their places in the professional arena.

The School also states that the creative development of the individual student is paramount and is the focus of its education policy. This is supported by its academic partner in maintaining quality of delivery of education, adherence to benchmarks and the professional requirements of the disciplines taught.

Recent developments

Due to the moratorium set by the University to validate any new awards, the School has been unable to progress the approval and validation of the current Inchbald diplomas. The current agreement document with the University enables the School to continue recruiting students to the master's and postgraduate diploma awards.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. A separate student submission was submitted to the team in advance. The overall process for the collation of the student responses was led by the relevant student representatives for interior and garden design programmes. The final document was collated by the Interior Faculty student representative. This was shared with the students prior to the visit. The coordinator met students at the preparatory meeting. Evidence of student feedback through institutional, programme and module feedback was available during the visit. This evidence, together with the team's meeting with the students during the review visit, was helpful to the team.

Detailed findings about Inchbald School of Design

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The arrangements for the management of academic standards for the University and School awards are clear and understood within the School. The School Board of Directors is ultimately responsible for academic strategy and business planning. The Faculty and Assessment Committees are concerned with all aspects which impact upon the student experience from initial enquiry through to graduation. The minutes of the Board of Directors provided the team with clear evidence of oversight of academic standards. The Board of Directors and other academic quality and standards committees and forums ensure the standards and regulations of the awarding body and the School are met. The policies and practices of the School are applied fully and fairly in the admission of students, delivery and assessment of the curriculum, and the awards on behalf of the awarding body and the School.

1.2 The delegation of responsibilities for academic standards, and the relationship between the University and the School for the maintenance and assurance of academic standards, is clearly documented. Programmes are managed on a day-to-day basis by the two course directors; and academic matters are overseen by the Vice Principal, who is also one of the course directors. The faculty committees, boards of study, Assessment Committee and the examination boards contribute to monitoring progress of all students and ensuring the standards of the student learning experience is effective. The School also operates a Staff-Student Committee that meets four times per year. The operation of these arrangements ensure that the required standards are maintained and in line with the awarding body's requirements and replicated for the School awards.

1.3 The arrangements for monitoring and reporting on academic standards and quality are appropriate and effective. There is clear annual monitoring present in the academic management through engagement with the University Moderator and clear external examiners' involvement for each course. This includes support and monitoring of standards for the School awards. The process and practice of assessment and moderation, and documented evidence of detailed and robust external examining, is evident. The assessment of work is primarily through design project-based activity and involves triple marking. A process for verifying the level and authenticity of student submitted work is in place. The external examiners reported overall satisfaction with the courses delivered at the School. There is evidence of responding to, and reflection upon, the external examiners' comments.

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

1.4 The School's external reference points are made clear in the course validation and the awarding body's documentation. The School has clearly documented evidence to support that the awards are offered in line with external benchmarks and the awarding body's requirements. The School diplomas have been developed through consultation and collaboration with the University and use explicit references to external reference points. References are also made to professional and sector organisations which represent the interior design and garden design industry standards. These include: the International Interior Designers Association, the British Institute of Interior Design, the Interior Design Educators' Council Inc, and the Society of Garden Designers. The School is also accredited by BAC and has a number of external and professional practitioner links that feed into the

delivery of courses and the curricula.

1.5 The current Inchbald diploma is classified as an unregulated award set at NQF level 6. The awards have gone through a pre-approvals process with the University for these awards to be validated as a level 6 pre-master's programme. However, due to the moratorium set for the University to validate new awards, they are currently awaiting approval and validation by an external awarding body. The School is currently considering its awarding partner's arrangements and will need to align this programme with the chosen awarding partner's regulations.

1.6 The School has a robust process for standard and non-standard admission of students. Most students already possess undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications from UK and overseas universities. All students are interviewed and, where necessary, non-cognate students are asked to provide design work and evidence of capability as part of the selection and admissions process. The School adopts a detailed accreditation of prior experiential learning process for all awards in line with the regulations of the awarding body. It has a clear and documented induction process for both face-to-face and online courses.

1.7 Staff demonstrated a clear understanding of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and NQF in the application of these frameworks in course design and approval. The taught courses are jointly developed with the University Moderator and the awarding body. The School and key staff have a clear understanding of the relevant University regulations and published syllabuses, assignment regulations and assessment criteria, and how these apply to both University and School awards.

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

1.8 The courses are overseen by the University Moderator and have external examiner oversight, with evidence of annual and periodic review. Course delivery and assessment is conducted by the School, with external subject specialist design staffing input to support course delivery. There is clear evidence of internal moderation and second assessment and, in some cases, third marking of design projects. The examination boards operate within the School with external examiners and University Moderator's involvement. Student progress and performance is monitored closely, with faculty boards of study and the Assessment Committee being concerned with the progress of individual students and monitoring the effectiveness of their learning experience.

1.9 The external examiners are appointed by the awarding body and their comments are formally responded to, although some operational comments are not immediately resolved. The external examining process is conducted in accordance with the awarding body's regulations for monitoring and assuring standards in collaborative partner institutions. Students reported that they did not have access to external examiners' reports. However, the external examiners meet with students and feed back comments into the external examiner reporting process. There is transparent and robust evidence of the process and practice of assessment, moderation, external examining, annual monitoring, and reflective academic practice in assuring the standards of the awards offered on behalf of the awarding body and the School.

The review team has **confidence** in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding body and itself.

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 responsibilities and arrangements for managing and reporting on the quality of learning opportunities are those described in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.3. These arrangements are effective in managing and supporting the quality of learning opportunities in the School's higher education provision, and are understood within the School.

2.2 Under the terms of its agreement with the University, the School is responsible for admissions and induction, counselling and support, initial appeals, discipline and complaints procedures, course development and delivery, assessments, first marking and annual course monitoring. The University reviews admissions policies as part of its annual monitoring system. Reports from periodic reviews and annual monitoring show the University's satisfaction in the School's discharge of its responsibilities for the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities. The University Moderator oversees the collaborative agreement and attends examination boards and boards of study, along with external examiners and a validation officer from the University. The School effectively fulfils its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities.

2.3 The School manages effectively and enhances the quality of learning opportunities available. Students have access to 20 hours per week of class contact and a 1:8 staff-student ratio. The School's course delivery and assessment strategy uses a system of integrated projects that cover elements of more than one module. The process for assessment decisions is through setting clear milestones with regular, comprehensive and formative feedback. The School incorporates active peer and group critiques to discuss current work and stimulate professional debate. The final summative decisions are made through second and triple marking to ensure that robust moderation takes place. There is a detailed matrix to map module learning outcomes to the assessment projects, and individual student spreadsheets to track coverage of learning outcomes and assessment decisions. The comprehensive feedback and support provided to students, which contributes to the formative and summative stages of assessment, is good practice.

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

2.4 The School engages with external reference points as stated in paragraphs 1.4 to 1.7 to manage and enhance learning opportunities for students.

2.5 The School makes use of external reference points in its management and enhancement of learning opportunities. It sets a higher requirement for students to progress from the postgraduate level through to master's. The University regulations allow progression from postgraduate to master's stage with a mark of 40 per cent, and the School requires 50 per cent. The University has been consulted on this and supports this arrangement. However, they omit details covering modules for the postgraduate diploma and master's awards in architectural interior design and garden design. The programme specification does not state which modules comprise the award, so no mapping is possible to module outcomes. Also, in the course handbook the details relating to describing the award titles, combinations and the student entitlement to contained awards are unclear. It is advisable that course documentation is reviewed and updated to ensure it aligns with the University regulations.

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

2.6 The School has effective systems to assure itself that it is maintaining and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, using student feedback to which it responds and takes appropriate action. The University monitors teaching and learning through the University Moderator and external examiners' reports as part of the annual review process. Student concerns and questionnaire feedback may trigger observations from the Course Director. Each programme specification contains a specific teaching and learning strategy. Students reported satisfaction with the quality of teaching and learning provided by the School.

2.7 The School recruits highly qualified and experienced teaching staff, all with current industrial and specialist experiences, to ensure that it maintains and enhances the quality of teaching and learning. The School has established an impressive group of affiliates who contribute to the programme of activity at the School, which enhances student employability opportunities. New teaching staff curriculum vitae are reviewed by the University during annual monitoring. The School uses student feedback to assess the efficiency and suitability of resources, course delivery and support, and this feeds into the annual review process for all awards.

2.8 The teaching and learning strategy uses integrated cross-modular projects, as described in paragraph 2.3. The majority of the projects and assignments are based on actual or simulated industrial and commercial settings, and this supports the development of employability skills. The integration of current practitioners working in the chosen specialist fields of interior architecture and garden design, and the team teaching undertaken by the School provides clear opportunities for regular and detailed formative feedback. The School also engages with numerous affiliates, who contribute to the quality of education provided by the School through guest lectures and teaching commitments. The use of external practitioners and use of industrial and commercial contacts to enable the students to gain employability skills is good practice.

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

2.9 The School has instituted procedures to ensure that students are supported effectively. The induction programme informs the students of the range of support available, including policies and regulations, appointment and access to student representatives, feedback surveys, the portal and e-library facilities and guidance on study skills. Course handbooks provide details relating to assessment and appeals, and refer students to the University's website for further information. The students that the review team met during the visit were aware of how to access the appeals procedure and who their student representative was.

2.10 Through the School's open-door policy students raise any issues and concerns with the teaching, learning and the support that they receive. The School carries out regular student surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of the delivery of courses. The course directors and senior tutors review feedback from these surveys, which feed into the University and School annual review process. Student experience on the online courses is comparable to that on the face-to-face courses. Online students have access to a well designed and accessible web portal with open access to extensive high-quality course materials, as well as facilities for extensive interaction with peers and teaching staff. The engagement of both staff and students in this virtual method of delivering the courses clearly opens opportunities for some students unable to study through attending the School. The quality of materials,

student feedback, and engagement by staff and students in online teaching and learning is exemplary and is good practice.

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

2.11 The formalisation of a School's staff development policy has been identified as an area for consideration. Teaching staff have the opportunity to enrol on any School courses relevant to their roles, and financial support is available for external courses. The University Moderator is available to advise on matters relating to assessment, quality, standards, teaching and learning and University procedures, and has been involved in staff development activity with the School.

2.12 Teaching staff meet annually with their Course Director and Senior Tutor to review their progress and performance. Practitioner continuous professional development is encouraged and teaching staff are active in their subject areas, and are recognised practitioners in their specialist field. New teaching staff are monitored by senior tutors, meet weekly with their Course Director, and their teaching is observed on an informal basis. Their induction process covers teaching and quality assurance matters, and they are shadowed by an experienced member of staff.

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 has a budget for books, journals, and information technology hardware and software. There is in-house and outsourced technical computing support, and students also have access to the University online library. There is access to a limited library resource. However, students are given information on local library resources, including public libraries. Students have access to key reference facilities close to the School, including the Victoria and Albert Museum and Westminster Library. The School is open daily Monday to Friday, with no access during evenings and weekends. Online learning students have open access to the dedicated virtual learning environment, as described in paragraph 2.10.

2.14 The information technology infrastructure has undergone changes with the purchase of large format printers in response to student feedback and in order to meet industry standards. The School is progressing investment planning to maintain industry standard resources. This includes maintaining and enhancing the use of electronic presentation equipment, which includes smart board technology, and continued support and development of the online teaching and learning environment. This investment clearly enhances teaching and learning pedagogy. The development and maintenance of the Online Inchbald Associates site, described in paragraph 3.3, contributes to these developments. The School is currently formulating a future information technology investment plan. The use and integration of information technology to support online and School-based teaching and learning is good practice.

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

3 Public information

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

3.1 The School prospectus, individual course information and website clearly describe the courses offered and the educational environment. Course costs and student expectations are clearly articulated in course information before acceptance of a place on the course. Information on student entry is clearly set out in the prospectus and website. The website is of a high standard and easy to navigate, and contains relevant and appropriate information for prospective students. The students that the review team met during the visit confirmed that this was the main vehicle to find out about the School, and many chose the School through personal recommendation. The majority of students are interviewed at the School. Online interviews are also available for applicants who are unable to attend a School-based interview. As part of the interview, the course directors clearly set out the requirements and expectations of the course of study. They are responsible for checking the admissions requirements and all non-standard entry students are sent to the University for approval.

3.2 Following enrolment, the students receive an induction and a comprehensive pack of information which covers all relevant course information. The students confirmed that this information is made available and accurate. They also stated that they receive an assessment schedule and are clear about what they have to do to achieve and attain a particular assessment grade. They confirmed that staff clearly articulated what the learning outcomes and assessment requirements are and the timings and methods at the start of each module. At the beginning of each term, all tutors provide details of the work to be covered and targets during the forthcoming term. Following the Assessment Committee and when students complete their course of study, they are informed in writing of their results and of any outstanding work they need to deliver in order to graduate from the School. The course directors are responsible for checking the results in the School before they are signed off by the University. All examination boards take place in the School.

3.3 The School provides information on progression opportunities as part of the induction programme. It also provides careers advice, including help in the production of curriculum vitae and portfolio presentations. The Online Inchbald Association is a web-based site and is managed by the School for current students and alumni, allowing networking, advertising of jobs and exhibiting current design work. The graduates advertise opportunities and professional advice to current students, who are invited to join after graduation. There is an annual student show, which enables students to gain employment through employer and client contacts. Students are encouraged to undertake work experience during vacation periods and they valued these opportunities. The extensive range of opportunities that the School provides for students and graduates to obtain valuable work experience, opportunities to gain internships, and share current work is good practice.

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

3.4 The course handbooks and course materials are produced by the course directors and senior tutors and checked for accuracy by the admissions secretary and finally checked and signed off by the directors. The School adopts the University template for course handbooks, and has customised it with the support and approval of the University. The course directors and Principal are ultimately responsible for the governance and approval of all internal and external communications of policies, procedures, information and data for the School. The course handbooks and details relating to programme and module

specifications are as approved at validation. The bibliographies for the modules contain few references to recent work. Staff confirmed that up-to-date references are included during the delivery of teaching and learning activity. However, there is no evidence contained within the project assignments, or within individual course handbooks, or module specifications. It would be advisable for the School to review and update course documentation as part of the annual review process.

3.5 The School prospectus and electronic communications, including the website, contains a range of specified information about the School, which is updated periodically as required. The School website is extensive and provides clear individual course information. The prospectus and web content is approved by the course directors and is ultimately signed off by the Principal. All marketing materials are sent in advance of their use for review and approval by the University. The University Moderator's reports indicate that there are no issues with the School's public information, publicity and marketing materials.

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

Action plan³

Inchbald School of Design action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight May 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:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the comprehensive feedback and support provided to students, which contributes to the formative and summative stages of assessment (paragraph 2.3) 	<p>Monitor and support this process across the faculties, ensuring its continuation and development for both in-house and online courses through mid-term and final tutorial meetings</p> <p>Particular attention will be paid to feedback and assessment of online students as they progress through the level 7 programmes</p>	July 2013	Course directors, senior tutors	Positive student progress and feedback project-to-project and successful external examination across two yearly visits by awarding body	Internal academic committees and Academic Board/awarding body	Achieving a successful evaluation of this process will be a combination of the analysis of the annual reports statement by external examiners, analysis of students' feedback concerning method and quality of summative and formative feedback, and the identification of the success of the learning

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

						<p>programme</p> <p>Feedback is used as a teaching tool to directly support the outcomes for the next project - successful progress, although varying student to student, is discussed at end-of-term and then end-of-year review with tutors</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the enhancement opportunities available to students through the use of external practitioners and industrial and commercial links to enable them to gain employability skills (paragraph 2.8) 	<p>To continue the involvement of working designers through teaching and lecture opportunities and the simulation of 'real studio practice'</p> <p>Professional contributions from current and new staff will continue to be encouraged and working with partners, such as Mont Blanc and Morpheus Developments, will be replicated and built upon</p>	<p>Throughout the academic year 2012-13</p>	<p>Course directors and senior tutors</p>	<p>Student satisfaction and engagement with the industry and the process, analysed through feedback to internal staff and subsequently awarding body</p>	<p>Internal academic committees and Academic Board/ awarding body</p>	<p>Feedback as to the professional relevance of work/ student outcomes through exhibition feedback from professional partners, prospective employers and external examiners</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the effective use and integration of information technology to support online and School-based teaching and learning (paragraphs 2.10, 2.14) 	<p>Further progress in terms of the integration of the successful practices between online and in-house delivery</p> <p>This will include online resource files from the interior design courses, made available to in-house courses on their virtual learning environment</p> <p>The future method for facilitating the student portal more effectively will be determined; at present Drop Box and Moodle are used, both to good advantage</p>	Spring term 2013	Course directors, IT technicians and Online Learning Manager	Increase in the successful information exchanges between courses and student groups	Internal academic committees and Academic Board/awarding body	Summation of the online activity and the use of said resources through reports from the Online Learning Manager, Course Director with responsibility for online delivery and through monitoring of the online interchange between students across all courses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the extensive range of opportunities for students and graduates to obtain valuable work experience, opportunities to gain internships, and share current work (paragraph 3.3). 	<p>Active pursuit of new connections with design practitioners/professionals is a continuing process</p> <p>Working towards a more varied choice in terms of student placement is an ongoing challenge</p>	Easter 2013	Course directors, senior tutors and studio tutors	Increased student placements during the Easter period, which result in securing internships following the exam board	Internal academic and management committees	Success in the job markets and response by professionals to the work exhibited at the annual exhibitions

	that is met by promotion of the School through validation, academic and professional contacts with British Institute of Interior Design, Society of Garden Designers and such societies involved in the evaluation of professional practice					
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is advisable for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> update course documentation to ensure that it aligns with the awarding body's regulations (paragraph 2.5) 	Amendments to the relevant documentation, programme specification, and student handbook, to show clearly which modules constitute which level of course	Published for October 2012 in time for Annual Course Review Document for University of Wales	Course directors, admissions and Principal	Publication and comprehension of the updated regulations	Internal management and partner organisation Validation Unit	Clear provision of more full and up-to-date information to current and prospective students monitored through questions at interview and through admissions processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review and update course documentation as part of the annual 	Review and update course material for both individual projects and modules	For the start of the academic year 2012-	Course directors and senior tutors, admissions and Principal	Successful publication of the updated documentation	Internal management and partner organisation	Continued updating will be evidenced and discussed with

review process (paragraph 3.4).	to provide clear evidence of the inclusion and relevance of reference and practical data relevant and contemporary in nature	13			Validation Unit	senior teaching staff and visiting experts, and checked by senior staff against comparable academic and industry organisations External examiners will be consulted
---------------------------------	--	----	--	--	-----------------	--

About QAA

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

QAA's aims are to:

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

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

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

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

Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

quality See **academic quality**.

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

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

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

RG 982 08/12

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Fax 01452 557070
Email comms@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2012

ISBN 978 1 84979 638 5

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

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786