



# **ICON College of Technology and Management**

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

June 2012

## Key findings about ICON College of Technology and Management

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in June 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 Edexcel and Management Development Partnership, an Affiliated Institution of the University of the West of England, Bristol.

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 the 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**:

- collaboration with the awarding bodies facilitates effective programme monitoring and development (paragraph 1.3)
- meticulous tracking of assessment records (paragraph 1.10)
- comprehensive and effective academic and pastoral support and enrichment activities (paragraph 2.10)
- rigorous and supportive responses to student absence (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 would be **desirable** for the provider to:

- formalise the use of external reference points in new programme proposals (paragraph 1.7)
- enhance the Teaching and Learning Strategy to include reference to the practice of good teaching and learning (paragraph 2.8)
- improve formal methods of obtaining students' views on support mechanisms (paragraph 2.12)
- further develop the staff induction programme (paragraph 2.15).

## About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)<sup>1</sup> (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at ICON College of Technology and Management (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 and Management Development Partnership, an Affiliated Institution of the University of the West of England, Bristol. The review was carried out by Mr Gary Hargreaves, Mr David Jones, Mrs Rebecca Morrison (reviewers), and Dr Heather Barrett-Mold (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).<sup>2</sup> Evidence in support of the review included the self-evaluation, samples of student work, annual monitoring reports, external examiners' reports, further documentation supplied by the provider and meetings with staff and students.

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

- the Academic Infrastructure
- guidance from Edexcel
- guidance from Management Development Partnership/University of the West of England, Bristol.

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

The College is an independent, private institution whose proprietor is ICON College of Technology and Management Ltd. It is situated in Whitechapel, East London, and took its first intake of students at the start of the academic year in 2003. The overwhelming majority of its students come from overseas, mainly from the South Asian continent. Since then, the College has grown rapidly, so that by May 2009 it had 365 students enrolled and over 1,000 students in 2010. Due to changes in immigration rules, the College currently has 472 students. It occupies a part of a building along one side of Adler Street, on the edge of the City of London E1, and in the neighbourhood of a large South Asian community. The building is a converted industrial site of which the College premises have been adapted for educational purposes.

The College mission includes the aim to provide education of excellent quality at an economic price. The College was awarded continuing accreditation, following inspections by the British Accreditation Council most recently in 2012. The 2012 inspection imposed no requirements on the College, but made recommendations which have been made the subject of action by the Senior Management Team.

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

### Edexcel

- BTEC HND in Computing and Systems Development
- BTEC HND in Electrical and Electronic Engineering
- BTEC HND in Business

<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4).

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx).

- BTEC HND in Business (Law)
- BTEC HND in Business (Accounting)
- BTEC HND in Travel and Tourism Management
- BTEC Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership

Top-up programmes in conjunction with the **Management Development Partnership**, an Affiliated Institution of the University of the West of England, Bristol

- BSc (Hons) Business Management
- BSc (Hons) Tourism and Hospitality Management

## The provider's stated responsibilities

The College's responsibilities in relation to its awarding bodies are outlined in the self-evaluation and the responsibilities checklist. For all awards, the College is responsible for learning and teaching, student support and learning resources. For Edexcel courses, the College is responsible for setting and marking assessments in accordance with the awarding body's approval. There is a shared responsibility for public information. The College is responsible for recruitment of students on Edexcel programmes and shares this responsibility with the awarding body for the top-up degree programmes. The awarding bodies provide the curriculum and some resources.

## Recent developments

The most recent development is that in 2010 the College had over 1,000 students, but currently, due to changes in immigration rules, this has reduced to 472. The College has adopted a strategy document which includes the consideration of developing further level 6 top-up degree programmes for provision at its existing site and the possibility of establishing overseas centres in Bangladesh and India.

The College has agreed with leading national and international companies to become an academy in respect of providing short courses for information technology training for UK and European Economic Area students. The College is also planning to run short courses in accounting using Sage accounting software.

## Students' contribution to the review

Students have been kept informed through the College virtual learning environment of the review process. Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. At the invitation of programme managers, students volunteered to draft a student submission. They were assisted in this by the provision of a draft questionnaire, for amendment freely by the students and circulation to the whole student body. This was the basis for the student submission and was supported by a member of the administration, who subsequently has taken on the role of Student Liaison Officer. The written submission was forwarded with the self-evaluation document and portfolio. The team found the student submission helpful and explored its content in meetings with students to gain a clear picture of the student learning experience.

## Detailed findings about ICON College of Technology and Management

### 1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The College has clearly delineated areas of responsibilities as defined by its awarding bodies, in agreement with the Management Development Partnership and through the Centre Approval Declaration with Edexcel. These are clearly understood by staff and students. The Quality Assurance Board is responsible for academic standards and the Managing Director is directly responsible for administrative and support areas. The Senior Management Team has an oversight of these responsibilities and members of this team are also members of the Academic Board. The Head of Faculty and heads of department have responsibility for chairing assessment boards meetings and they are also members of selection boards in appointing new teaching staff relevant to their areas of responsibility. Programme managers have responsibility for monitoring teaching staff, including assessment, teaching schedule of work and teaching materials on a regular basis. Documentation from committees and discussions with staff to formalise these indicates work in progress.

1.2 The Senior Management Team and Academic Board have effective oversight of the College's higher education provision, providing a regular, robust and detailed record of its monitoring, with clear lines of responsibility, accountability and clear timescales for actions. The Senior Management Team minutes go to the Academic Board, which also reviews the effectiveness of that group annually. Proposals for new courses are reviewed by the Senior Management Team prior to their submission for approval to the Quality Assurance Board.

1.3 The Principal is the Quality Nominee for Edexcel programmes and as such has a wider cross-college quality role and encourages and promotes good practice in the College. Meetings with the awarding bodies confirm the reciprocal and valued formal and informal relationship and the College benefits from prompt, responsive monitoring and reporting. The reciprocal working relationship between the awarding bodies and the College facilitates effective programme monitoring and development.

1.4 The College policy on quality assurance outlines the responsibilities and reporting structures, including monitoring review and enhancement of its academic provision and supporting quality assurance procedures. The key structures that underpin quality assurance are: the college-wide Quality Framework, committee structures, management responsibilities, devolved responsibilities of quality assurance, student participation, and Central Support Services (student services).

1.5 The committee structure and reporting methods are effective and provide a high degree of detail. Committees play a significant and effective role maintaining oversight of the College's higher education provision. The College has a clear structure for its eight committees and boards with terms of reference, membership details, reporting processes and outline of their responsibilities. The Academic Standard Advisory Board is an advisory body that is largely made up of external members, enhanced by the inclusion of independent retired academics. Programme assessment boards are responsible for the operational quality assurance and academic standards, and compliance with external agencies. The subcommittees deal with complaints, discipline and misconduct.

1.6 The Academic Board has oversight of standards. It monitors the reports of committees and receives reports such as Student Attendance, Health and Safety, Staff and Student Handbook and Monitoring of Public Information. Recent recommendations have been carried forward to conduct appraisal for all staff by their line managers, which includes allocation of resources to support its implementation and appropriate training. It was agreed that programme managers should report to the College Principal to make the academic administration more effective.

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

1.7 The College staff and students are made fully aware of external reference points. For example, links to QAA and awarding bodies are on the College virtual learning environment. Use of the Academic Infrastructure is evident in the centre-designed higher national programme specifications, such as through the recognition of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (the Code of practice)*, *Section 6: Assessment of students* and subject benchmark statements. Seminars on Academic Infrastructure have also formed part of the staff induction process. However, the internal validation processes are fairly informal and use of the Academic Infrastructure variable; it is desirable to strengthen the use of external reference points at this stage in programme development.

1.8 Edexcel external examiners' reports are unanimous in confirming that academic standards are in compliance with the awarding body and external requirements. In addition, the College uses Edexcel specialist papers, which alert them to policy and also the *Code of practice* and the regulatory requirements of Edexcel.

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

1.9 The College has rigorous monitoring processes in place for its higher education provision. The Academic Board has a broad remit and is active in responding to issues raised, for example, through student feedback reports, peer observation and external reports. The Academic Board also responds to departmental reports, and actions policy changes and developments. The Quality Assurance Board meets regularly and advises on quality aligned to external organisations, including the Quality Assurance Agency and the awarding bodies. The Quality Assurance Board has oversight of the detail of College quality systems and peer observation.

1.10 Programme assessment boards manage academic matters at programme level, including plagiarism, review of external examiners' reports, internal verification and moderation, approval of student grades, and reports on individual modules. All modules are evaluated once tutors have completed them. The documentation for internal and external scrutiny of assessed work is exemplary. The meticulous tracking of assessment records demonstrates rigorous and consistent monitoring and audit, and is good practice.

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 bodies.

## 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 Principal takes responsibility for the management of the quality of the learning opportunities. The Principal delegates operational responsibilities to the programme managers to maintain and enhance the quality of teaching and learning for the Edexcel programmes. The programme managers deliver a report to the Academic Board on issues raised by faculty and/or students for developmental discussions. With regard to the top-up degree programmes, the responsibility for quality assurance lies with the awarding body.

2.2 The College has informal and formal methods of reporting the management of the quality of teaching and learning. The informal methods include verbal conversations between senior members and teaching staff, and email conversations. The formal process of reporting follows a system that gathers information from a variety of sources. The Annual Report is tabled at the Academic Board and action point responsibilities are clearly defined. The College feeds back to the students through the Staff and Student Liaison Committees. Students and staff have opportunities to provide feedback through surveys and committee meetings.

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

2.3 The College's use of external reference points is described in paragraph 1.7.

2.4 Teaching staff design the summative assessments for the units they deliver. They then meet with the appropriate programme manager and review the semester plans, including content, assessments and resources. The assessment designs are verified by the programme manager, ensuring that they are fit for purpose and mapped against the learning outcomes and assessment criteria.

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

2.5 The College maintains oversight of teaching and learning by drawing together data from a variety of resources. Course teams provide course evaluations, using information from the Staff and Student Liaison Committees. Programme managers compile a report for the Principal, which is tabled at the Academic Board. Action points from the reports are monitored by the programme managers and progress made is fed back to the students via the Staff and Student Liaison Committees.

2.6 Peer observation takes place to support teaching staff in their personal development. The Principal and programme managers undertake teaching observations as a performance monitoring process. Peer observation has been part of the informal appraisal system that has been operating and will remain in the new appraisal system which is planned for the next academic year. The programme managers are responsible for monitoring the developments and ensuring the Teaching and Learning Strategy is met.

2.7 Students reported satisfaction with the teaching methods and staff. They comment on the application of the theoretical knowledge to the practical classes and value the opportunity to apply the theory to current topics. They welcome excursions to business events. The College has a number of methods for the students to provide feedback on the service they receive. There is student representation on the Academic Board and the Staff

and Student Liaison Committees. Students consider that they have sufficient opportunities to provide feedback. They complete a feedback questionnaire in the middle of each semester, which the programme managers report back to the Principal, who provides an update of any issues at the Academic Board.

2.8 The Teaching and Learning Strategy provides broad aims for the development of the quality of learning and outlines the College's objectives in delivering programmes to create independent, critical and lifelong learners. The Teaching and Learning Strategy highlights the College plans to enhance the delivery of the courses by varied teaching styles and application of media resources, but there is little attention given to the development of good classroom practice and the impact of that on outcomes for students. It is desirable that the College enhances the Teaching and Learning Strategy in order to further develop good classroom practice and outcomes for students.

2.9 The College advertises teaching posts in appropriate publications and follows a procedure of selection that includes senior managers in interviewing and final decisions. In the case of the top-up degree programmes, the appointment of teaching staff is ratified by the University of the West of England and the Management Development Partnership.

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

2.10 A Student Liaison Officer has been appointed to ensure that issues raised at the Staff and Student Liaison Committees are reviewed and dealt with at appropriate committees. This post has been deemed a success by both the faculty and the students. The role covers academic, pastoral and enrichment responsibilities. The Student Liaison Officer has arranged extra-curricular activities to support the students in their relocation to the UK to study. With the implementation of this role, the demands on the faculty for pastoral support have been reduced, thus providing them with more time to develop and prepare for their classes. The comprehensive and effective academic and pastoral support and enrichment activities are good practice.

2.11 Teaching staff are available after lectures as an additional opportunity to provide academic support. There is good pastoral care providing students with ample support. Students value the structured formative feedback sessions within classes, which aid their academic skills. The College has appointed a Head of Student Services whose role is to support the students with matters which may affect their academic performance. This appointment has been received in a positive manner by the student body, who indicated that it has been useful in their academic development.

2.12 Currently, informal feedback is used to evaluate support mechanisms. The Staff and Student Liaison Committees and the mid-semester student feedback questionnaire are formal mechanisms to evaluate student support provision. However, the questionnaire does not include an evaluation of the academic and pastoral support offered to students. It is desirable that the College improves formal methods of obtaining students' views on support mechanisms.

2.13 Student attendance monitoring is a significant innovative feature within the College in that it supports students to improve attendance and punctuality, identifying and looking at underlying issues that contribute to poor attendance and lateness. The Student Attendance Monitoring and Reporting Team regularly interviews students, providing mentoring and coaching. Students view this as a very positive aspect of College support. The rigorous and supportive response to student absence leading to increased attendance and retention is good practice.



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

2.14 The quality of teaching staff and their experience, observation processes and appraisal, assist in ensuring the quality and maintenance of academic standards. The College has a Staff Development Policy which incorporates the appraisal system as the focal point. Currently, the appraisal system has been a more informal process, using peer observation with staff development reliant on individuals taking ownership of their developmental needs. The College has reflected that, as the number of full-time staff increases, a more structured approach to staff development is required. A new appraisal system has been developed to ensure that all staff will be supported in their development, for example the updating of teaching practice expertise and scholarly activities.

2.15 The College delivers an induction to newly appointed academic staff that includes presentations and workshop activities. An external speaker is invited to support the induction process. The induction includes aspects of the teaching, learning and assessing required of the programmes to be delivered. As part of their induction, new tutors receive a mentor to support their teaching and assessing, and value the opportunity to observe the various boards and committees. Staff are given hard copies of policies and procedures to read at their induction, which includes information on academic support. However, the delivery does not include student support. It is desirable that the College consolidates the staff induction process to provide a coherent programme.

2.16 Good practice is identified and disseminated using formal and informal methods. Overall, the quality systems, processes and committee structure provide a working framework for discussing reporting and sharing good practice. The formal approach is at the Academic Board, where the programme managers report any issues that have arisen within their area. The informal approach takes place with senior members of staff working in close proximity on various assessment boards and through email discussion. As these systems mature, the College will be in a better position to measure the impact of the processes for sharing good practice. The responsibility for the dissemination of good practice is that of the programme leaders and the heads of department.

**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 College is well resourced. There are a variety of resources from journals to books, from hard copies to electronic copies. Top-up degree programme students have access to the University of the West of England's electronic library. The College has a full-time librarian to support the students' access to the learning materials. There is a Library Committee that has the responsibility to review access and stock, ensuring that the learning resources are accessible and appropriate for the student learning. The virtual learning environment has recently been introduced to act as a repository for lecture materials, assignment briefs, policies, procedures, and so on. Staff have access to the virtual learning environment to upload their material at the approval of the Principal or programme managers.

2.18 Students are of the opinion that the College has very good library provision and borrowing facilities. The student feedback form has a section on the quality of the learning resources and evaluating the availability of resources (electronic copies and hard copies). The students confirm that the library is useful and that staff support their searches for relevant journals or articles. Students appreciate the extra time allowed inside the engineering laboratories, enabling them to practise and develop the practical component of their course.

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 College provides a wide range of public information, including its prospectus, flyers, website, student handbook, programme specifications, Edexcel study guides and unit details. External programme specifications are the responsibility of the awarding bodies. The prospectus and website contain contact details for the College, brief course information and clear information on fees and the enrolment process. The College does not presently utilise social media, owing to perceived difficulties in effectively monitoring its content, although this policy may be reviewed in the future. The information provided is considered as relevant, current and useful to the students, both prior to enrolment and during their time at College.

3.2 Information is communicated through a range of accessible media; handbooks and programme details are provided in hard copy, and are also accessible via the virtual learning environment. The student handbook and virtual learning environment contain the information listed above in more detail, along with an embedded plagiarism detection facility. The College's policies and procedures on assignment submission, plagiarism, attendance, appeals, complaints and grievances are further embedded in a series of presentations to students from the Enforcement Officer. Students appreciate that College policies are strictly enforced, but clearly and openly communicated. The virtual learning environment contains links to relevant external agencies, such as UK Border Agency and QAA, as well as links to the awarding bodies. Important headline information, such as the UK Border Agency updates, are posted on the student noticeboards. Information for South Asian students is available through a regional office in Bangladesh and in exhibitions, some of which are organised by the British Council.

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

3.3 All of the College's publicity material is approved by the Principal, having been reviewed by the Head of Compliance to ensure that it is both accurate and complete. This monitoring activity is reported to the Academic Board at each meeting to ensure that there is a comprehensive awareness of all public information. The course handbooks are compiled by the Exams Office with the approval of programme managers and the Principal. However, programme specifications for the external programmes are based on the requirements of the awarding bodies, with additional information in respect of the College's responsibilities.

3.4 The virtual learning environment and hard copy of the student handbook are introduced to students at induction. The content of the virtual learning environment is tightly controlled by the Head of Faculty, who checks the advice and guidance content daily for accuracy, clarity and completeness. User statistics, together with discussions with the Student Liaison Officer and student tutor meetings, help to inform and fine-tune information provided to students.

3.5 The accuracy, currency and completeness of programme information are the initial responsibility of the programme teams who need to get the approval for material from their programme manager. Programme content is checked at least once every academic year, but often each semester. This also needs to be approved by the Head of Faculty. Programme managers, where necessary, obtain expert guidance to ensure that subject-specific content is accurate. When content is updated, students are informed by email.

3.6 The appointment of agents is approved at the Academic Board. In South Asia, recruitment is handled by the College's own regional office in Bangladesh. The agents' contracts are approved by the Head of Compliance and the Managing Director/Director of Admissions. The activities of the recruitment agents in South Asia are subject to strict guidelines; they are only permitted to use College publicity material. Details of contracts with agents are supplied to UK Border Agency.

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<sup>3</sup>

ICON College of Technology and Management action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight June 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The review team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>collaboration with the awarding bodies facilitates effective programme monitoring and development (paragraph 1.3)</li> </ul>	Monthly personal contact by the Principal with the awarding bodies, together with monthly updates by the Principal (monitored by the Head of Compliance) issued to programme managers of changes in the requirements and regulations of the awarding bodies	Commencing first week of September 2012 and monthly thereafter, and whenever information is received by Principal	Principal, Head of Compliance and programme managers	100 per cent positive feedback from external examiners' reports as to compliance with requirements and regulations	Assessment boards	Minutes of assessment boards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>meticulous tracking of assessment records</li> </ul>	Use current anti-plagiarism software based on	By end of September 2012 and	Head of Faculty	Positive feedback from external	Assessment boards	Minutes of Academic Board and assessment

<sup>3</sup> 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 bodies.

(paragraph 1.10)	<p>annual reports from Head of Faculty with his recommendations based on professional expertise</p> <p>Produce student assessment appeals statistics of successful appeals mapped against internal marking records</p>	<p>thereafter annually</p> <p>By end of September 2012 and thereafter annually</p>	Senior Examinations Officer	<p>examiners</p> <p>Diminution in number of successful appeals year on year by at least 10 per cent per year</p>	Assessment boards	<p>boards</p> <p>Minutes of Academic Board and assessment boards</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>comprehensive and effective academic and pastoral support and enrichment activities (paragraph 2.10)</li> </ul>	<p>Recording of formal contacts by students and staff to identify expectations on both sides</p> <p>Student/Management Liaison Officer to liaise with Head of Student Services on weekly basis to jointly develop enrichment activities</p>	End of September 2012 and at end of each semester thereafter	<p>Programme managers and teaching staff</p> <p>Student/Management Liaison Officer and Head of Student Services</p>	<p>Lowering of drop-out rates and raising of pass rates</p> <p>10 per cent year-on-year rise in recorded rate of student satisfaction with extra-curricular activities</p>	<p>Quality Assurance Board</p> <p>Senior Management Team</p>	<p>Minutes of Academic Board</p> <p>Minutes of Senior Management Team</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>rigorous and supportive responses to student absence</li> </ul>	Review of administrative staff responsibilities by Managing Director	By end of September 2012 and thereafter when	Director of Admissions (Head of Administration)	Efficiency of administration by identifying gaps and	Managing Director (Head of Administration)	Reports by Managing Director to Senior

(paragraph 2.13).	(Head of Administration) to identify individual responsibilities without overlapping roles and thereby to empower staff  Programme of communication skills training for all administrative staff	recommended by Administration Meeting  By end of September 2012 and thereafter when recommended by Administration Meeting	Head of Compliance (who has substantial training experience)	duplication  Efficiency of administration by identifying gaps and duplication		Management Team in minutes of Senior Management Team
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>formalise the use of external reference points in new programme proposals (paragraph 1.7)</li> </ul>	Senior Management Team to consider that all proposals for new courses should be submitted to the Senior Management Team on the basis of a pro forma identifying external reference points applicable to the proposed	From start of September 2012 and at least three months before the proposed commencement of any new course	Principal as chair of Senior Management Team	100 per cent adoption of pro forma and identifying of external reference points	Quality Assurance Board and Academic Board	Minutes of Academic Board of scrutiny of Principal's report to Academic Board

	new course					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>enhance the Teaching and Learning Strategy to include reference to the practice of good teaching and learning (paragraph 2.8)</li> </ul>	Review the Teaching and Learning Strategy for greater emphasis on classroom practice and outcomes for students	From start of September 2012	Policies and procedures subcommittee of the Academic Board	Better retention and pass rates	Quality Assurance Board	Reports through peer observation of teaching and students' comments through feedback questionnaires and minutes of assessment boards
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improve formal methods of obtaining students' views on support mechanisms (paragraph 2.12)</li> </ul>	Develop student feedback questionnaire to include an evaluation of the academic and pastoral support offered to students  Add regular item on agenda of Staff and Student Liaison Committees to evaluate academic and pastoral support	End of November 2012 and thereafter annually or more frequently when questionnaires are revised	Senior Management Team	Enhancement of academic and pastoral support as reported on basis of analysis of replies to student questionnaires	Quality Assurance Board	Minutes of Staff and Student Liaison Committees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>further develop the staff induction programme (paragraph 2.15).</li> </ul>	Put into practice for all staff teaching on all courses, familiarisation with student support services as part of	From end of September 2012 at all future staff induction events and by	Programme managers	Reports of students from revised questionnaires as analysed, showing staff	Senior Management Team	Minutes of staff induction reported to Academic Board

	a coherent staff induction programme and adding a question to student questionnaires asking if teachers are helpful in advising as to available student services	end September 2012 circulate to all staff details of student support services and adapt student questionnaires		helpful in informing students as to student services		
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## 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](http://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](http://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](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary). Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#)<sup>4</sup>

**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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<sup>4</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx](http://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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