



# Review for Specific Course Designation by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

## Northern College of Acupuncture

February 2014

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## Key findings about Northern College of Acupuncture

As a result of its Review for Specific Programme Designation carried out in February 2014, 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 Middlesex University.

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

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**:

- use of the outcomes of significant research projects to inform the curricula (paragraph 1.8)
- the development and implementation of e-learning programmes (paragraphs 2.12 and 3.4).

### 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:

- complete the mapping of its policies and procedures against the Quality Code (paragraph 1.6)
- clarify how students can access external examiner reports (paragraph 1.10)
- continue to implement its Quality Improvement Plan (paragraph 2.3)
- review its formal mechanism of recording the approval of assessment design (paragraph 2.5)
- review its internal moderation documentation (paragraph 2.6)
- further develop consistent constructive feedback on assignments that is clearly linked to learning outcomes (paragraph 2.9)
- revise its mechanisms for checking the consistency of teaching and learning materials and eliminate duplication of information across modules (paragraph 3.7).

## About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Specific Programme Designation](#)<sup>1</sup> conducted by [QAA](#) at the Northern College of Acupuncture (the College), 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 Middlesex University (the University). The review was carried out by Mr Martynas Serys-Kubertavicius, Mr Paul Monroe, Mrs Ranjinder Willis (reviewers) and Dr Margaret Johnson (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight \(and for specific programme designation\): Handbook, April 2013](#).<sup>2</sup> Evidence in support of the review included documentation supplied by the provider and awarding body, meetings with staff and students, reports of reviews by the University, accreditation reports from the British Acupuncture Accreditation Board, the European Herbal and Traditional Medicine Practitioners Association and the Nutritional Therapy Council, and examples of student work. During the visit the College also provided a detailed tour of the website, virtual learning environment and e-learning facility.

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

- *The framework for higher education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)
- subject benchmark statements
- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)
- national occupational standards
- British Acupuncture Accreditation Board
- European Herbal and Traditional Medicine Practitioners Association
- Nutritional Therapy Council.

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 situated in a Georgian building in the centre of York. Founded in 1988, the College then offered one professional diploma programme in acupuncture which was later validated as a degree in 1995. A further diploma in Chinese herbal medicine was added in 1994 and became a degree in 2004. In 2008 a degree in nutritional therapy was included in the portfolio. In 1990 the College established a Foundation for Research into Traditional Chinese Medicine, as a separate charity, to carry out research into the value of complementary therapies. A small fund is used to support students and staff in undertaking research which has the potential to lead to publication. Collaborative research with Sheffield University made a substantial contribution to the decision by the National Institute for Clinical and Healthcare Excellence (NICE) to recommend that acupuncture for back pain be made available in NHS clinics.

The College aims to be a leading and pioneering establishment of educational excellence in the fields of traditional Chinese and oriental medicine and nutritional therapy, with a reputation for significant research activity. Its aim is to help students become balanced and well-rounded practitioners as well as educating them to a high academic level. Theory and research evidence are applied in practice, and theory is informed and modified continually by

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<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx)

direct clinical experience. The College places considerable emphasis on the importance of clinical experience and early exposure to clinical practice is a key feature of all programmes. Practice is facilitated in five clinical rooms that offer acupuncture, Chinese herbal medicine, Tuina Chinese massage and nutritional therapy every week of the year.

There are 135 students enrolled across four programmes. Most students are mature learners and are recruited from across the UK and European countries. The Principal is a full-time member of staff supported by 51 part-time academic staff, with two full-time and 10 part-time administrators.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath the awarding body.

### **Middlesex University**

- BSc in Acupuncture (full-time and part-time)
- MSc in Acupuncture (part-time)
- MSc in Nutritional Therapy (part-time)
- MSc in Chinese Herbal Medicine (part-time)

### **The provider's stated responsibilities**

All programmes are awarded by the University who have overall responsibility for the provision. Day-to-day management is undertaken by the Principal, programme leaders and teaching staff of the College. The College's responsibilities include the admission and induction of students, programme delivery, student support and feedback, annual monitoring, resource provision, and liaison with the University through an appointed link tutor. The College is also responsible for advertising and recruitment although all advertising materials must be approved by the University prior to publication.

Shared responsibilities include the development of programme specifications and learning outcomes, quality review and student appeals.

### **Recent developments**

The College has developed two master's degrees in Advanced Oriental Medicine and Advanced Complementary Medicine that are to be validated by the University in March 2014. Both degrees will be delivered by e-learning.

### **Students' contribution to the review**

Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the review team. A group of student representatives volunteered to produce a written submission and gathered student views from all programmes using a questionnaire. Each representative submitted the results of programme questionnaires to one student who acted as the author, who then collated the overall report that included a useful summary of the findings.

One student attended the preparatory meeting and the team met 14 students during the review visit. The students were articulate and open during the discussion and their views were helpful to the team.

## Detailed findings about Northern College of Acupuncture

### 1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The College is aware of its responsibilities for managing academic standards and is diligent in fulfilling them. Programmes are delivered and managed in accordance with the policies and procedures of the University, as set out in a comprehensive Memorandum of Agreement.

1.2 Reporting arrangements within the College are well defined and effective. The Student Progress Committee and the Assessment Boards report to the Boards of Study which in turn report to the Academic Board. Management decisions are passed in the opposite direction. The Academic Board has responsibility for educational policy and procedures, staff development, overall academic quality, academic achievement and academic disciplinary matters. There is a separate Board of Directors that deals with issues such as College management, risk, facilities, staff and finance.

1.3 Each programme group has a student representative and they collect and transmit student opinions consistently and effectively. The students are satisfied with the way the system works and are able to cite examples of their comments being acted upon in a timely fashion, and how the system works to their benefit. There are several formal ways in which the student voice is accessed by the College, including satisfaction forms issued after every teaching or practical session. This information, and other student opinions collected in questionnaires, is analysed in a highly effective and transparent manner that includes use of a 'Net Promoter Score' to quantify student satisfaction. Feedback to students is achieved through the elected student representatives on the committees, and through regular direct communication between programme leaders and student cohorts.

1.4 The College makes constructive use of student data relating to retention, achievement and progression. The College intends to extend the format to include a three-year continuing data set of the above when programmes have completed their relevant period of time.

1.5 The College has a Major and Minor Changes Process and a Programme wind-down procedure. These provide a coherent and well-defined way of dealing with changes to programmes, including closure if this is necessary. These procedures are all structured to work to the benefit of students on the programme.

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

1.6 The College has made good use of the Quality Code in the development of the Quality Improvement Plan, and in producing the evidence for the review. This clearly demonstrates an understanding of the purpose and use of the guidance provided in the Quality Code, but the exercise is not yet complete. It would be **desirable** for the College to complete the mapping of its policies and procedures against the Quality Code.

1.7 The College has made good use of a variety of professional benchmarks and national occupational standards in curriculum development. This was necessitated by the absence of directly relevant subject benchmark statements for its programmes. The College has excellent links with all the professional bodies and specialist organisations involved in

the complementary health disciplines, and is also aware of the generic guidance provided in *Master's degree characteristics* published by QAA.

1.8 The College has a significant research portfolio that includes research projects undertaken in partnership with the universities of Sheffield and York. The outcomes of these research projects have been recognised nationally and are used, as appropriate, to maintain the content and currency of the curriculum. The use of the outcomes of significant research projects to inform the curricula is **good practice**.

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

1.9 The College has a clear and comprehensive policy for moderation and verification. Programme assessment materials are shared, prior to issue, with the University and the relevant external examiner where appropriate. All recommended and agreed changes are made by the College as required. Assessment schedules are provided at the beginning of all programmes, with stipulated dates for submission and return of the assessed work in line with the College's service standard. This is followed by regular meetings with the tutors to discuss feedback. The students testify to consistent adherence to the assessment schedules and the benefits this brings to managing their studies.

1.10 In full compliance with University guidelines, an external examiner is appointed to each award and trained by the University. The annual external examiner reports are submitted to the University and then passed to the College. The external examiners liaise directly with the College and take every opportunity to meet both with teaching staff and students during their visits. All issues raised in their reports are included in the annual monitoring reports along with any actions required to address the issues. The annual monitoring reports are posted to the virtual learning environment, to which all students have access but the majority of students are unaware of their location. It would be **desirable** for the College to clarify how students can access the external examiner reports.

<p>The review team has <b>confidence</b> in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of its awarding body.</p>
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## **2 Quality of learning opportunities**

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

2.1 The College has effective structures and processes in place to monitor the quality of learning opportunities that reflect those for academic standards outlined in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.5.

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

2.2 The College has begun to review its policies and procedures to align them with the Quality Code. This has resulted in the approval of an overarching Admissions Policy and the implementation of a formal internal minor and major changes procedure. Minor changes are recorded and monitored through annual monitoring and are communicated to students on the virtual learning environment. All major changes are subject to Middlesex University processes. During the process of programme validation with the University and accreditation with the professional bodies the College made good use of the FHEQ.

2.3 Implementation of the Quality Code has identified gaps in College policies and procedures that are being addressed through the Quality Improvement Plan. For example, while teaching and peer observations have taken place, the recording of these has largely been informal. The College has addressed this by formalising the documentation. It would be **desirable** for the College to continue to implement its Quality Improvement Plan.

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

2.4 The Boards of Study have effective oversight of all matters regarding the quality and enhancement of learning. This is achieved through scrutiny of individual programme annual monitoring reports which monitor evaluation of student feedback, external examiner comments and analysis of student data on achievement and progression. Actions arising from each programme report are monitored and reported throughout the year at successive Boards of Study.

2.5 There is variable quality assurance of summative assessments. All examination questions are written by senior tutors experienced in assessment, and are subsequently reviewed by the Programme Director. New assessments, such as those on the MSc in Chinese Herbal Medicine, are subject to an iterative process with several stages of drafting before approval. However, there is no formal system to record the outcomes of the discussions to agree both examination questions and new assessments. All examination questions are sent to the external examiner for comment and approval four to eight weeks in advance of examinations. For other assessments, the requirements are written in advance and included within the module descriptions in the Student Programme Handbooks before the programme starts. It would be **desirable** for the College to review its formal mechanism of recording the approval of assessment design.

2.6 Internal moderation of summative assessments is almost always in line with the College's Assessment Policy and Regulations as set out in the College Handbook. For instance, there is double marking of all MSc dissertations, and moderation of all summative assessments and scrutiny of all student work by the moderator when the cohort is small. However, some of the examples of moderated student work do not contain the exact list of sample student work moderated, moderation comments sometimes lack detail and there is no formal record of moderator signatures or date of moderation. It would be **desirable** for the College to review its internal moderation documentation.

2.7 Students provide feedback on the quality of teaching through a wide variety of questionnaires in accordance with the Quality Assurance and Curriculum Development Policy. Questionnaires are completed for each module and programme and on some programmes students are expected to complete an end-of-session questionnaire for each lecture session. Other programmes make questionnaires available for students to complete when they have feedback they wish to give. Module and programme questionnaires are analysed by the Registrar, and end-of-session questionnaires by module or year leaders. All are considered by the Boards of Study. The feedback from end-of-year questionnaires in 2012-13 indicated a good teaching experience. Students are able to raise concerns informally with the Principal and Programme Directors and more formally through the student representatives in class. Students confirmed that the representative system worked well and provided examples where the College was responsive to feedback.

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

2.8 The College has an effective Recruitment and Admissions Policy. The Registrar is responsible for the process from application to enrolment. Part of the application process includes an invitation to attend an introductory day where students are able to discuss

programmes and meet current students. The students who attend the days find them to be insightful and positive.

2.9 The College's processes and provision for academic support are satisfactory. All students are provided with a half-day induction that includes a tour of the library, teaching and clinical facilities. Students confirm they receive a study skills session that provides detailed information on referencing, use of journals and research techniques. However, students reported that feedback on assessment varied between tutors. The review team found summative feedback was extensive and of good quality on the MSc dissertation and Herbs and Formulae 1 modules. However, feedback provided on other seen examinations, case studies and poster presentations was limited with inadequate links to the achievement of learning outcomes. It would be **desirable** for the College to further develop consistent constructive feedback on assignments that is clearly linked to learning outcomes.

2.10 Other forms of student support and guidance are provided by the College and are effective. Students confirm that they know how to access pastoral care which they consider to be of high quality. Staff are responsive to students' personal circumstances. All students identified with specific educational needs receive swift and appropriate support from the College.

### **How effectively does the College develop its staff to improve student learning opportunities?**

2.11 The College has an effective Staffing Strategy. It employs well-qualified academic staff who have a variety of postgraduate awards and professional qualifications and extensive practical experience. The College is committed to supporting its staff and diligently engages new staff in induction and training conducted by the Principal and Programme Directors. The College identifies continuing professional development opportunities through its appraisal system and provides financial and flexible support to staff to undertake staff development. A number of staff are undertaking the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education with the University.

2.12 The College provides full-day staff development sessions throughout the year that include the dissemination of good practice. Examples include an exploration of the innovative style of the seen examination for the Herbs and Formulae module of the MSc in Chinese Herbal Medicine and its practical implementation, and the good practice demonstrated in the College's approach to the development of e-learning.

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

2.13 The College provides a well-resourced learning environment for both staff and students. There are five individual clinical rooms, three teaching rooms and access to a tutorial room. The on-site library provides books and e-journals which together with wireless internet are easily accessible by all students.

2.14 The College's virtual learning environment has been extensively updated during the current academic year and effectively supports students. It also supports the College's innovative e-learning platform which is highly valued by its students.

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 College communicate information about learning opportunities to students and other stakeholders?

3.1 The College uses a variety of effective strategies to communicate information about learning opportunities to its students and other stakeholders. There are comprehensive subject prospectuses and programme, College and clinic handbooks, all of which are available on the virtual learning environment. A recently introduced version control measure ensures that all updates are formally tracked and that only current publications are in use. Additionally, the College produces clinic information leaflets and occasional press releases that are robustly managed by the Marketing Manager in liaison with appropriate staff and approved by the Principal.

3.2 The College maintains a professional-looking website which is easy to navigate and provides all the necessary information for prospective students and other stakeholders. The College is currently considering changing the website to a content-management system which will provide an effective platform for multiple-author editing.

3.3 The College makes extensive use of its virtual learning environment and has exemplary e-learning programmes. The virtual learning environment is comprehensive and easy to access and navigate. It allows students to access detailed College information such as minutes of board meetings and reports. The College recognises the virtual learning environment as an effective means of enhancing teaching and learning. For example, discussion boards are used to instruct students on correct referencing techniques and this is fully appreciated by the students.

3.4 The College provides effective distance learning with tailored and adapted e-learning programmes through the virtual learning environment. They include video and audio lectures, downloadable slides and files, and exercises and assignments. There is detailed information for teaching staff on the development, presentation style and operation of e-learning programmes to be implemented across the College. The development and implementation of e-learning programmes is **good practice**.

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

3.5 The College produces information about learning opportunities that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Responsibility for the management and quality of the information is clear and well understood by the academic and management staff. Policies for the management of information are maintained in a College Handbook by the College Manager, who is responsible for monitoring updates and all review dates.

3.6 The collaborative agreement with the University, described in paragraph 1.1, requires all advertising and publicity materials to be approved in advance by the University and this is robustly executed. Programme specifications and handbooks are updated annually using a template provided by the University and include additional information added by the College to meet the programme and professional body requirements. The final internal quality monitoring is carried out and recorded by the Registrar.

3.7 The College's website, virtual learning environment and written materials are subject to several checking procedures to ensure consistency. The website is maintained by the Marketing Manager with all changes approved by the Principal. Information to be uploaded to the virtual learning environment is subject to hierarchical content and quality monitoring that begins at teaching staff level through stream and module leaders to

programme directors. The material within e-learning sessions is checked for technical inconsistencies and errors by a content checker. However, the processes do not always ensure the consistency of materials across modules within programmes, and students report some information duplication across modules. It would be **desirable** for the College to revise its mechanisms for checking the consistency of teaching and learning materials and eliminate duplication of information across modules.

3.8 The College actively seeks feedback on the accuracy and completeness of the information it produces by including relevant questions in module, programme and College questionnaires. The outcomes are included in the annual monitoring reports and lead to designated action points. The College also uses web analysis tools for its website and virtual learning environment to identify areas for improvement. The action points and outcomes are communicated effectively to the College community through the virtual learning environment. Teaching staff, students and alumni are all informally involved in the development and production of information.

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 plan<sup>3</sup>

Northern College of Acupuncture action plan relating to the Review for Specific Course Designation February 2014						
Good practice	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The review team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use of the outcomes of significant research projects to inform the curricula (paragraph 1.8)</li> </ul>	Knowledge of use of outcomes of significant research projects to continue to be widely disseminated among teaching staff	<p>Include presentation and discussion at next Staff Development Day (past and new projects)</p> <p>Post summary of presentation in staff area of virtual learning environment</p> <p>Evaluate impact of dissemination in annual course monitoring reports</p>	<p>1/10/2014</p> <p>15/10/2014</p> <p>1/11/2015</p>	<p>College Manager</p> <p>College Manager</p> <p>Course Directors</p>	<p>Management Team meeting</p> <p>Management Team meeting</p> <p>Boards of Study</p>	<p>Staff Development Day programme</p> <p>Posting on virtual learning environment</p> <p>Evaluation in annual course monitoring reports</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the development and implementation of e-learning programmes</li> </ul>	Knowledge of our experience of developing and implementing our e-learning programmes will continue to be widely	Organise e-learning training in May/June for new master's degrees staff team	30/6/2014	College Manager	Management Team meeting	Training programme and materials

<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 College's awarding body.

(paragraphs 2.12 and 3.4).	disseminated among teaching staff	Organise presentation and discussion of e-learning at next Staff Development Day (learning so far and further improvements, technical and educational aspects)	1/10/2014	College Manager	Management Team meeting	Staff Development Day programme
		Post summary of presentation in staff area of virtual learning environment	15/10/2014	College Manager	Management Team meeting	Posting on virtual learning environment
		Evaluate impact of dissemination in annual course monitoring reports	1/11/2015	Course Directors	Boards of Study	Evaluation in annual course monitoring reports
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Intended outcomes</b>	<b>Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes</b>	<b>Target date/s</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation (process or evidence)</b>
The team considers that it would be <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>complete the mapping of its policies and procedures against the Quality Code (paragraph 1.6)</li> </ul>	Work with the University to complete mapping and identify areas for further development with corresponding Quality Code chapters allocated for consideration at appropriate College Boards and Committees	Form management team working group tasked to complete mapping of Quality Code indicators against College policies and procedures to identify areas needing further development, and refer these to appropriate Boards and Committees	1/10/2014  3/3/2015	College Manager	Management Team meetings	Minutes of management team working group  Mapping document completed, including identification of

			30/5/2015			<p>areas for further development and referrals to Boards and Committees</p> <p>Feedback from staff and students on the impact of the mapping to the Quality Code</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clarify how students can access external examiner reports (paragraph 1.10)</li> </ul>	Place external examiner reports in clearly visible location on virtual learning environment, and inform the students	Create and populate external examiner reports folder on virtual learning environment within each Course Information section	31/7/2014	Information Technology administrator	Management Team meeting	Reports easily visible on virtual learning environment
		Inform students via announcement on virtual learning environment College News forum	31/7/2014	College Manager	Management Team meeting	Announcement posted to virtual learning environment forum
		Add information on location (from College Manager) to Programme Handbooks	1/9/2014	Course Directors	Management Team meeting	Folder location given in Assessment Section of Programme Handbooks
			30/9/2014			Feedback from students after they access

						external examiner reports.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continue to implement its Quality Improvement Plan (paragraph 2.3)</li> </ul>	All items in Quality Improvement Plan to be implemented as planned	Regular review of Quality Improvement Plan to ensure progress towards full implementation by named staff and/or boards/committees	3/4/2014 and each subsequent Management Team meeting	Principal	Management Team meeting	All Quality Improvement Plan actions implemented as planned, evidenced by evaluation for each item as stated in Quality Improvement Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review its formal mechanism of recording the approval of assessment design (paragraph 2.5)</li> </ul>	Formal mechanism to be reviewed	Review at Academic Board	24/4/2014	Principal	Academic Board	Academic Board minutes
	Improve the mechanism for documentation	Document in Assessment and Marking Guidelines	30/6/2014	Acupuncture Course Director	Academic Board	Assessment and Marking Guidelines
	Disseminate the improved mechanism to staff	Inform staff at next Staff Development Day and in associated mailing	1/10/2014	Principal	Academic Board	Staff Development Day programme
	Report approvals annually to Module Assessment Boards	Add to Module Assessment Board agendas	1/8/2015	Course Directors	Module Assessment Boards	Minutes record all assessments approved using improved process
			30/11/2014			Feedback from staff involved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review its internal moderation</li> </ul>	Review the formal internal moderation documentation	Review at Academic Board	24/4/2014	Principal	Academic Board	Academic Board minutes

documentation (paragraph 2.6)	Improve the documentation produced as a result of the review	Revise internal moderation report form and place in staff area of virtual learning environment	30/5/2014	Acupuncture Course Director	Academic Board	Internal moderation report form
	Inform all staff of changes	All staff involved in assessment informed by email and virtual learning environment announcement	8/5/2014	Principal	Academic Board	Email and virtual learning environment announcement
	Improve the documentation used for all summative assessments	Agenda item for Module Assessment Boards	1/8/2015	Course Directors	Module Assessment Boards	Minutes record all assessments moderated using improved documentation
			31/1/2015			Feedback from staff involved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>further develop consistent constructive feedback on assignments that is clearly linked to learning outcomes (paragraph 2.9)</li> </ul>	Ensure all marking criteria clearly linked to learning outcomes and assessment guidance	As appropriate, develop or revise specific marking criteria to clearly link to learning outcomes and assessment guidance	1/9/2014	Course Directors	Boards of Study	Marking criteria in module descriptions within Programme Handbooks
	All markers to give constructive feedback linked to learning outcomes	Develop staff to improve feedback, including use of plagiarism-detection software	1/6/2015	College Manager	Management Team	Staff Development Day Programmes in 2014-15
	Markers to receive feedback on their	(a) Internally monitor quality of feedback on	30/6/2014	Principal	Academic Board	Internal moderation

	feedback	assignments with enhanced internal moderation form  (b) Request feedback on feedback from external examiners	1/8/2015  30/9/2014	Course Directors	Module Assessment Boards	report form  External examiner reports  Feedback from staff and students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>revise its mechanisms for checking the consistency of teaching and learning materials and eliminate duplication of information across modules (paragraph 3.7).</li> </ul>	All teaching and learning materials to be checked for consistency and unnecessary duplication of information	Appoint content checker for learning materials for each course, and agree consistency and quality criteria	1/8/2014	Course Directors	Boards of Study	Key tasks description, consistency and quality criteria, and documentation of appointment of content checkers
		Provide section in session feedback forms for students to feed back on consistency and unnecessary duplication	1/8/2014	Course Directors	Boards of Study	Electronic and paper student feedback forms
		Explore options for involving students and external stakeholders more systematically in content checking	1/12/2014	Acupuncture Course Director	Board of Study	Minuted discussion
		Review process and timing for checking of curriculum documents including Programme	30/6/2014	Course Directors	Boards of Study	Clearly documented process with responsibilities

		Handbooks and Assessment Calendars	30/9/2014			and deadlines  Feedback from staff and students
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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 Specific Course Designation can be found at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx).

## 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 \(and for specific course designation\): Handbook, April 2013](#).<sup>4</sup>

**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 degree-awarding bodies for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standards**.

**awarding body** A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the power to award degrees, conferred by Royal Charter, or under Section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or under Section 48 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, or by Papal Bull, or, since 1999, granted by the Privy Council on advice from QAA (in response to applications for taught degree-awarding powers, research degree-awarding powers or university title).

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

**differentiated judgements** In a Review for Specific Course Designation, 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 review processes.

**external examiner** An independent expert appointed by an institution to comment on student achievement in relation to established academic standards and to look at approaches to assessment.

**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*.

**good practice** A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's review processes.

**learning opportunities** The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, and resources (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.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx)

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

**programme (of study)** 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(s) (of higher education)** Organisations that deliver higher education. In the UK they may be a degree-awarding body or another organisation that offers programmes of higher education on behalf of degree-awarding bodies or awarding organisations. In the context of Review for Specific Course Designation 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** See **academic quality**.

**Quality Code** Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of reference points for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the Expectations that all providers are required to meet.

**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.

**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 **frameworks for higher education qualifications** 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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