QAA

RTC Education Ltd

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

May 2012

Key findings about RTC Education Ltd

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 award(s) it offers on behalf of Edexcel, the London Centre of Marketing, and the Organisation for Tourism and Hospitality 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 bodies.

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 way in which the College takes explicit account of the Academic Infrastructure in the context of the current range and level of its provision (paragraph 2.5)
- the tailored and readily accessible support for students, together with the swift and full response to issues raised by them (paragraph 2.13).

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:

- establish course committees and involve Academic Council in consideration of written annual course reviews (paragraph 1.1)
- revise the membership of its Academic Council to include representation from students and academic staff (paragraph 1.2)
- review its higher education policies to ensure that they are customised to the College's needs and the range and level of its provision (paragraph 1.3)
- ensure that issues relating to the management and enhancement of learning opportunities are identified and addressed more systematically (paragraph 2.1)
- develop a formal policy for course closure (paragraph 2.4)
- establish a formal system for student representation (paragraph 2.11).

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

- clarify and formalise the relationship between the External Advisory Committee and the Academic Council (paragraph 1.4)
- check that all internal verification forms for assessed work are signed by the internal verifier (paragraph 1.8).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](1) (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at RTC Education Ltd (the provider; the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of Edexcel, the London Centre of Marketing, and the Organisation for Tourism and Hospitality Management. The review was carried out by Mr Andrew Bates, Dr Sally Bentley (reviewers), and Dr Paul Hartley (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: meetings with staff and students; the syllabuses and curriculum information provided by Edexcel, the London Centre of Marketing, and the Organisation for Tourism and Hospitality Management; and documentation provided by the College including:

- the self-evaluation
- the student submission (in the form of a video)
- the student handbook
- marked and moderated assignments
- minutes of board and committee meetings
- access to the virtual learning environment
- Edexcel reviews
- the staff handbook
- the Articles of Governance
- the admissions policy
- the application and enrolment procedure
- the assessment and appeals procedure
- the assignment moderation policy
- the equality and diversity scheme
- the internal verification and moderation policy
- the quality assurance manual
- the 2010-11 Edexcel external examiner report
- student work and internal verification records
- Academic Council minutes
- student feedback questionnaires and summary
- the staff development policy
- Academic Review Meeting minutes

The review team also considered the provider's use of the Academic Infrastructure.

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

RTC Education Ltd, which is part of the Regent Group, was established as an independent school and sixth-form college in 2000. It offered a range of programmes including Key Stage 3, GCSE and A-level courses. In 2009-10 the College took the decision to expand its portfolio of activity and established a Higher National Diploma (Edexcel) course which was launched in 2010. In September 2010 the Further and Higher Education Division was

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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.

established. In January 2011, in response to growing demand, further new programmes were launched, validated by the Organisation for Tourism and Hospitality Management and the London Centre of Marketing. An Association of Chartered Certified Accountants course was also started, but has since been discontinued.

The College operates on two campuses, one in Harrow (housing the school provision and some of the Higher National Diploma courses), and one in Wembley, which houses the remaining higher education courses. At the time of the review the College had 79 students across its higher education provision (see below). It has seven administrative staff and 13 teaching staff and is managed by a Principal and a Co-Principal who share management responsibilities.

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

Edexcel
- Higher National Diploma in Business (1 student)
- Higher National Diploma in Business Management (10 students)
- Higher National Diploma in Business Finance (1 student)
- Higher National Diploma in Business Accounting (3 students)
- Higher National Diploma in Business Law (3 students)

London Centre of Marketing
- Higher Diploma in Sales and Marketing (6 students)
- Professional Diploma in Sales and Marketing (6 students)
- Integrated Graduate Diploma in Sales and Marketing (13 students)
- Graduate Diploma in Sales and Marketing (3 students)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Business Management and Marketing (4 students)

Organisation for Tourism and Hospitality Management
- Professional Diploma (21 students)
- Professional Higher Diploma (8 students)

The provider's stated responsibilities

In its self-evaluation the College states that it works closely with its awarding organisations to ensure that it meets the expectations of the Academic Infrastructure. It sees the responsibility for the maintenance of academic standards as a shared responsibility.
The College states that it has a robust organisational structure and that it identifies the roles and responsibilities for each awarding body and organisation and ensures that members of staff adhere to them. The Principal takes a practical approach to the management of quality and standards.

The Principal's role is pivotal in securing and maintaining standards in the institution. He is the Quality Nominee (and until recently the lead internal verifier) and main point of contact with Edexcel, as well as with London Centre of Marketing and Organisation for Tourism and Hospitality Management, and he chairs the College quality and standards meetings.
He works closely with a small team of teaching and support staff.

Recent developments

The College intends to expand its higher education provision in the medium term, possibly through validation or articulation arrangements with a university, but detailed plans have yet

to be elaborated. It will be expanding its Harrow campus through the acquisition and development of a nearby building to create additional space for its higher education students.

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 submission was a video presentation by the students, prepared with some technical assistance from the College. Several students were present at the preparatory meeting held with the review coordinator. The review team also had the opportunity to meet a representative group of students during the review.

Detailed findings about RTC Education Ltd

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The College is broadly effective in fulfilling its responsibilities for the management of academic standards. There is a detailed structure for the management of higher education provision and the College has an Academic Council which meets quarterly. Minutes of Academic Review meetings demonstrate that a process for annual and in-year course review has been implemented. However, the College has not yet completed the full quality assurance cycle which is set out in the self-evaluation. For example, Course Committees have yet to be established. The Academic Council does not currently consider the minutes of Academic Review meetings and therefore misses an opportunity for formal engagement with the course review process. As part of the full implementation of its quality assurance cycle, it is advisable that the College establish Course Committees and involve Academic Council in consideration of written annual course reviews.

1.2 The Principal advises the Academic Council of all matters pertaining to higher education strategy and operation. The Academic Council would benefit from expanded membership, since it does not include representation from students or academic staff involved in teaching or course management. It is advisable that the College revise the membership of its Academic Council to include representation from students and academic staff.

1.3 There is a comprehensive set of procedures for the management of higher education provision. The College acknowledges that some of these are too complex and lengthy for the size of the current provision. However, it takes the view that they will provide a solid foundation for future growth. The College has borrowed heavily from policies and procedures which support its school programmes, and from other higher education providers. College senior managers are aware that there is further work to be done to customise these policies to suit the needs of the current provision. It is advisable that the College review its higher education policies to ensure that they are customised to the College's needs and the range and level of its provision.

1.4 The College has an External Advisory Committee to advise the Principal on the academic integrity and quality assurance of its higher education provision. The relationship between the External Advisory Committee and the Academic Council is unclear. The Principal advised the team that he briefs the Academic Council orally on matters arising from External Advisory Committee meetings. However, there was no written evidence of this. It is recommended as desirable that the College clarify and formalise the relationship between the External Advisory Committee and the Academic Council.

1.5 Current contracts are in place between the College and each of its awarding body and organisations and the accreditation certificates are clearly displayed in the Principal's office. Awarding body and organisation agreements recognise the College as an accredited teaching centre for each of the courses delivered at the time of visit.

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

1.6 The College has begun to use external reference points in its management of academic standards in response to the requirements of the Review for Education Oversight.

It has a reasonable understanding of the Academic Infrastructure, although the approach taken in the self-evaluation in justifying each academic policy and procedure in relation to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*) is disproportionate to the range and level of the provision. The College is responsible for providing tuition for the London Centre of Marketing and Organisation for Tourism and Hospitality Management courses but is not responsible for the design of new curricula or providing or marking summative assessments. For its Edexcel provision the College is responsible for designing the schemes of work to the unit specifications provided by the awarding body, and for designing and marking summative assessments. The College is making appropriate use of its external reference points.

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

1.7   The College is effective in its use of external moderation, verification and examination to assure academic standards. The College currently receives external examiner reports for its Edexcel provision. The external examiner's report for 2010-11 commented positively on the quality of provision and the learner achievement. There was, however, no evidence that the external examiner's report was used to inform the annual programme review or that the report was considered by the Academic Council.

1.8   The College has a comprehensive internal verification procedure which was described as robust and diligently applied by the external examiner. An examination of student work demonstrated that all assignment briefs had been verified and, where required, amendments made in the light of the internal verifier's comments. Internal moderation of assessed student work is also undertaken in a comprehensive way. However, a number of internal verification forms had not been signed by the internal verifier. The College has recently revised its arrangements for internal verification. The Principal will no longer be undertaking this role in order to ensure that a potential conflict of interest is avoided between the roles of internal verifier and quality nominee. It is desirable that the College check that all internal verification forms for assessed student work are signed by the internal verifier.

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 organisations.

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2   Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1   The College fulfils its responsibilities for the management and enhancement of learning opportunities through its Principal supported by its Academic Council. The Council is advised by the External Advisory Committee and the College intends to include members with experience of higher education. Matters related to the quality of teaching and learning are discussed at separate review meetings. However, the notes of the meetings record topics discussed rather than identifying and tracking actions needed to address issues. It is advisable that the College ensure that issues relating to the management and enhancement of learning opportunities are identified and addressed more systematically.

2.2   The quality assurance manual contains a useful description of the management of student learning opportunities. A curriculum policy describes the management of learning opportunities. Awarding organisation specifications are available to staff and students and

the heads of division ensure all schemes of work meet the College's related policies. A number of policies relating to learning opportunities should be further developed and updated. One set draws almost verbatim on QAA publications and needs further adapting to the College's particular context.

2.3   The academic timetable is based on that of Regent College Independent School. Students and staff were able to illustrate ways in which the greater independence associated with higher level study is developed progressively. The College demonstrates its understanding of the importance of offering a variety of learning opportunities and adapts the guidance of its awarding organisations on the preparation of course schema and lesson plans.

2.4   The College does not have a published policy for course closure, but it has had to close one course mid-session and fulfilled its responsibilities to offer clear information and support to affected students. It was evident that the College had acted with due regard for the students, but it is advisable that it develop a formal policy for course closure.

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

2.5   The quality framework shows awareness of the Academic Infrastructure and other external reference points, but some policies are taken verbatim from QAA documentation without being tailored to the College's specific need. The College makes very good use of guidance provided by the awarding body and organisations on the use of external reference points. It has detailed documentation demonstrating how its courses meet the requirements of the relevant subject benchmark statements. The College has invested significant effort in ensuring that all aspects of its provision and policies have been developed with constant reference to the Academic Infrastructure. The way in which the College takes explicit account of the Academic Infrastructure is good practice in the context of its current range and level of provision.

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

2.6   Academic Council has formal oversight of teaching and learning. Annual monitoring comprises an annual review meeting covering course delivery and aspects of student progress. However, there is little discussion of matters relating to teaching, and limited use of management information. There is little formal use of feedback from students and agreed actions are not clearly defined. Annual reviews supported by termly meetings address any mid-year issues. Programme leaders reflect on statistical information about student achievement, but this process is not formally recorded. As part of the implementation of its quality assurance systems the College could adopt a more evidence-based evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning and follow through with clear actions.

2.7   Feedback from students is gathered through course questionnaires. The College analyses this data and formulates an action plan to address concerns. The first survey, conducted a few months ago, confirmed generally high levels of satisfaction with teaching, but raised concerns about access to resources, which the College quickly addressed.

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

2.8   Advice for students is offered by course coordinators both face-to-face and through email. Mid-year progress reports are issued to all students. Work-based learning is supported through materials provided by the relevant awarding body or organisation. Useful formative assessment is undertaken in the form of mock tests, presentations and case

studies. Tutors provide constructive, helpful feedback on assessed work. The heads of division are the formal personal tutors but students feel able to approach any tutors for advice.

2.9 An effective induction programme includes course-based sessions. Students receive a helpful pack of materials including course documentation and a clear timetable. This is tightly structured and students have supervised study periods. They receive detailed guidance on academic malpractice and plagiarism and are expected to use plagiarism detection software. They receive clear information about assignments, assessment procedures and how to appeal against decisions. Overall, students were content with the balance of support and independent learning.

2.10 The College is committed to providing external specialist student advice if needed, though it has to date been possible for all students to be appropriately advised by senior staff. Students confirmed to the review team that they received helpful advice from staff throughout their course. Careers advice, including information about possible progression onto other courses, is available.

2.11 Students have elected representatives on each campus but the College has not yet established course committees or student liaison committees. The system works well from the students' perspective, but depends on informal relationships between the College and its students. It is advisable that the College establish a formal system for student representation, including on Academic Council and course committees.

2.12 The College offered a high level of support to students who joined mid-year from another college following course closure. When the College decided to close one of its own courses mid-year due to changes in the external policy environment, departing students were given helpful, individual support to find alternative equivalent courses.

2.13 Collectively, the College's approach to student support with its emphasis on providing tailored and readily accessible support, together with the swift and full response to issues raised by students, constitutes good practice and is highly valued by the students.

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

2.14 There is a useful staff handbook which supports day-to-day academic activities. A staff training day is held at the start of each academic year and staff have the opportunity to attend the awarding organisations' professional development events. Staff receive a range of materials giving assistance in developing schemes of work, assignment briefs and other aspects of programme delivery.

2.15 From summer 2012, the optional staff appraisal system will be obligatory and there will be an annual process which includes formative self-reflection and more formal performance management elements. Observations by line managers occur annually for each tutor, and their outcome will feed into the annual appraisal process.

2.16 The College is committed to appointing well qualified staff and the process is supported by a clear appointments policy. Staff must have relevant qualifications at least one level above that at which they will be teaching. Current staff predominantly have master's or doctorate level qualifications. A teaching qualification is not obligatory, but staff must have previous teaching experience. New staff receive a comprehensive induction to the College and its procedures.

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

2.17   The students express general satisfaction with their study facilities. Teaching resources are considered as part of the business planning process and during course reviews. The College recently responded quickly to student concerns about learning resources. A clear action plan was drawn up and additional resources were immediately put in place, including the creation of a separate area for higher education students in the shared library and the purchase of access to relevant externally hosted e-resources.

2.18   An on-site intranet has some course documents and supporting materials and a more extensive virtual learning environment is under development. This hosts some very helpful learning resources, including access to online professionally managed e-resources, and has useful assessment information. From September 2012, it will be further developed as an all-round communication tool.

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 College publishes a range of information for students and other external organisations. Students confirmed that they found it to be accurate, comprehensive and helpful. This information includes its prospectus, a website, a student handbook and College policies and procedures, including a quality assurance manual, which the prospectus identifies as a key summary document. The College does not make any formal use of social media.

3.2   The prospectus is clear and accurate and provides a useful range of high-level information about the College and its courses, including entry qualifications, course content and progression information. The website is clear, accurate and useful containing such helpful information as the prospectus, further course information, the student handbook, the quality assurance manual and term dates.

3.3   The student handbook provides helpful introductory information for students, with a separate, fuller guide available for international students and course-specific guides, where provided by the awarding body or organisations.

3.4   The team noted some specific issues relating to the accuracy of the policies and procedures published on the website (discussed in paragraph 1.3) and as part of its review of these policies, the College should address these inaccuracies.

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

3.5   There are well documented systems for assuring the accuracy and completeness of the information the College provides to applicants. Staff are clear that the heads of division are responsible for the development and checking of course-related information, that the

Registrar prepares general information and that all information is checked by the Principal before publication. The day-to-day minor updating of the website is effectively managed by the Head of Division (Harrow). Information needed by external bodies, such as that relating to international students, is effectively managed by the Registrar and is checked by the Principal. There is a policy for public information, but this relies too heavily on that used by another provider and could be better adapted to the College's context.

3.6   The College makes some use of international agents, but it does not allow agents to provide advice or published materials about the College, other than the prospectus and website. After initial contact by the agent the College always deals directly with potential applicants. International students confirmed that the information they had been given was clear, comprehensive and accurate and that they had dealt directly with the College. Overall, the College provides comprehensive information to its staff and students and has robust systems in place to ensure its accuracy.

> 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]

RTC Education Ltd 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:						
• the way in which the College takes explicit account of the Academic Infrastructure in the context of the current range and level of its provision (paragraph 2.5)	The Academic Infrastructure is being replaced by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) Review and enhance the current policies to be in line with the Quality Code prior to the academic year 2012-13 and ongoing thereafter Take into account the relevant quality code for the higher education provision This is an ongoing process	31/08/2012	Heads of division and Registrar	Complete and updated policy document We expect annual review to provide us an overview of the academic year in which we will address the issues However, depending on the intensity of any matters, we may address immediately	Principal and Academic Council	Annual review, annual self assessment report, direct feedback on policies from employees and student feedback

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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 body and organisations.

the tailored and readily accessible support for students, together with the swift and full response to issues raised by them (paragraph 2.13).	Tutor groups to be continued to next academic year New discussion board for students on the virtual learning environment	31/08/2012	Heads of division	Improved engagement with students, positive evaluations from students and regular communications between students and staff	Principal, and Academic Council	Annual review annual self assessment report, direct feedback from employees and student feedback We will measure the positive evaluation received from student through our student survey We expect to use the statistics, drawn from our student survey held at different times during the academic year, to compare the student experience on various aspects The same methodology is followed to understand, effective and regular communication

						via direct and via the virtual learning environment Our tutor group system is part of our direct communication with the students We will look to enhance our response to student issues through the feedback and input given from our existing students This is an ongoing process
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:						
• establish course committees and involve Academic Council in consideration of written annual course reviews (paragraph 1.1)	Course committee formed by programme leader, teachers and student representatives with representation of academic council	28/09/2012	Heads of division	Awareness among staff and students and improved staff and student engagement Awareness is generated	Principal Academic Council	Annual review annual self assessment report, annual course review, direct feedback from employees and student

	There are three course committees:LCM, OTHM and HND A representative of the Academic Council join the course committee to represent the Academic Council and report back to the Academic Council			through student/staff hand books and regular communication which may take informal meetings as well as formal review meetings		feedback The course committees and the academic council is a part of the annual course review writing process This process takes place once the issues are discussed with different stakeholders (staff, students, and so on) and corrective measures are taken where needed This is an ongoing process in seek of continuous improvement
• revise the membership of its Academic Council to include representation from students and academic staff (paragraph 1.2)	Devise policy on Academic Council Membership Revise membership to include the members outside the higher education	31/08/2012	Principal and heads of division	Terms of reference	Principal	Review membership effectiveness at the annual review We expect the Academic Council to be an entity

	provision, representatives of teaching staff and student representatives					which monitors, evaluates and advises the higher education provision Their involvement (this may take the form of attendance, raise of issues and recommendations with the higher education provision over the year will provide us an insight in to whether it is working which we will address at the annual review
• review its higher education policies to ensure that they are customised to the College's needs and the range and level of its provision (paragraph 1.3)	Review, enhance and customise the current policies to be in line with the Quality Code prior to the academic year 2012-13	31/08/2013	Heads of division and Registrar	Complete policy document	Principal and Academic Council	Annual review, annual self assessment report, direct feedback from employees and student feedback
• ensure that issues relating to the management and enhancement of learning opportunities are	Student feedback survey at the end of academic year Student feedback survey in the middle	29/06/2012 28/12/2012	Heads of division and Registrar	Application of surveys systematically Direct feedback from students	Principal and Academic Council	Annual review annual self assessment report, end of year student feedback and end of year

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identified and addressed more systematically (paragraph 2.1)	of the term					staff feedback
	Student feedback survey at the end of academic year	14/06/2013				Our Annual Review is formed by the analysis of the surveys, student feedback, complaints and so on
	Tutor meetings					
	Peer review at the beginning and middle of the academic year					Apart from addressing issues the entire aim of student/staff survey is to analyse the statistics we have collected and draw conclusions of possible actions
	End of year staff feedback survey	05/07/2012 05/07/2013				
	The virtual learning environment student discussion board, available from academic year 2012-13	31/08/2012				
	Formal documentation of actions taken on issues risen from the feedback	Ongoing				The success of the conclusions drawn is again measured at the next set of surveys
• develop a formal policy for course closure (paragraph 2.4)	Devise policy for course closure	31/08/2012	Heads of divisions and registrar	Complete policy document	Principal and the Academic Council	Annual review annual self assessment report; direct feedback from employees and student feedback

						Our success indicator would be that, in an event where a course closure takes place, our students will have the minimum impact and that their transition to another option is carefully administered We would expect if no complains are made, our policy is embedded.
• establish a formal system for student representation (paragraph 2.11).	Policy for student representation – Students representation election week – Each programme will at least have two student representatives, (number of student representatives	31/08/2012 Week commencing 01/10/2012	Heads of divisions and registrar	Complete policy document Formal student representation at key meetings	Principal and Academic Council	Annual review annual self assessment report, direct feedback from employees and student feedback

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
for each programme is to be decided following the number of student recruitment)						
The team considers that it is **desirable** for the provider to:						
• clarify and formalise the relationship between the External Advisory Committee and the Academic Council (paragraph 1.4)	Reappoint the External Advisory Committee Reappoint the Academic Council Formal documentation on the membership of External Advisory Committee	31/08/2012	Registrar	A fully functional External Advisory Committee, Academic Council whom we expect to provide us with advice, recommendations and work with the higher education team	Principal	Annual Review annual
• check that all internal verification forms for assessed work are signed by the internal verifier (paragraph 1.8).	All internal verfication forms are signed from next internal verifier meeting	04/07/2012	Heads of division (Harrow) and internal verifiers	Complete signed internal verification forms	Principal and Academic Council	Course review, external examiner report from the awarding body

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 (Fhigher educationQ) 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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