



West London College

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

October 2012

Key findings about West London College

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in October 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 Bournemouth University, the British Computer Society, the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality, Heriot-Watt University, the Institute of Commercial Management, the University of the Arts London and the University of Greenwich.

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 and organisations.

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

Good practice

The team has identified the following **good practice**:

- peer observation of teaching in collaboration with staff from Heriot-Watt University (paragraph 2.11).

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:

- ensure the College has access to all external examiner reports to inform its annual monitoring processes (paragraph 1.9).

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

- develop and embed the Policies Folder (paragraph 1.5)
- increase staff awareness and use of the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 1.7)
- extend the use of plagiarism detection software to all programmes (paragraph 1.8)
- develop the staff development policy (paragraph 2.12)
- ensure that course manuals are regularly updated (paragraph 2.15)
- continue to develop the virtual learning environment (paragraph 2.16).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at West London College (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 Bournemouth University, the British Computer Society, the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality, Heriot-Watt University, the Institute of Commercial Management, University of the Arts London and the University of Greenwich. The review was carried out by Mrs Claire Blanchard, Professor Charles Chatterjee, Professor Roger Murphy (reviewers), and Dr Judith Foreman (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 a self-evaluation document and supporting evidence supplied by the provider, a student written submission, meetings with staff and students.

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

- awarding bodies and organisations: published syllabuses and programme specifications, assessment regulations and assessment criteria
- the Qualifications and Credit Framework: level indicators and descriptors
- British Accreditation Council requirements
- 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](#).

West London College (the College) forms part of the British Study Centres (BSC) group of colleges, a non-profit making company limited by guarantee. It has its roots in correspondence schooling in the 1930s and took its current form in 1992. Since 1997, the College has occupied a six-floor building in Central London. In 2004 and 2009, the College acquired two additional premises for teaching and administration. The majority of students are international. However, the proportion of UK and EU students has risen over recent years.

The College's academic structure comprises four academic departments: Business Studies, Computer Science, Fashion, and Hotel and Tourism Management. Currently, there are 1,056 full-time students on higher education programmes.

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

Bournemouth University

- Level 6 BA (Hons) International Hospitality and Tourism Management (38)

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

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

British Computer Society (BCS)

- Level 5 Diploma in Information Technology (81)

Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality (CTH)

- Level 5 Advanced Diploma in Hotel Management (101)
- Level 5 Advanced Diploma in Tourism Management (39)

Heriot-Watt University

- Level 6 BA Accountancy (5)
- Level 6 BA Accountancy and Finance (2)
- Level 6 Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) (282)
- Level 6 BA Business and Finance (76)
- Level 6 BA Fashion (20)
- Level 6 BA Management and Psychology (0)
- Level 7 Master of Business Administration (156)
- Level 7 MSc Marketing (30)
- Level 7 MSc Financial Management (47)

Institute of Commercial Management (ICM)

- Level 4 Pre-BBA: Diploma in Business Administration (68)
- Level 4 Pre-MBA: Diploma in Business Administration (11)

University of the Arts London (UAL)

- Level 3/4 Foundation Diploma in Fashion Design (35)

University of Greenwich

- Level 6 BSc (Hons) Computing (65)

The provider's stated responsibilities

The College has the following responsibilities devolved from each of its awarding bodies and organisations: student recruitment, staff development to support teaching and assessment, teaching and learning, library and learning resources, gathering and responding to student feedback, and the accuracy of public information. The admission of students on programmes awarded by Bournemouth University is a shared responsibility. There is shared responsibility with the awarding bodies and organisations for providing programme and module information and monitoring teaching and learning quality. The awarding bodies and organisations are responsible for programme content and, in some cases, setting and marking student assessments. On programmes awarded by Bournemouth University, the second year of the programme awarded by the CTH, the BA Fashion programme awarded by Heriot-Watt University, the awards of UAL, the University of Greenwich and the ICM, the College sets and marks assessments.

Recent developments

The College became an Associate Campus of Heriot-Watt University in 2012 and is in the process of reviewing its collaborative agreements with other awarding bodies and organisations in the light of this change.

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 written submission was presented and drew on feedback from students. The writing of the submission was coordinated by a student with the support of the College. It was well devised and presented, addressed all the significant aspects of students' experience and helped the reviewers to develop their agendas for the visit. The team also held a valuable meeting with students during the visit.

Detailed findings about West London College

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The management arrangements for academic standards are effective. The Principal has responsibility for the strategic management of the College's higher education programmes and for ensuring that the policies and procedures of the awarding bodies and organisations are implemented. The Principal is supported in this role by the Deputy Principal and the Academic Director. The College delivers higher education programmes through a departmental structure. Four heads of department, supported by deputies, coordinate a team of course leaders and tutors in the delivery of programmes.

1.2 Higher education matters are reported by the Principal to the College Board of Governors. The College has recently implemented a new committee structure to formalise and strengthen higher education oversight. The new structure includes the Teaching and Learning Committee, which replaces the earlier heads of department meeting, and an Academic Board. The Academic Board and the Teaching and Learning Committee are still at an early stage of maturity, but provide a basis for future development of more focused deliberation and reporting on academic issues across the College.

1.3 The College undertakes annual programme monitoring. The procedures for monitoring on university programmes are well established and involve both the College and universities in the monitoring process and producing monitoring reports. In addition, the College has recently introduced progression and retention monitoring reports for all programmes. These will be considered through the departmental meeting process and actions addressed, as appropriate, through the new committee and reporting structure.

1.4 The College has strong partnerships with its awarding bodies and organisations, which effectively contribute to the management and delivery of standards. Guidelines from these institutions clearly identify the location of mutual responsibilities for the development and enhancement of standards. Appointed link tutors liaise with the College at programme level and ensure that staff and students are aware of awarding body and organisation regulations, policies and quality assurance procedures, and that processes to meet the requirements of partnership agreements are implemented.

1.5 There is a variety of mechanisms for communicating with staff to ensure broad understanding of processes for managing academic standards, as these apply across the provision of the seven awarding bodies and organisations. All lecturers are given a set of guidance notes which provide useful information on College policies and procedures and what is expected of teaching staff. Lecturers also receive the Policies Folder, which the College has been developing to bring coherence and clarity to quality assurance procedures. At the time of the review, the Policies Folder had only just been completed and the College was in discussion with Heriot-Watt University to ensure that the emerging policies and procedures meet the University's requirements in the context of new collaborative arrangements. The development of a comprehensive and coherent set of policies has the potential to make a positive contribution to the College's approach to the management of academic standards. It is desirable that the College continues to develop and embed the Policies Folder as part of its management practices.

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

1.6 The College is making effective use of external reference points. The programme specifications and syllabus outlines provided by the awarding bodies and organisations demonstrate that the award levels are appropriately mapped to the relevant external reference points, principally the Qualifications and Credit Framework, the Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework and the *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. The College is careful to ensure that staff understand and operate to the approved curricula and assessment strategies.

1.7 The College has a range of policies and procedures to support good practice in the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities in such areas as admissions, student complaints and appeals, but has largely been dependent on its awarding bodies and organisations for information about and use of the Academic Infrastructure. Internal awareness of the Academic Infrastructure is developing in dialogue with university representatives and preparation for Review for Educational Oversight. The new Policies Folder contains information for staff on the Academic Infrastructure and the College's Admissions Policy has been mapped to the principles and precepts of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 10: Admissions to higher education*. In order to further secure academic standards and enhance the quality of learning opportunities across the provision, it is desirable that the College continues to increase staff awareness and use of the Academic Infrastructure.

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

1.8 The College contributes to the setting and marking of assessments on programmes awarded by Bournemouth University, CTH, Heriot-Watt University, UAL, the University of Greenwich and the ICM. There are clear procedures for internal verification. The team's scrutiny of a sample of students' assessed work confirmed that assessments are clearly designed and enable students to achieve the programme learning outcomes. The marking processes are transparent and secure. In their meeting with the team, students showed good awareness of plagiarism. Commercial plagiarism detection software is used on some programmes to raise students' awareness and assist staff in managing the assessment process. It is desirable for the College to consider extending the use of plagiarism detection software to promote consistency in the management of assessment.

1.9 On some programmes which are externally assessed by awarding bodies and organisations, the College receives useful reports on student achievement, which are effectively used by the College to monitor and revise courses. Additionally, on the Bournemouth University programme, external examiners, appointed by the University provide reports directly to the College. However, not all awarding bodies provide timely external examiner reports to the College. It is advisable for the College to ensure that it has access to all external examiner reports to inform its annual monitoring processes.

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 and organisations.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 The arrangements for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities are effective. The College has a range of delegated responsibilities in relation to the quality of learning opportunities, some of which are shared with the awarding bodies and organisations. These include student recruitment, guidance, admission, and induction; teaching and the preparation of students for assessment; providing formative and summative feedback on student assessment on some programmes; the provision of library and learning resources; staff development to support teaching and assessment; and collecting and acting upon student feedback and opinion. The internal management arrangements are overseen by the Principal and are broadly as described for academic standards in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.5. Evidence from the student written submission, as well as discussions with students, confirm that, generally, students are happy with the learning environment, teaching and resources.

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

2.2 The use of external reference points is broadly as described for academic standards in paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7. Approval and reapproval events, as well as dialogue with awarding body and organisation representatives, ensure that the College complies with external requirements in the delivery and development of programmes.

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

2.3 The College has a published teaching and learning strategy with the aim of supporting and challenging a diverse student body. There is a range of mechanisms that report on the quality of teaching and learning, drawing on information arising from the observation of teaching, external examiner and awarding body and organisation feedback, student feedback and the review of student retention, progression and achievement.

2.4 There are clear expectations with regard to tutor responsibilities, which are set out in the Guidance Notes for Lecturers and in the Policies Folder. Each course has a designated team leader with responsibility for the compilation of a course folder. The course folder comprises key documents and information, including minutes of staff team meetings, student feedback and achievement data. Team leaders are required to provide an end-of-year evaluative course report, which is submitted annually with the folder to departmental managers.

2.5 The College acknowledges that its approach to teaching observation has in the past been reactive and is developing a more systematic and proactive approach. All new members of staff are observed shortly after joining the College, while established members of staff are observed on an annual basis. Areas for development are recorded by the observer on a feedback form and discussed with the member of staff being observed. As part of its teaching and learning strategy, the College is keen to foster students' independent learning skills and has clear policies and expectations that teaching staff will build in to their schemes of work opportunities for formative assessment.

2.6 The College is committed to the collection and use of student feedback to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and promote continuous improvement. Student views of

teaching and learning are sought through a range of mechanisms, including programme surveys, student representation at programme meetings with staff, and more informal means of feedback, such as suggestion boxes and contact with staff in the classroom. Student representatives are awarded a College Certificate of Appreciation. The College has also created the role of Student Ambassador, chosen from the student body, as a point of contact for all students. Students confirmed that, generally, the College is responsive to their feedback on teaching and learning, and provided examples of changes that had been made. This includes, for example, extending library opening hours and providing more extensive wireless access.

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

2.7 A range of mechanisms and procedures are in place to ensure that students receive comprehensive support. Student guidance arrangements, including pre-entry guidance and induction, are effective. As part of the induction arrangements, students receive both a student and a course handbook providing details of their programme, rules and regulations that apply to their studies and general information about being in London. The College uses a computerised attendance monitoring system and a disciplinary code, managed by department administrators, to highlight students at risk of disengaging from their course. The Student Services team also plays an important role in monitoring students and gives expert advice to students about a range of matters.

2.8 The College has recently introduced additional support for students while studying. For example, the Tuition Support Centre has been developed to offer additional tuition to individual students by appointment. Take-up of this service is not yet extensive and is unevenly spread during the year. The College is looking at ways of adjusting the service to better meet demand and promoting the benefits of the Centre to students. Students who met the team were positive about the easy access to tutors and the time spent by tutors explaining the requirements of assessment tasks and providing examination advice.

2.9 Careers information, advice and guidance is provided through the Job Shop and is appreciated by students. The College is a subscriber to the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) and support staff benefit from access to the information and guidance shared through the Council's network of members.

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

2.10 The management and delivery of staff development involves a broadly effective combination of College, awarding partner and staff-directed activities. Lecturing staff are well qualified and, in some cases, combine teaching with ongoing or recent professional practice experience. All staff receive induction to the College and their role within it. The College encourages staff to engage in external events. In-house training is provided as necessary. This includes, for example, offering a City & Guilds-accredited teacher training programme for staff without teaching qualifications, and training in the use of the virtual learning environment. The College acknowledges that, with a large number of part-time staff, there are challenges in maintaining up-to-date staff development records and is looking at ways of improving its recording systems.

2.11 Staff participate in development events organised by the awarding bodies and organisations, which make an effective contribution to staff development. For example, some staff involved in the delivery of programmes awarded by Heriot-Watt University engage in peer teaching observation with colleagues at the University in Edinburgh and London. Staff confirmed that peer observation is a useful opportunity for developing teaching.

The opportunity offered through peer observation to develop and share teaching and learning skills is good practice.

2.12 The College is improving its systems to identify the development needs of academic staff through undertaking more systematic teaching observation and implementing the Staff Development and Appraisal Policy. The policy and performance management procedures are at an early stage of development and the College acknowledges the challenges presented by managing this process with large numbers of part-time members of staff. The published Staff Development and Appraisal Policy contains a detailed consideration of appraisal. However, consideration of staff development is less well articulated. In order to ensure that staff knowledge and skills are maintained, it is desirable that the College further develops its staff development policy.

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 suitability and accessibility of learning resources are scrutinised during the approval process for awards, and reviewed subsequently through awarding bodies and organisations' periodic review processes and the College's annual monitoring processes.

2.14 All core texts to support programmes are available as reference copies in the College's library. Students on the programmes whose awarding partners are universities also have the opportunity of using electronic learning resources available through the universities' libraries. The College is responsive to the views of students in its management of learning resources. For example, it has extended library opening hours in response to student concerns about obtaining access to books. Staff are expected to play an active role in ensuring their programmes have sufficient resources through the provision of notes and handouts to students, updating reading lists, recommending books for the library, and participating in team meetings to review resources.

2.15 Students on the business programmes awarded by Heriot-Watt University receive course manuals produced by the University, which contain textual resources to support the syllabus. In their meeting with students, the team was told that some of the material contained in the manuals is outdated and the College acknowledges that this can cause confusion for both staff and students. It is desirable that the College ensures that course manuals are regularly updated.

2.16 The College is developing its virtual learning environment, known as my-WLC, to support teaching and learning and to communicate information to students. The team's review of the virtual learning environment and discussions with students indicate that practice is variable in relation to the development of individual programme virtual learning environments. Students report positively on the availability of programme materials through the virtual learning environment, but not all students have received an induction to its use. My-WLC has the potential to make a positive contribution to the quality of learning opportunities and there is scope to extend its use beyond that of a repository for programme materials. It is desirable that the College continues to develop the virtual learning environment to support students in all programme areas.

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 comprehensive range of clear and accurate information about its programmes for potential and existing students. Under the terms of its agreements with the awarding bodies and organisations, the College has considerable responsibility for publishing information relating to its higher education provision.

3.2 The College publishes a higher education prospectus which provides information on individual programmes, including entry requirements, programme content and assessment. The College website also provides information about programmes, as well as guidance on visas, information about living in London, accommodation and living costs, facilities and support services for students. The higher education prospectus is available for download from the website. The website is easy to navigate and contains clear identification of the College's partnership arrangements with the awarding bodies and organisations. Online social networking sites are managed by the College staff to facilitate communication between current and prospective students and the College. Care is taken to monitor the social network page.

3.3 Prior to arrival, students receive an arrival pack with information about visas, accommodation, travelling to the College and registration arrangements. Once registered, students receive further detailed information about academic, financial and welfare issues, as well as College facilities and services in the Student Handbook and supplementary fact sheets.

3.4 All awards have a programme handbook containing information about content and learning objectives derived either from the programme specifications and syllabus outlines of the awarding bodies and organisations, or provided directly by these institutions. Details of programme contents and learning outcomes are also provided through my-WLC. A range of useful information is published for staff, including the Guidance Notes for Lecturers, a set of policies and procedures, and the Employee Handbook.

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

3.5 There are clear processes in place, which contribute to assuring the accuracy and completeness of public information. The College has a Publishing Policy clearly stating the College's recognition of its responsibilities to provide accurate and accessible information. An agreed schedule, with allocation of responsibilities and deadlines, provides a framework for the review and publication of key documents.

3.6 The production of publicity and marketing information is coordinated centrally and managed by the Principal. The Prospectus is planned in advance and checked by the awarding bodies and organisations to ensure that course information is accurate. Updating and revision of the Student Handbook, programme handbooks and fact sheets is undertaken regularly and overseen by student services staff. Students consider the Prospectus and website to be accurate, informative and easy to understand.

3.7 The revision and updating of programme virtual learning environments is the responsibility of team leaders. The College has recently appointed three my-WLC monitors to further oversee standards and drive improvements to the content of the virtual learning environments.

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

| West London College action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight October 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"> peer observation of teaching in collaboration with staff from Heriot-Watt University (paragraph 2.11). | <p>To continue, build up and embed the peer observation process and roll it out across all Heriot-Watt University provision</p> <p>Staff from both providers to continue with peer observations at either Heriot-Watt University or West London College</p> <p>Annually evaluate the effectiveness of the peer observation process and modify teaching and learning policies accordingly</p> | July 2013 | Heads of department | <p>Peer observation as an agenda item in department meetings; improvements in teaching and learning and sharing of good practice</p> <p>All staff delivering Heriot-Watt programmes undergo a peer observation at least once per academic year</p> | Teaching and Learning Committee | <p>Academic Council meeting minutes, Teaching and Learning Committee meeting minutes</p> <p>Peer observation records</p> |

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 bodies and organisations.

| 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"> ensure the College has access to all external examiner reports to inform its annual monitoring processes (paragraph 1.9). | To request awarding body partners to produce and share external examiner reports as a matter of routine | September 2013 | Academic Liaison Manager | <p>External examiner reports received from all awarding bodies and organisations to inform annual monitoring processes</p> <p>Agenda item in department meetings</p> <p>External examiner reports to be included in course folders (to inform course monitoring process)</p> | Teaching and Learning Committee | <p>Teaching and Learning Committee meeting minutes</p> <p>Course folders</p> <p>Department meeting minutes</p> |
| Desirable | Action to be taken | Target date | Action by | Success indicators | Reported to | Evaluation |
| The team considers that it is desirable for the provider to: | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop and embed the Policies Folder (paragraph 1.5) | To encourage reference to the Policies Folder, as well as to add and disseminate the folder with each | January 2013 | Deputy Principal | Regular updates and revisions; improved staff understanding of policies and procedures and | Teaching and Learning Committee | Teaching and Learning Committee meeting minutes |

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|---|--|--------------|--|---|---|--|
| | significant change | | | more systematic practice across the College | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase staff awareness and use of the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 1.7) | To map the UK Quality Code for Higher Education against College processes and encourage reference and use by providing staff development sessions in regular department meetings | January 2013 | Deputy Principal and heads of department | <p>Documents mapped and referenced to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education</p> <p>Mapping documents in minutes; improvements in professional practice; alignment with best practice</p> <p>Increased staff engagement with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education</p> | Department meetings and the Teaching and Learning Committee | Department meetings minutes; Teaching and Learning Committee meeting minutes; documents mapped to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> extend the use of plagiarism detection software to all programmes (paragraph 1.8) | To incorporate the plagiarism detection software within my-Wlc; train staff and students in 'what is plagiarism' and use of software | January 2013 | Programme managers/heads of departments | <p>Use of the plagiarism detection software extended to all programmes to identify and reduce instances of plagiarism</p> <p>All staff trained on</p> | Department meetings | Teaching and Learning Committee to monitor |

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|--|--|---------------|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| | | | | the use of plagiarism detection software | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop the staff development policy (paragraph 2.12) | <p>To incorporate scholarly activity within the Staff Development and Appraisal Policy</p> <p>To trial a Performance Management System (inclusive of staff development plans) based on Management By Objective (MBO) for the Admissions team initially</p> | April 2013 | Deputy Principal and line managers | <p>An effective staff development policy is in place</p> <p>Annual staff development plans for admissions staff</p> | Teaching and Learning Committee and Board of Governors | <p>Teaching and Learning Committee meeting minutes</p> <p>Board of Governors meeting minutes</p> <p>Results of trial</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that course manuals are regularly updated (paragraph 2.15) | To introduce a section in the end-of-course report to highlight issues and errors identified in course material and pass these onto Heriot-Watt University | December 2012 | Programme Manager/heads of department | Course materials regularly updated; positive evaluations by students of teaching materials | Department meetings and the Teaching and Learning Committee | Academic Council meetings minutes; Teaching and Learning Committee meeting minutes; department meeting minutes; staff and student evaluations |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to develop the virtual learning environment (paragraph 2.16). | To upgrade virtual learning environment software and for programme managers to drive | January 2013 | Programme managers | Virtual learning environment usage reports indicating increased usage | Department meetings and the Teaching and Learning Committee | Teaching and Learning Committee to routinely monitor at quarterly |

| | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|--|--|--|--|----------|
| | continued development | | | by students; more consistent use of the virtual learning environment by staff across the provision; positive evaluations of the virtual learning environment by students | | meetings |
|--|-----------------------|--|--|--|--|----------|

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.

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