



London School of Science & Technology

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

June 2013

Key findings about London School of Science & Technology

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in June 2013, 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 programmes it offers on behalf of Pearson.

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

The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Good practice

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

- the extended admissions process creates crucial dialogue between staff and students (paragraph 2.1).

Recommendations

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

- evaluate the effectiveness of the revised management and committee structures in supporting the management of academic standards (paragraph 1.3)
- complete and evaluate the annual programme monitoring process (paragraph 1.4)
- complete writing programme specifications, using the appropriate external reference points (paragraph 1.5)
- review the impact of the revised Learning and Teaching Strategy on attendance and attrition rates (paragraph 2.2)
- adopt a structured and formal approach to peer observation and evaluate its effectiveness (paragraph 2.5)
- complete the review of its academic tutorial provision (paragraph 2.6).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at London School of Science & Technology (the provider; the School), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. 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 Pearson and the University of West London. The review was carried out by Allan Davies, Brenda Eade, David Malachi (reviewers) and Christopher Mabika (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#)² and as part of the annual monitoring process following the initial review in March 2012. Evidence in support of the review included:

- policy and operational documents
- minutes of meetings
- the March 2012 review report and action plan
- meetings with management, staff and students
- reports of inspections by the British Accreditation Council
- external examiner reports from Pearson
- programme approval documents from the University of West London.

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

- subject benchmark statements
- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)
- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code).

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

The School was established in 2003. It is housed in a large modern office block in the centre of Alpertown. The School has 1,024 students, the majority of whom are home and European Union students. This reflects its new focus, which has brought about a new student profile. It is registered with the Student Loan Company, and with UCAS (the universities and colleges admissions service in the UK). The School offers diplomas at levels 4 and 5 in business and computing and level 7 in business, all awarded by Pearson. The School signed a collaborative agreement with the University of West London (UWL) in May 2012 for the delivery of the BA (Hons) Business Studies level 6 (top-up) degree programme. Validation of this programme took place in January 2013 and delivery will start in September 2013.

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

Pearson

- HNC in Business - level 4 (691)
- HND in Business - level 5 (162)
- HNC in Computing and Systems Development - level 4 (151)

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/educational-oversight

² www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

- HND in Computing and Systems Development - level 5 (19)
- Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership - level 7 (1)

The provider's stated responsibilities

The School is responsible for teaching and assessment as well as providing learning resources for the students studying on the Pearson programmes. It develops its own internal verification policies and procedures with guidance from Pearson, who also set and monitor academic standards.

In its contract with the University of West London (the University), the School will be responsible for marking and moderating student assessments. The University will provide teaching materials and assessment briefs, and will be responsible for moderating the assessments. The partners will share the responsibility for the delivery of the programme.

Recent developments

The School has secured a second campus in Luton, which it plans to open to students in September 2013. It is also considering acquiring other sites. In preparation for the multi-site operation, the School has reviewed its structure to centralise some management functions. In November 2012 the School appointed a Provost to act as the chief academic officer for all sites. The Provost is also currently Vice Principal responsible for quality and development. In the new structure, a Principal or Head of School will be responsible for the operation of each campus, reporting to the Provost.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. They made a written submission. The School supported the students to prepare the submission by allowing them time and access to resources. A group of students, some of whom had attended the preparatory meeting, attended a meeting with the reviewers. All actively took part in discussions during these meetings, which made a significant contribution to the review.

Detailed findings about London School of Science & Technology

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The School has strengthened its policies for managing academic standards in response to the previous REO in March 2012 and its increasing student population. The University of West London (the University) has confirmed its confidence in the management of academic standards through its review of the School. The School has introduced a new management structure. Two vice principals now oversee the curriculum, and quality and development respectively. Programme coordinators manage programmes, and are responsible for staff and students associated with their programme.

1.2 A new committee structure was introduced to enhance the management of academic standards. Minutes of the programme committee meetings indicate that issues raised at these committee meetings are referred through the structure, action is taken and progress monitored. The Student Experience Committee is regarded as central to the management of learning and articulates with the Academic Board and the Management Board. It receives the minutes from the Student Representative Committee that meets bimonthly. Actions from the Student Experience Committee have already been identified in relation to mitigating circumstances, assignments and the student survey results. However, these committees have each met only once and therefore their effectiveness has not yet been assessed.

1.3 The School has scheduled a review of the impact of the changes in structure, policies and procedures for August 2013. It is **desirable** for the School to formally evaluate the effectiveness of the revised management and committee structures in supporting the management of standards.

1.4 The School has devised a rigorous procedure for programme monitoring. The procedure takes into account feedback from external examiners and students, and issues raised in programme and staff meetings. Programme coordinators analyse and summarise external examiner reports and the necessary action taken in response to their comments. Programme monitoring reports will not be completed until the end of the teaching period in July 2013. It is **desirable** for the School to complete the annual programme monitoring process to evaluate how effectively it is managing academic standards in relation to the Quality Code.

How effectively does the School make use of external reference points to manage academic standards?

1.5 The School makes some use of external reference points. It uses the specifications provided by Pearson for defining the curriculum, but is currently in the process of writing programme specifications for each of the awards it offers. The School intends to use these to provide a further link to external reference points by using subject benchmark statements, the FHEQ level descriptors and *Chapter A2: The subject and qualification level* and *A3: The programme level* of the Quality Code. It is **desirable** for the School to complete writing programme specifications, using the appropriate external reference points.

1.6 Staff are aware of the Quality Code, although their use of it is variable. Staff development sessions, held each month, have effectively introduced staff to the Quality

Code. Staff are supported by the awarding organisation in respect of the Quality Code, through validation and monitoring processes. The School has also provided information workshops on the Quality Code. There is a commitment from the University to provide staff development linking the curriculum to external reference points. Staff are also aware of the guidance provided in the Pearson handbook and of the wider external reference points such as the FHEQ, practice guidance issued by professional bodies and strategies published by the relevant Sector Skills organisations. The admissions and assessment policies refer to relevant sections of the Quality Code (*B2: Admissions, B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning and B7: External examining*).

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

1.7 The School has robust procedures for assessment which are set out in the Assessment Regulations and Procedures. The rigour of these processes is confirmed by the external examiner for Pearson. Unit coordinators are responsible for writing the assessments in consultation with the teaching team. Programme coordinators take an overview of the student assessment load and confirm that the assessment complies with the requirements of the awarding organisation. The Vice Principal, Curriculum, internally verifies all assessment briefs and marked assessments. Both internal and external markers mark the assessments. The School provides training for external markers and issues detailed assessment criteria. The University of West London will be responsible for oversight of the assessment process for its top-up BA (Hons) Business Studies programme. The School reviews and evaluates the effectiveness of its management of academic standards in relation to moderation and examination through its programme committees, which receive the minutes of the examination boards.

The review team has **confidence** in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of its awarding organisation.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 The School effectively manages the admission of students and the teaching and assessment of the awards it offers. A revised admissions policy has been approved by the Executive Committee which provides for initial screening of applicants, testing for literacy and numeracy, and for the academic team to interview students to test their subject knowledge. Mature students are required to provide evidence of their prior experiential learning. The extended admissions process which creates a crucial dialogue between staff and students prior to admission is **good practice**.

2.2 The School uses the Learning and Teaching Improvement Strategy to drive improvement across aspects of its provision. Senior managers emphasised the importance of the strategy in outlining their day-to-day duties. Teaching staff demonstrated familiarity with the strategy through clear examples of how they use it in their teaching. However, senior management recognise that student attendance and student attrition rates need to improve. Attendance in some cohorts was less than 50 per cent. The School has introduced robust procedures for recording and monitoring attendance along with a range of strategies to encourage students to attend. It is **desirable** for the School to review the impact of the revised Learning and Teaching Improvement Strategy on attendance and attrition rates.

How effectively does the School make use of external reference points to manage and enhance learning opportunities?

2.3 The School considers and applies the relevant parts and chapters of the Quality Code in the management of the quality of learning opportunities as discussed in paragraphs 1.5 and 1.6.

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

2.4 Teaching staff underlined the importance of the staff handbook in their engagement with the Learning and Teaching Strategy. They noted that it was also invaluable as a continuous training and reference source for new and existing staff. Students are aware that they are able to raise any concerns about any aspect of their learning experience in the Student Representative Committee, which meets regularly and informs the Student Experience Committee made up of representatives from management, staff and students. The students regarded the Student Representative Committee positively, citing a number of examples of concerns which were successfully addressed, for example some students requested to be allowed and supported to fast track programme completion. They confirmed that they are getting this support.

2.5 The School uses lesson observations for staff recruitment, and induction and the development and grading of existing staff. It keeps detailed records of the observations along with suggested actions for further staff development where necessary. Alongside formal observations required for staff appraisal, the teaching staff undertake an informal process of peer observation and support. Teachers who have undertaken this process view it positively. They cited examples of how the outcomes have impacted on their teaching. New teachers undergo informal observations within two weeks of their appointment and formal lesson observations within two months of appointment. It is **desirable** for the School to adopt a structured and formal approach to peer observation and put measures in place to evaluate its effectiveness.

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

2.6 All students are timetabled for six hours of academic tutorials per week for one-to-one support with the preparation of their assignments. Students are assigned a personal tutor. Personal tutorials are intended to monitor motivation and performance. They take place in groups or as one-to-one review sessions. Staff confirmed that the engagement of students is informal and best supports students who willingly seek out their tutors for support. Students who engaged in these tutorials regarded the system as helpful. However, attendance for these sessions is low. The School is therefore currently reviewing the academic tutorial provision. It is **desirable** for the School to complete the review of its academic tutorial provision.

How effectively does the School develop its staff in order to improve student learning opportunities?

2.7 The School offers a wide range of staff development opportunities. In-house staff training takes place on a regular basis and engages with aspects of the Quality Code and content from the School's Teaching and Learning Handbook. There have also been workshops for administrative staff on UCAS and student finance. The University of West London provides support for School staff through its internal professional development programmes, including participation on the postgraduate certificate in education (PGCE) course. Some teachers have already undertaken workshops to prepare them to teach at level 6 and to supervise dissertations. The School also encourages a range of scholarly

activities for staff, including writing papers for journals and membership of professional bodies. Opportunities for sharing good practice are available through the weekly staff meetings as well as by peer review discussed in paragraph 2.5.

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

2.8 The School library and learning centre, staffed by a tutor-librarian and an assistant librarian, provides students with access to computers and the internet. The School also provides a virtual learning environment that currently holds programme lecture notes and other materials. It is also used for the distribution of programme and assessment materials, reading lists, rules and regulations and general School information, as well as providing opportunities for discussion forums and facilities to submit assignments. Teaching staff use the virtual learning environment to support their teaching and are planning to use it more extensively in future. The School provides guidelines on the minimum expectations of what staff are required to upload.

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 Information about learning opportunities

How effectively does the School communicate information about learning opportunities to students and other stakeholders?

3.1 The School is clear about its responsibilities for public information. Since the March 2012 review, the School has made good progress in enhancing its policies, procedures and practices for providing information to its students and other stakeholders. In agreement with the awarding organisation, the accountability for the accuracy of information is clearly identified. The information that the School provides to its students includes its publications and those of its awarding organisation. The School's website provides a range of factual information about the School, its environment and the programmes it offers. The School clearly states fee structures, any additional charges and its refunds and complaints procedures. Student programme handbooks provide a factual overview of each programme. This helps prospective students to make informed choices about their studies. The Student Handbook, available both in hardcopy and on the School's virtual learning environment, contains a comprehensive range of useful information, including the Registry, the Library and learning resources, health and safety, and useful contacts. It is effective in providing all the information students need in one accessible booklet.

How effective are the School's arrangements for assuring that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy?

3.2 The School has developed and maintains a comprehensive and auditable strategy to ensure the reliability and validity of public information. The School keeps records of decisions relating to publication of documents. It has arrangements to ensure the accuracy and completeness of public information and for quality assuring and monitoring the appropriate use of electronic documentation. This information is published in various locations such as the staff and student handbooks. The School effectively employs an electronic system, through its intranet, to ensure that all publications are carefully version-controlled and are timely and accurate. The School Registrar has responsibility for the

accuracy of information. It is planning to include students in assuring the accuracy and completeness of information through student representatives.

The team concludes that reliance **can** be placed on the information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Action plan³

London School of Science & Technology action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight June 2013						
Good practice	Intended outcomes	Action to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation
The review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the School:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the extended admissions process creates crucial dialogue between staff and students (paragraph 2.1). 	Increased satisfaction shown by results of induction surveys and improved retention rates	<p>Continue to deploy the extended admissions process</p> <p>Monitor by conducting satisfaction surveys for students and staff at each induction</p> <p>Produce a report after each induction, proposing any actions to be taken to improve satisfaction levels</p>	<p>9 December 2013</p> <p>16 March 2014</p> <p>31 July 2014</p>	Admissions Director	Provost	Minutes of Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee that demonstrate qualitative improvement in induction surveys and improved retention rates
Desirable	Intended outcomes	Action to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is desirable for						

³ The School 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 School's awarding organisation.

the School to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> evaluate the effectiveness of the revised management and committee structures in supporting the management of academic standards (paragraph 1.3) 	Successfully review the management and committee structure	All action points are tracked, reported and signed off in a timely manner	16 March 2014	Executive Committee	The School's Board	Executive Committee minutes that demonstrate effective and efficient information flow and decision-making without overlap or complication
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> complete and evaluate the annual programme monitoring process (paragraph 1.4) 	Completed Programme Evaluation and Monitoring Reviews and associated action plans	Course coordinators to complete the annual programme monitoring process	31 July 2013	Course coordinators	Academic Standards and Quality Assurance and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committees	Minutes of Academic Standards and Quality Assurance and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee meetings demonstrating that an action plan is in place and being monitored
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> complete writing programme specifications, using the appropriate external reference points (paragraph 1.5) 	To produce full and comprehensive programme specifications approved and signed off by the Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee	Complete programme specifications, using the appropriate external reference points such as the Quality Code, Pearson standards and UWL specifications	31 July 2013	Course coordinators	Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee	Minutes of Academic Standards and Quality Assurance Committee citing approval of programme specifications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the impact of the revised 	As part of an overall college-	Establish and review attendance and	18 December 2013	Learning, Teaching and	Academic Board and	Minutes of Learning, Teaching and

Learning and Teaching Strategy on attendance and attrition rates (paragraph 2.2)	wide improvement strategy, continuously improved attendance and retention rates	retention data Review the impact of the revised Learning and Teaching Strategy		Assessment Committee	Executive Committee	Assessment Committee Improved and evidenced attendance rates and retention rates
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adopt a structured and formal approach to peer observation and evaluate its effectiveness (paragraph 2.5) 	To gain objective evidence to monitor the standards of teaching and learning	Establish a baseline of formal lesson observation grades Complete and review the implementation of the peer observation process	7 February 2014	Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee	Academic Board	Minutes of Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee Improved monitoring of teaching and learning as evidenced in formal observation grades and review of peer observation reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> complete the review of its academic tutorial provision (paragraph 2.6). 	Successfully review the academic tutorial provision by embracing the views of staff and students	Complete a staff and student survey and analyse the results Develop an action plan for improvement	7 February 2014	Learning, Teaching and Assessment Committee	Academic Board	Minutes of Academic Board

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/educational-oversight.

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 The core guidance developed and maintained by QAA in partnership with the UK higher education community and used by QAA and higher education providers until 2011-12 for quality assurance of UK higher education. It has since been replaced by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (**Quality Code**).

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

academic standards The standards set and maintained by higher education providers for their courses and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standards**.

awarding body A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the **framework for higher education qualifications**, such as diplomas or degrees.

awarding organisation An organisation authorised to award a particular qualification; an organisation recognised by Ofqual to award Ofqual-regulated qualifications.

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 which formed the core element of the **Academic Infrastructure** (now superseded by the **Quality Code**).

designated body An organisation that has been formally appointed or recognised to perform a particular function. QAA has been recognised by UKBA as a designated body for the purpose of providing educational oversight.

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

enhancement The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. 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 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: *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

⁴ www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

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 study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, resources, and specialist facilities (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

learning outcomes 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 reviews and reports.

programme An approved course of study that 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 A UK degree-awarding body or any other organisation that offers courses of higher education 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').

Quality Code Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is being developed from 2011 to replace the **Academic Infrastructure** and will incorporate all its key elements along with additional topics and overarching themes.

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 standards The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national qualifications frameworks and **subject benchmark statements**. See also **academic standards**.

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

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