Oxford Centre for Mission Studies

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

October 2012

Key findings about the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies

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 the University of Wales and 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 these awarding bodies.

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

Good practice

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

- rigorous detailed quality management systems for academic programmes (paragraph 1.5)
- effective systems for preventing plagiarism (paragraph 1.10)
- systematic sustained support for students, from induction through to final assessment (paragraph 2.11)
- fostering a strong academic community among students both in the UK and in their home countries (paragraph 2.12)
- enhancing students' learning experience through use of the virtual learning environment (paragraph 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:

- implement a formal, documented system of staff appraisal for full-time academic staff in accordance with the condition set by Middlesex University (paragraph 2.14)
- enhance supervisor training through online resources and refer to this training in supervisors' letters of appointment (paragraph 2.15)
- maintain student representation on the new Board of Study (paragraph 3.1)
- establish a formal procedure for updating the website (paragraph 3.6).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)[1] (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (the provider; the Centre). 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 the University of Wales and Middlesex University.
The review was carried out by Dr Gwynne Harries, Professor Graeme White (reviewers), and Professor Patricia Higham (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 Middlesex University's Research Degrees Programme Handbook 2012-2013, programme flow chart mapping to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, committee structures, the Centre/Middlesex University Supervisor Handbook 2012-2013 and Student Handbook 2012-13.

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

- specific criteria of partner institutions (University of Wales and Middlesex University)
- the Academic Infrastructure
- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)
- the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE)
- British Educational Research Association (BERA)
- the Vitae Researcher Development Statement
- Framework for Research Ethics (Economic & Social Research Council, 2010).

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

Founded in 1983, the Oxford Centre for Mission Studies (the Centre) is an international and ecumenical research centre that exists to facilitate research and encourage excellence in mission scholarship, professional practice and theological education. The Centre focuses on the nature and practice of Christian mission, with particular attention to the needs of the developing countries of the Two-Thirds World. The Centre has 120 students studying for a research degree, of whom 19 are full-time and 102 are part-time and non-resident. Consistent with its mission, 70 per cent are from the developing world. Students are supported at the Centre by 12 faculty and six administrative staff (15 full-time equivalent) and by supervisory teams drawn from a network of around 150 leading academics based in the UK and overseas. The single campus, in a Grade 1 listed former parish church, houses a specialist library of 12,000 volumes on theology and mission history.

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

University of Wales/Middlesex University
- Research Programme:
    - the OCMS induction and research methods stage
    - the MPhil/PhD stage

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[1] www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4.
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx.

- the PhD stage

The provider's stated responsibilities

The Centre manages and operates its Research Degree Programme stage of induction and research methods whose purpose is to prepare students for university registration for MPhil/PhD degrees as a joint partner of its awarding bodies. The awarding bodies have ultimate responsibility for the standards, quality and award of the Centre's degrees. The Centre is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Research Degrees Programme and recommendations to the awarding bodies for its approval of the registrations, transfers and arrangements for examining candidates. The awarding bodies assist in staff higher education training and work with the Centre to provide training for supervisors, faculty and administrative staff. The awarding bodies also work with the Centre to monitor the provision of teaching and learning and to provide access to library and learning resources for students.

The Centre creates supervisory teams to match the particular requirements of the student and the project by appointing supervisors from universities and higher education institutions across the UK and, where appropriate, overseas, who are often recognised experts in their field. Part-time students must complete a minimum six weeks of annual residence in Oxford for intensive research, supervision, and interaction with the research community at the Centre and beyond. For the rest of the year, research continues where they are usual resident, which allows student access to a wealth of primary sources. Online communications allow the Centre to track and support students' progress.

Recent developments

Since 1994, the Centre has been a collaborative centre offering research programmes leading to MPhil and PhD degrees validated and awarded by the University of Wales. Following the decision of the University of Wales to cease its collaborative provision of research degrees, the Centre has negotiated partnership arrangements with Middlesex University. The Centre has become a joint collaborative partner institution of Middlesex University, with institutional approval to deliver the Centre's Research Programme. Upon successfully passing the final viva voce examination, the 'viva', this leads to the qualification of Doctor of Philosophy awarded by the University. The Programme, which is offered jointly with Middlesex University, contains an MPhil stage.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. Facilitated by one of the research students, a survey addressing the three major themes of the REO was prepared independently of the Centre's management, and administered online. The results were collated into a student submission that accompanied the self-evaluation document. Reviewers met a representative group of students at different stages in their research programme during the review visit, and were given opportunities for informal contacts with students at the weekly community lunch.

Detailed findings about Oxford Centre for Mission Studies

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The Centre effectively manages its delegated academic standards and responsibilities for higher degree programmes undertaken by the students. The Centre's Assessment Board and Board of Study chaired by the Academic Dean, are responsible to the awarding bodies for management of academic standards and have oversight of quality assurance procedures. The Academic Dean has management support from the Quality Enhancement Tutor, stage leaders, the Senior Residentiary Fellow, the Deputy Registrar and the Executive Officer (Quality Assurance and Student Records). The Programme's quality assurance procedures are described in detail in various sections of the Programme Handbook. These are informed by the requirements of awarding bodies and operate through scrutiny of external examiners' reports by the Centre's Research Degrees Committee (under the University of Wales) and now through the Assessment Board and Board of Study. Stage leader monitoring reports on student progress and consultation with faculty feed into the process. Previously, prior to the Research Degrees Committee meeting, the Centre had a formal procedure for monitoring and discharging its responsibilities for academic standards through OCMS sub-committees, Dean's meetings with stage leaders and reports of external examiners. Under the new awarding body arrangements with Middlesex University, a new structure, which replaces the Research Degrees Committee with a Board of Study and the OCMS Assessment Board, will augment these processes.

1.2 The Centre has held and undertaken accreditation from various institutions at different times during its existence, including the Council for National Academic Awards, the Open University, the University of Wales and now Middlesex University. Under these awarding bodies, the Centre provides supervision guidance and direction to individualised learning and research pathways. The awarding bodies monitor the intended learning outcomes of the Programme as a part of their collaborative partnership agreements. The Centre takes responsibility for assessing students at each progression point in their individual programme that is, induction, university registration, transfer of registration to PhD and before final submission. Final assessment by the Examining Board is managed by the awarding body. The Centre has recently become an approved centre under a collaborative partnership arrangement with Middlesex University. Students on the Programme are being enrolled or re-registered with Middlesex University from autumn 2012.

1.3 A Director of Studies, Main Supervisor and Second Supervisor receive operational guidance in the relevant Supervisors' Handbook and supervise the Programme in relation to individual candidates. Committees report to the Research Programme management team. The team notes that one external supervisor commented on the Supervisors' Handbook as being 'particularly helpful for any new team member'.

1.4 The comprehensive Supervisors' Handbook and the Research Degree Programme Handbook provide guidance for academic staff on policies and procedures to support academic standards. For example, handbooks include clear statements on assessment and accreditation of prior learning and procedures for programme monitoring and review. The Assessment Board has responsibility for oversight of all internal verification and moderation, and for annual auditing records and together with the Board of Study provides an annual report to inform quality improvements.

1.5   The Centre, through its Assessment Board and Board of Study, undertakes annual reviews of academic standards, the effectiveness of student progress and identifies the potential for enhancement. The Quality Enhancement Officer/Institution Link Officer gathers the material and authors annual reports. The course review reports, progression panel reports, records of student-supervisor communication and committee minutes scrutinised by the team demonstrate a rigorous approach to quality assurance and the management of academic standards, and show clear processes which can be tracked. The team also notes the Centre's systematic mapping of practice against external benchmarks (evidenced in paragraph 2.4). The team considers the rigour and detail of the quality management of the programmes to be good practice.

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

1.6   The Centre uses relevant external reference points effectively to manage academic standards. It uses specific criteria of its partner institutions and has clearly articulated their reference through external benchmarking to the Quality Code and Academic Infrastructure, HEFCE and BERA.

1.7   The Centre has policies and procedures, which meet the precepts of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, for example the complaints and appeals policy, a disability and equality policy, and the policies on student assessment. The team found that admissions and student selection processes operated effectively in clear accordance with the Quality Code, thus enabling the Centre to accept students with the highest potential for successful MPhil and PhD completion.

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

1.8   The Centre operates a clear set of procedures for internal verification that are described in detail in the Supervisors' Handbook. The Dean's Review and Pre-admission Sub Committee carry out internal verification of assessment. This is a vigorous procedure that demonstrates an effective formative assessment process.

1.9   External examiners appointed by the University attend the Centre to scrutinise student submissions, confirm internal verification linked to the students' intended learning outcomes and standards achieved. The team found that the internal verification procedures are sound and reliable, a view that three external supervisors who met the team endorsed. The Board of Study discusses the external examiners' reports and monitoring reports received by the Centre, and these contribute to the annual review meetings of the students' progress.

1.10   The team agreed that the Centre has a well developed and effective system for sharing good practice, which contributes to the maintenance of academic standards. External supervisors, the University Link Tutor from Middlesex University and students commented on the effectiveness and quality of the guidance and support given to students. They also found the level of scholarship to be of an appropriate standard and quality for the awards. They commented upon the consistent and fair application of the supervisory and internal verification processes. External supervisors, staff and students commented positively on the rigour with which the Centre clarifies its policy on plagiarism to students. Students who met the team confirmed their understanding of the rules on plagiarism. The team commends as good practice the Centre's systems for preventing plagiarism, including information shared both orally and in written format in the Student Handbook,

the use of appropriate commercial software for the virtual learning environment, and penalties for students who plagiarise.

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.

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2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 The Centre has effective mechanisms in place for the management and enhancement of learning opportunities. These mechanisms include arrangements for induction, ongoing support both in Oxford and in the students' home countries, and systematic preparation for assessment. They are underpinned by efficient and reliable online communication, by a recently revised committee structure and by a highly committed group of academic and administrative staff. Students are regularly consulted and given the opportunity to evaluate the various aspects of their experience, in the interests of quality enhancement.

2.2 At the time of the review, the Centre was in the process of transferring its provision from one awarding body to another. The team found this transition to have been well managed. Under the terms of its new Memorandum of Cooperation, responsibility for such matters as staff development, student induction, and the monitoring of admissions, retention and completion was shared between the Centre and the University. The Centre and the University see the Centre's MPhil and PhD programmes as 'a joint initiative'. In meeting staff from both institutions, the review team observed a shared commitment to a constructive collaborative partnership to the ultimate benefit of students.

2.3 The team asked the Centre staff whether there was any tension between the Centre's declared commitment to evidence-based critical enquiry based on 'freedom of thought and intellectual curiosity' on the one hand, and its website declaration that it was 'deeply evangelical from its roots to its mission'. The team was informed that the Centre's commitment to Christian mission set the context for its academic work, but not the manner in which it was carried out.

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

2.4 The Centre uses external reference points to secure the quality of learning opportunities systematically and to good effect. Practice has been mapped against indicators of *Chapter B11: Research degrees* of the Quality Code, the outcomes being published in the Research Degree Programme Handbook for 2012-13.

2.5 In response both to the indicators in the Quality Code and to the conditions set by a periodic review conducted by the previous awarding body in 2011, the Centre has enhanced training for supervisors and introduced a research ethics committee. The Centre has mapped skills training for research students against the Vitae Researcher Development Statement, where Domain D on 'engagement, influence and impact' has particular relevance to the Centre's mission. Programme assessment criteria are derived from *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. Supervisors who met the team confirmed that standards attained by students were comparable with those at

level 8 across the higher education sector.

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

2.6 The Centre uses several means to oversee the quality of learning and teaching. Full-time students, in residence at the Centre for at least 30 weeks per annum, are required to submit monthly progress reports that reflect on recent achievements, challenges and also outline future intentions. Part-time students, in addition to reporting on their period of annual residence in Oxford, normally for a minimum of six weeks, submit six-monthly progress reports on their experience in their home countries. Students also report after each supervision, with an evaluation of the quality of supervision. Supervisors are also required to submit reports on their students after each supervision, at key stages in their students' programme, and annually. The annual report includes an opportunity to suggest any enhancements to processes or to the support they are given. Reminders are emailed to students and supervisors when reports are due, with follow-up emails being sent if they are overdue. Samples of students' and supervisors' reports seen by the team were thorough and critical, indicative of a well operated system.

2.7 Full-time staff at the Centre scrutinise these reports, allowing the progress of individual students to be tracked and issues of general concern to be identified. Meticulous records are kept of individuals' progress, with any decisions affecting them being dealt with as 'closed business' by the Centre's Research Degrees Committee. With the change in awarding body, such matters will in future go to the Centre's Assessment Board. General issues, which have in the past been considered as 'open business' by the Research Degrees Committee, will in future go to a newly constituted Board of Study. The Dean's Forum discusses these issues**,** and they are also raised in the annual monitoring report submitted to the awarding body.

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

2.8 The review team was satisfied that the system of regular reporting by students and supervisors was conscientiously observed and provided an effective means of ensuring support for students in their home countries as well as in Oxford. Students assured the team that minimum requirements for contact and supervision were regularly exceeded. They also understood the different roles of the various staff members assigned to them. These include the Stage Leader who oversees their current stage in the programme, the House Tutor who provides pastoral support and academic oversight, and main and second supervisors. The Centre monitors the workload of these staff members to ensure that maximum allocations are not exceeded.

2.9 Online communication is critical to success in maintaining contact with students. This is well developed, prompt, reliable, supported by contracted technical expertise and systematically enhanced. For example, from September 2012, the Centre has uploaded research seminars so that they can be accessed by students worldwide.

2.10 Partly because of its commitment to the higher education of church leaders in the UK and overseas, the Centre has significantly fewer women than men students. This is also reflected in the number of full-time academic staff and external supervisors. Measures are being taken to address this issue, through the appointment of more women trustees. A gender balance is being achieved through scholarships and other funding arrangements conducive to the recruitment of women students, and through the engagement of supervisors with specialisms in gender studies.

2.11   Both in their written submission and in their meeting with the team, students expressed themselves well satisfied with the support they received throughout the three stages of their programme. This takes place from the initial Research Induction School as part of the Centre's pre-registration stage through the University-registered MPhil and PhD stages. Scrutiny of their work by the Dean's Review and Pre-submission Committee provided excellent preparation for final PhD assessment. The high quality of support received by students at the MPhil or PhD stages has contributed to percentage wastage rates being reduced to single figures since 2005. The team considers that systematic sustained support for students, from induction through to final assessment, is a feature of good practice.

2.12   The team also noted the success of the Centre in fostering a strong academic community, which offered mutual support to its members, despite the challenges posed by geographical dispersal. This had been commended by a formal University periodic review in 2011 and the team confirmed this conclusion. Students appreciated the readiness of the institution to respond to their concerns and keep them informed of developments. For example, the Research Induction School has been extended from four weeks to five in the light of student evaluation. Research interest groups enabled students to discuss their work with peers, while weekly lectures and seminars at the Centre are now made available online. The team concludes that fostering a strong academic community among students both in their home countries and in the UK is a feature of good practice.

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

2.13   The Centre employs well qualified full-time academic staff and has a team of external supervisors drawn from reputable institutions both in the UK and in regions of the world on which its research is focused. Appointment of supervisors, many of whom are leading international scholars in their fields, is subject to formal approval, initially within the Centre and ultimately by the awarding body. All this makes for what the 2011 periodic review described as 'a vibrant and intellectually challenging research environment'. This is enhanced by the Centre's own publications, via the Regnum Press and the peer-reviewed *Transformation* journal to which staff, external supervisors and students can all contribute. Published work is duly reported through the annual monitoring process. As set out in the Staff Development Policy, full-time staff have one day each week set aside for their own research, plus up to four weeks each year for fieldwork. A system of sabbatical leave is projected for 2013.

2.14   The Institutional Approval event which recommended the transfer of the Centre to its new awarding body, held in June 2012, noted the lack of a formal system for the appraisal of full-time staff, although undocumented meetings did take place biannually with the Academic Dean. In response to a condition set on this occasion, the Centre has developed plans to formalise the system from the beginning of 2013, with provision for appraisals at key stages in career development, as well as on an annual basis. The review team considers it desirable that the Centre implements a formal, documented system of staff appraisal for full-time academic staff in accordance with the condition set by the new awarding body. It should report an evaluation of its effectiveness to the awarding body through the annual monitoring process.

2.15   The 2011 periodic review identified the need for more formal induction of external supervisors. In its self-evaluation, the Centre itself acknowledged that skills training for this diverse body should be enhanced. Supervisors have consistently been sent information on the Centre's processes and expectations. House tutors have fulfilled a mentoring role as required. Nevertheless, the Centre intends to develop a more systematic training programme, as required by the Memorandum of Cooperation with the new awarding body, and in conjunction with that University's own Research and Knowledge Transfer Office. An obligation to undertake training provided by both the Centre and the awarding body is now written into the codes of practice for supervisors, although this obligation does not appear in their letters of appointment. Accordingly, the team considers it desirable that the Centre enhances supervisor training, maximising the use of online resources, and refers to this training in supervisors' letters of appointment.

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

2.16   The Centre has effective means to ensure that students have access to adequate resources, both when they are resident in Oxford and when they are in their home countries. In terms of staffing, the team concluded that the Centre was adopting a measured approach to growth, increasing its staff numbers and range of expertise in advance of expansion into new fields of enquiry. For example, while Latin America and Eastern Europe are acknowledged as regions suitable for further recruitment of research students, the Centre recognises that this can only be addressed if 'we…bring on new faculty' with relevant specialisms, plus 'appropriate support staff to facilitate growth'.

2.17   The student written submission expressed full satisfaction with library resources in Oxford, where the Centre's own substantial holdings of books and journals are complemented by full access to the Bodleian Library. Those studying in their own countries are required at admission to provide an audit of the resources that will be available to them. Some of their research is practice-based, but, in addition, students can access the online resources of the awarding body and of the Christian Research In Action Network (coordinated by the Centre). Various e-journals and other material are readily accessible through the Centre's intranet, and through material which the librarian obtains and sends on request. All this is monitored through students' and supervisors' reports. Students who met the team raised no concerns about the availability of resources in their home countries.

> 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   Communication to students, supervisors and the wider public is generally accurate, reliable and effective. Student representation on the Research Development Committee has until now ensured that 'open' business at this committee could be disseminated to the student body as a whole, not only at the Student Forum but also online. Now that the Research Development Committee has been superseded under the new awarding body arrangements by a Board of Study, the review team considers it desirable that the Centre

maintains such student representation, so that matters of interest to students can continue to be published online.

3.2   The Course Prospectus for 2012-13, available both electronically and in hard copy, is succinct and covers the essential ground in an accessible manner. Amendments arising from the change of awarding body appear in a photocopied addendum insert. The information provided is consistent with that on the website. The website was completely redesigned about three years ago under guidance from an external consultant and continues to be adjusted and updated in the light of evaluation by the Senior Residentiary Fellow. The website is attractive, informative and easily navigated, covering matters ranging from programme structure and duration, entry requirements, and partnership arrangements to visas, accommodation and Centre news, facilities and services. Students assured the team that they found this information accurate. The Centre's arrangements for servicing and technical back-up ensure that the website remains a reliable means of communication.

3.3   Regulations and procedures governing the provision are found in the detailed Research Degree Programme Handbook and in accompanying handbooks for students and supervisors tailored to their priorities and requirements. Communication by email and online video interview enables full-time academic and administrative staff at the Centre to deal with specific queries from students and supervisors when they are at a distance from the Centre, thus minimising the risk of inaccurate information passing between them.

3.4   The Centre also publishes on its intranet pages a wide range of information and support material, including learning resources, details of the residency programme, and students' entitlements and obligations. Students were able to demonstrate knowledge of complaints and appeals procedures, attendance requirements and other regulations, convincing the team that this comprehensive resource was very effective in fulfilling its purpose. Taken together with the effectiveness of online learning resources, the team considers that the Centre's use of its virtual learning environment to enhance students' learning experience constitutes a feature of good practice.

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

3.5   The Centre's discharge of its responsibilities for assuring accurate and complete public information is generally effective, notwithstanding the recommendation, which appears below. Principal responsibility for ensuring the accuracy of information within the Centre rests with the Quality Enhancement Tutor on behalf of the Academic Dean, although under the Memorandum of Cooperation the new awarding body has to agree anything published about itself or the programme of study. The Executive Officer (Quality Assurance and Student Records) regularly checks legal and financial information disseminated to students while other academic and administrative staff monitor different aspects of the website. In concluding that, in general, these duties are effectively fulfilled, the team noted, for example, the consistency between the information presented in the programme, students' and supervisors' handbooks. Beyond this, stage leaders have a key role to play in briefing supervisors about expectations and requirements, and also in ensuring that students are following procedures. For their part, students considered themselves to be well informed about all necessary aspects of the programme, and that they had every opportunity to seek further information if required. Supervisors thought the same, particularly since the Centre arranges for hard copies of forms and handbooks to be sent to them if they prefer an alternative to online access.

3.6   The team noted, however, that some of the information on the website about external supervisors was at least a year out of date. Also, in one case, a supervisor who met

the team was not on the website list. The Centre has a process for each supervisor to edit her/his published curriculum vitae, but this is presented as an option and not a requirement. The team also considered the checking of the website by a variety of people, outlined in paragraph 3.5, to indicate a somewhat informal approach to its updating and concluded that it is desirable for the Centre to establish a timetabled review cycle or other formal procedure for the updating of the website in the interests of ensuring currency.

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

Action plan[3]

Oxford Centre for Mission Studies 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:						
• rigorous detailed quality management systems for academic programmes (paragraph 1.5)	Continuous evaluation of process: admissions, committee structure, student progress and research environment	September 2013 prior to Annual Report to University, (due October) Continuation of annual procedure Also May and October 2012 and ongoing for Board of Study meetings and as needed	Academic Dean, Faculty and Academic Administration	Continued high rate of successful completion Issues recognised and managed efficiently and early according to procedure	Board of Study Senior Academic Management Team	Cohort analysis Annual monitoring report to awarding body Consideration of external examiners' reports and awarding body

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[3]The provider has been required to develop this action plan to follow up on good practice and address any recommendations arising from the review. QAA monitors progress against the action plan, in conjunction with the provider's awarding bodies.

	Monitoring against external requirements and guidance, for example *Chapter B11: Research degrees* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education	September 2013 and annually ahead of submitting Programme Handbook for new academic year to University each October		Procedures revised if required		Annual report to Quality Assurance Agency
• effective systems for preventing plagiarism (paragraph 1.10)	Student sessions on plagiarism and plagiarism detection software at Research Induction School	Began March 2012, and continuing with every Research Induction School in April and October	Research Induction School Tutor Academic Staff, Students, Academic Dean	Ongoing use of plagiarism software on student seminars, papers and theses submitted for review	Senior Academic Management Team	Regular review of plagiarism policy and implementation at Board of Study
	Faculty to set up accounts run all papers through plagiarism detection software, then return to students	September 2012	Academic Dean	No cases reported		
	Action taken if plagiarism discovered	Procedure set up 1983 and continually evaluated, as evidenced by				

		evolving policy and software use				
• systematic sustained support for students, from induction through to final assessment (paragraph 2.11)	Appointment of mentors during Research Induction School to prepare students for registration by guiding development of research proposal, oversight of research skills and providing pastoral care	April and October 2013 at Research Induction Schools Procedure set up September 2008 and continuous since then	Research Induction School Tutor	Interaction and development through student representation at Student Forum and Board of Study Successful completion of research programme by students	Senior Academic Management Team Board of Study	Reflection on process via annual monitoring report submitted to awarding body Collation, analysis of and response to student feedback, both informal and formal
	Internal house tutors on supervisory team for pastoral support and oversight of skills training once students are registered	Universally applied since 1998 Policy reviewed annually (September), and as necessary	Stage Leader/ Academic Dean	Continuing reporting compliance and detailed reporting from students		Cohort analysis, statistics collated (particularly admissions, for quality assurance and annual report)
	Comprehensive online reporting system for all students	March and September 2013 as reports received	Quality Assurance Officer/ Information Technology Team	Continuing student satisfaction, as measured through feedback from the Student		Feedback from student representatives at Board of Study

		Review procedure set up May 2006 and continuous since then	Quality Enhancement Tutor/students/ Quality Assurance Officer	Forum		
	Questions on reporting to be reviewed	January 2013	Academic Dean and Faculty			
	Continue formative assessment checkpoints such as Dean's Review, pre-viva	Set up May 2006, policy reviewed annually in September				
		Evaluated as students reach checkpoints				
• fostering a strong academic community among students both in the UK and in their home countries (paragraph 2.12)	Weekly open lecture/student seminars, research induction groups, attended in person and via global teleconferencing	Ongoing since 1998; global conferencing since September 2012	Faculty (arranging and through research activity) and students (support through attendance and preparation)	Student participation, both in person and virtually, in community events for example lectures, seminars and in chapel	Senior Academic Management Team	Collation, analysis of and response to student feedback, both informal and formal
		Evaluated at Dean's and	Students	Student feedback, informal and		

		Student Forum and as needed	Independent monitor/ students	formal (Student Forum and student representatives)		
		Policy and practice reviewed annually (September) for annual report (due October)				
	Annual full-time residents to enhance interaction through mentorship of newer students	March 2013, to be reviewed at Board of Study				
	Student forums	Three times a year/ ongoing				
• enhancing students' learning experience through use of the virtual learning environment (paragraph 3.4).	Global conferencing software for seminars/lectures	November 2012/ discussed at website meetings	Quality Enhancement Tutor/students/ Quality Assurance Officer	Measure student access to a range of resources via reporting/student feedback/ questions	Senior Academic Management Team Board of Study	Quality of student output for example seminar papers, draft thesis and final submission
	Upgrade virtual learning environment	November 2012/ discussed at website meetings	Information Technology team	Student participation as measured in student forums, lectures, seminars, on		Supervisor reports on students' progress Collation, analysis of and

	Online sessions for research methodology	May 2013	Academic Dean	virtual learning environment, via computers and conferencing software		response to student feedback, revision and additions as required
	Access to Middlesex University library services online	December 2012/ evaluated at Board of Study meetings May and October	Institutional Link Tutor/ University Link Tutor/awarding body			
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:						
• implement a formal, documented system of staff appraisal for full-time academic staff in accordance with the condition set by Middlesex University (paragraph 2.14)	Staff appraisal policy to be formalised by the Centre's Senior Management Team	January 2013	The Centre's Senior Management Team	Annual staff appraisal meetings and documentation	The Centre's Senior Management Team	Annual monitoring report to Middlesex University
	Staff appraisal policy to be circulated and documented in Programme Handbook	January 2013		Documented policy circulated and in the Handbook		Informal report to Dean's Forum
	Staff appraisal policy enacted	January 2013				
• enhance supervisor training through online	Oxford Centre for Mission Studies faculty and new	March 2013	Academic Dean and dedicated	Completion of Middlesex supervisor	Academic Dean	Supervisor feedback

resources and refer to this training in supervisors' letters of appointment (paragraph 2.15)	supervisors to attend Middlesex University supervisor training		senior faculty members assigned to plan and oversee Supervisor Induction Programme	training		Supervisor reports
	Supervisor Induction Programme, including online access via global teleconferencing: twice annually	September 2013		Implementation and ongoing evaluation of semi-annual supervisor training Supervisor reports indicate effective and efficient supervision practice		
• maintain student representation on the new Board of Study (paragraph 3.1)	Decision made to have students from each stage of programme on Board of Study, that is three representatives	October 2012	Quality Enhancement Tutor/students/ Quality Assurance Officer		Senior Academic Management Team	Student representation on board, measured by numbers and contribution (evidenced by minutes)
	Students decided on three representatives to Board of Study, first meeting 13 November 2012	November 2012	Quality Enhancement Tutor/students	Continued student representation and participation in Board of Study		Issues raised by students discussed and actioned by management

	Terms of Reference in Programme Handbook to be updated	January 2013	Quality Enhancement Tutor	meetings		Annual monitoring report
	Student elections for representatives (term: two years) to be held in July 2013	July 2013	Student representatives			
• establish a fomal procedure for updating the website (paragraph 3.6).	Establish website committee which meets every quarter	First meeting December 2012 then ongoing	Executive Director	Quarterly review of website to ensure updating	Oxford Centre for Mission Studies Senior Management Team	Website information up to date and reliable
	Regular contact with Middlesex University to check public information	December 2012				

About QAA

QAA is the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. QAA's mission is to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education.

QAA's aims are to:

- meet students' needs and be valued by them
- safeguard standards in an increasingly diverse UK and international context
- drive improvements in UK higher education
- improve public understanding of higher education standards and quality.

QAA conducts reviews of higher education institutions and publishes reports on the findings. QAA also publishes a range of guidance documents to help safeguard standards and improve quality.

More information about the work of QAA is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk.

More detail about Review for Educational Oversight can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/tier-4.

Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary. Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the *Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook*[4]

Academic Infrastructure Guidance developed and agreed by the higher education community and published by QAA, which is used by institutions to ensure that their courses meet national expectations for academic standards and that students have access to a suitable environment for learning (academic quality). It consists of four groups of reference points: the **frameworks for higher education qualifications**, the **subject benchmark statements**, the **programme specifications** and the **Code of practice**. Work is underway (2011-12) to revise the Academic Infrastructure as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

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

academic standards The standards set and maintained by institutions for their courses and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

awarding body A body with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the **framework for higher education qualifications**, such as diplomas or degrees.

awarding organisation An organisation with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the Qualifications and Credit Framework for England and Northern Ireland (these qualifications are at levels 1 to 8, with levels 4 and above being classed as 'higher education').

Code of practice *The Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, published by QAA: a set of interrelated documents giving guidance for higher education institutions.

designated body An organisation that has been formally appointed to perform a particular function.

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

enhancement Taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of **learning opportunities**. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

feature of good practice A positive aspect of the way a higher education institution manages quality and standards, which may be seen as exemplary to others.

framework A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

framework for higher education qualifications A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks:

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[4] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx.

The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (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.