

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

ALRA (Academy for Live and Recorded Arts)

January 2014

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Key findings about ALRA (Academy of Live and Recorded Arts)

As a result of its Review for specific Course Designation carried out in January 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 the University of Greenwich and St Mary's University, Twickenham.

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 information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Good practice

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

- the comprehensive and supportive audition, admission and induction arrangements (paragraph 2.9)
- the targeted creation of opportunities afforded by the outreach programme (paragraph 2.10)
- the thorough and embedded approach to career development (paragraph 2.11)
- the extensive and helpful information about student support (paragraph 3.2)
- the connection established between the Academy and its alumni (paragraph 3.7)
- the access for students and staff to current and comprehensive student records on the Student Tracker system (paragraph 3.8).

Recommendations

The team has also identified a number of **recommendations** for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

The team considers that it is **advisable** for the provider to:

- ensure that the marking of assessments is transparent and verified (paragraph 1.7)
- consider formally comments made by external examiners in their reports and ensure that agreed actions have been completed (paragraph 1.8)
- provide written feedback on assessed student work that consistently reflects assessment criteria and intended learning outcomes (paragraph 2.3)
- formalise the processes for maintaining the accuracy and currency of information (paragraph 3.9).

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

- formalise and enhance the arrangements for the recording and reporting of meetings (paragraph 1.4)
- provide students with a description of the process for making complaints and appeals directly to the awarding body (paragraph 3.3)
- direct students to the location of the external examiners' reports (paragraph 3.5).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Specific Course Designation](#)¹ conducted by [QAA](#) at ALRA (Academy of Live and Recorded Arts) (the Academy), 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 the University of Greenwich and St Mary's University, Twickenham. The review was carried out by Ms Barbara Thomas, Mr Brian Whitehead, Miss Kate Wicklow (reviewers) and Dr Anne Miller (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight \(and for specific course designation\): Handbook, April 2013](#).² Evidence in support of the review included reports from Trinity College London; Drama UK; Ofsted; the University of Greenwich; and St Mary's University, Twickenham. In addition, evidence was gained from meetings with staff, students and from scrutiny of samples of assessed student work and the reports of external examiners.

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

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code)
- Drama UK Hallmarks of Conservatoire Training
- Ofsted Common Inspection Framework
- regulations and quality frameworks of the awarding bodies
- professional partner organisations including: Oldham Coliseum Theatre; Royal Exchange Theatre, Manchester; Octagon, Bolton; Yellow Earth; Battersea Arts Centre; Cirque Bijou; Theatre503; People Show; Tara Arts; Company of Angels
- casting directors and actor's agents.

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

The Academy was founded in 1979 as a drama school for live theatre, television, radio and film. The Academy's mission is 'to equip actors and theatre technicians with skills fundamental to a productive and creative life in performance'. It is a registered charity and strongly committed to helping students of all backgrounds and ages to enter the live and recorded arts. The vocational ethos of the Academy is enabled and supported by collaborative creative relationships with industry partners.

The Academy operates from two sites in London and Wigan known respectively as ALRA South and ALRA North. Since 1981 the Academy has occupied part of the Grade II* listed Royal Victoria Patriotic Building on Wandsworth Common in London. To support expansion and enhance access to the industry, the Academy established ALRA North in 2010 in Wigan.

In 2006 the Academy established a partnership with the University of Greenwich to award the BA (Honours) Acting and the Foundation Degree in Stage Management and Technical Theatre. In 2008 the partnership was extended to include the MA Professional Acting. In 2012 a change in strategic direction led the University of Greenwich to issue notice to end the partnership. The last students to be recruited to University of Greenwich awards at the Academy were enrolled in September 2012. The partnership with the University of

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx

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

Greenwich will end once all current level 5 and level 6 students complete their studies. The Academy has established a new partnership arrangement with St Mary's University, Twickenham with effect from September 2013. At the time of the review only level 4 and level 7 students were registered with St Mary's University, Twickenham. Under the terms of the Academy's written agreement future successive cohorts of students will enrol with St Mary's University, Twickenham.

The Academy is accredited by Drama UK and by Trinity College London. This recognition enables financial support for a designated number of students through the Dance and Drama Awards (DaDa). Five postgraduate and 20 undergraduate students are in receipt of financial support from DaDa to cover academic tuition fees.

The Academy is governed by a Board of Trustees that meets quarterly and includes industry representatives and two student representatives. The Academy is managed by a full-time Co-Director (Curriculum) based at ALRA South and a full-time Co-Director (Development) based at ALRA North. The Co-Director (Curriculum) works at ALRA North once a week and the Co-Director (Development) works at ALRA South when required. There are a further seven full-time teaching staff and 13 full-time administrative and technical staff. The vocational nature of the provision is well served by 45-50 part-time tutors who include professional directors, designers and technical designers.

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

St Mary's University, Twickenham

- Foundation Degree in Stage Management and Technical Theatre (level 4: six students at ALRA South and one student at ALRA North)
- BA (Honours) Acting (level 4: 29 students at ALRA South and 32 students at ALRA North)
- MA Professional Acting (level 7: 14 students at ALRA South and 15 students at ALRA North)

University of Greenwich

- Foundation Degree in Stage Management and Technical Theatre (level 5: six students at ALRA South)
- BA (Honours) Acting (levels 5 and 6: 55 students at ALRA South and 58 students at ALRA North)

The provider's stated responsibilities

The Academy and both awarding bodies share responsibility for strategic developments; curriculum planning; monitoring admission, retention and completion; annual monitoring; staff development; the student appeal system; and ensuring that information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

Under the agreement with St Mary's University, Twickenham, the University retains responsibility for overall quality assurance and review of the awards. The Academy is responsible for the identification of curriculum needs, provision of programme specifications, selection and recruitment of students, student admission guidance, and induction. The Academy is also responsible for core teaching materials and handbooks; learning and teaching; setting, marking and moderation of assignments; and provision of related feedback to students. The Academy's remit includes the library and learning resources, employer

engagement, collecting and acting on student feedback and opinion, and publication of information about courses in the prospectus and on the website.

Under the agreement with the University of Greenwich, the Academy shares responsibility for overall quality assurance and review of the awards, library and learning resource provision, collecting and acting upon student feedback, and provision of information about courses in the prospectus and on the website.

Recent developments

St Mary's University, Twickenham gained its university title in January 2014 and has recently finalised the terms of its written agreement with the Academy. A formal written agreement is now in place which describes the terms of the relationship and protects the interests of students and both partners. The Academy is currently developing a master's degree in applied creative movement for validation by the University.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education courses at the Academy were invited to present a submission to the review team. An informative 14-minute film was prepared by student representatives from ALRA North and ALRA South. The perspectives given in the film reflected collated evidence of student opinion gathered from both locations by means of social media. A transcript of the film was provided with a supporting document containing related evidence. Students met the coordinator at the preparatory meeting and the team during the review visit and made a very helpful contribution to the review.

Detailed findings about ALRA (Academy of Live and Recorded Arts)

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The responsibilities for management of academic standards are clearly defined in formal written agreements between the awarding bodies and the Academy. St Mary's University, Twickenham retains operational responsibility for quality assurance and the review of academic standards. The University of Greenwich shares with the Academy the remit for quality assurance and the review of standards. The Academy is fulfilling its responsibilities in a coherent and effective way.

1.2 The organisational structure of the Academy offers appropriate arrangements for the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. The executive structure comprises the Co-Directors and four heads of department for movement, voice, stage management and postgraduate studies plus a registrar. The Co-Directors specialise in curriculum and business development and share responsibility for overall management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. There is effective operational management by the three programme leaders supported by a programme manager who deals with practical aspects of delivery.

1.3 Members of the Board of Trustees participate in a helpful way in the management and activities of the Academy. The Academic Board meets termly and has ultimate responsibility within the Academy for the management of academic standards and the quality of all programmes. It is chaired by the Co-Directors and members include the heads of department, the programme manager and student representatives. A Curriculum and Programmes Group that meets twice a term systematically scrutinises the delivery of the programmes.

1.4 There is scope to introduce more effective and formal recording and reporting of decisions taken at meetings. The action taken in response to decisions of the Academic Board cannot always be verified. This is due to a lack of formal recording and reporting of such decisions and consequent action. Use of detailed minutes within which actions and outcomes are clearly identified would promote greater transparency and support the management of academic standards. While informal means of communication are effective, it would be **desirable** for the Academy to formalise and enhance the arrangements for the recording and reporting of meetings.

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

1.5 The Academy makes effective use of external reference points to manage academic standards and equip students for professional practice in a competitive industry. To enable its students to acquire relevant knowledge and skills, the Academy refers to a wide range of professional partners. It employs specialist freelance tutors who include successful alumni, theatre directors, stage managers and designers. In ensuring the employability of graduates the Academy maintains an open dialogue with casting directors and actors' agents. The Academy aligns its practices with the Drama UK Hallmarks of Conservatoire Training and requirements of Trinity College London.

1.6 The Academy relies heavily on the guidelines and quality assurance procedures of its awarding bodies to assure academic standards. Its practices are aligned with some but not yet all aspects of the Quality Code. Awareness of the Quality Code among staff and students is achieved through the awarding bodies' quality assurance arrangements. University link tutors have provided strong support and yet awareness of the Quality Code is relatively low. The Academy has begun to review its provision against the Quality Code for discussion at the next annual staff conference.

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

1.7 Heads of department meet their responsibilities for the maintenance of academic standards, but assurance is not always recorded and demonstrated. Practical assignments such as acting are marked by two tutors who observe the performance and then decide upon a provisional mark in discussion. Performances for assessment are recorded to enable later moderation by the head of department and an external examiner. The Academy assures the independence of the marking of performances and studio presentations by using internal markers who did not teach the work being assessed. Written assignments are marked by tutors and a sample is then moderated by the relevant head of department and an external examiner. However, there is no formal evidence of second marking or ensuing discussion, nor is there a written policy about second marking. It is **advisable** for the Academy to ensure that the marking of assessments is transparent and verified.

1.8 The external examiners are appointed by the awarding bodies and work closely with the Academy in a supportive way. It is unfortunate that both external examiners are due to be replaced during the same academic year. The Academy receives external examiners' written reports from the awarding bodies and the Co-Director (Curriculum) discusses them with the heads of department. The Academy states that it considers and acts on the advice of external examiners but lacks formal recording and reporting arrangements. It is **advisable** for the Academy to consider formally comments made by the external examiners in their reports and ensure that agreed actions have been completed.

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

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 There are effective processes for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities (see paragraph 1.2). The Academy is responsible to its awarding bodies for learning, teaching and assessment, student support, learning resources and staff development. Members of the academic and administrative staff understand and fulfil the responsibilities for the quality of learning.

2.2 The Co-Directors oversee the operational delivery of learning and teaching and the allocation of resources to programmes. The students receive programme handbooks containing programme specifications and details of approaches to assessment and feedback. The heads of department monitor approaches to learning, teaching and assessment through curriculum and planning meetings which report to the Academic Board.

2.3 The Academy has developed assessment descriptors that are fit for purpose but which are not used consistently in written summative feedback. Written feedback given to students is not always explicitly related to the intended learning outcomes, which limits its usefulness for the students. It is **advisable** for the Academy to provide written feedback on assessed student work that consistently reflects assessment criteria and intended learning outcomes.

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

2.4 The Academy has begun to develop policies and procedures that are aligned with the Quality Code (see paragraphs 1.5 and 1.6). There are suitable arrangements for students to contribute to the quality assurance of their education.

2.5 Following guidance from Drama UK, the Academy maintains high teaching contact hours and has introduced a valuable teaching observation scheme. The Academy makes extensive use of its professional partners and freelance tutors drawn from relevant industries.

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

2.6 The Academy has recently developed a draft teaching and learning strategy that is to be refined following discussion with professional and awarding bodies. Approaches to learning, teaching and assessment are evident in the curriculum and articulated in student and staff handbooks and relevant programme documents.

2.7 Appropriately qualified and experienced tutors support the teaching, learning and administration of the programmes. The vocational nature of the curriculum is supported by combining the expertise of full-time tutors with specialist contributions from diverse freelance tutors. The latter ensure externality, currency and relevance and provide access to relevant industrial contacts and employment opportunities. The appointment process for freelance tutors includes an interview together with delivery of several short classes and is informed by students' feedback.

2.8 There is a good system of formal student representation, an online feedback system and frequent informal opportunities for students to provide feedback. Student representatives can serve as elected members of the Academic Board, attend meetings of the trustees and there is a student council. Student feedback is gathered at module and programme level and staff are knowledgeable about the processes for the collection and evaluation of student comments. A dedicated student liaison officer assists students on a wide variety of administrative, contractual, financial and welfare matters.

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

2.9 There are robust and comprehensive admission, audition and induction arrangements, including accreditation of prior learning and use of Drama UK admissions guidelines. Students value the in-depth induction events provided at both ALRA South and ALRA North as an important and influential initial learning opportunity. There is a proactive approach to student well-being. All students are screened for additional learning needs. This leads to specialist testing and access to relevant guidance and support to meet individual needs. Students spoke positively about the Academy's exhaustive search for and direction to a wide range of potential sources of student funding. Students receive generic and specific health and safety information and undertake training on safe use of equipment.

The comprehensive and supportive audition, admission and induction arrangements are **good practice**.

2.10 An Academy outreach programme enables access to higher education for talented students from areas with low participation in higher education. The Academy visits regional centres, including schools, and auditions prospective students, thereby reducing cost for potential applicants. The Academy also works with its professional partners to promote access for minority ethnic groups. The targeted creation of opportunities afforded by the outreach programme is **good practice**.

2.11 The Academy successfully designs and delivers programmes that are vocationally relevant and students value the strong focus on employability. Students are introduced to the vocational nature of the curriculum at open days, audition and induction. Specific elements of the curriculum are designed to explore and develop employment opportunities. The Academy ensures that students are fully aware of opportunities and ways to exploit its network of professional contacts to gain employment. Alumni are offered free rehearsal spaces and informed of employment opportunities through the Academy's website. There is good progression into the industry and graduate profiles reflect the career trajectories in the discipline. The thorough and embedded approach to career development is **good practice**.

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

2.12 The teaching observation scheme informs appraisal for full-time academic staff. All full-time tutors must observe and be observed, whereas freelance tutors are observed and offered the opportunity to observe others. Heads of department review the outcomes and provide support as necessary to address any identified scope for improvement. Heads of department meet to consider the needs for specific and general staff development. The Academy recognises the need to develop teaching skills at the appropriate level for higher education through further training and support for staff.

2.13 The Academy has a systematic continuing professional development policy. Financial support is available for staff, including freelance tutors, when this is in the interests of both the Academy and the member of staff. Academic tutors have been sponsored by the Academy to undertake development in their subject to maintain currency. The Academy convenes staff development days or conferences at which it disseminates good practice and shares information about developments.

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

2.14 The Academy provides students with good specialist studio learning spaces at both North and South locations, which focus on the practical content of their subject. There are small libraries at both ALRA South and ALRA North within which students can access books and journals. Library resources have recently been augmented through acquisition of a licence to access specialist Drama Online provision. The Academy has responded to recommendations about resources from St Mary's University, Twickenham by augmenting the information technology facilities at ALRA South. This will provide dedicated workspaces for students and additional information technology resources. Members of staff communicate with students through email, group texts and, in line with industry norms, through traditional notice boards.

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

3.1 The Academy publishes clear and accurate information on its website and in a prospectus about courses, awarding and accrediting bodies, students and their work. The website presents the Academy's history and its trustees but only a limited number of academic policies. The information given on institutional strategy and quality assurance procedures is limited, although there are plans to publish the teaching and learning strategy.

3.2 The Academy provides clear, helpful and accurate information for students about sources of professional, financial and personal support. A particular strength is the extensive and practical guidance about sources of funding to cover tuition fees and living expenses. Valuable practical information about the available facilities and the nature and cost of specialist equipment is given in excellent student handbooks. There is a strong focus in the information for students on sources of professional and personal support, including medical and financial services. During induction, students receive a guide to personal safety that is reinforced during their studies. The extensive and helpful information about student support is **good practice**.

3.3 Students clearly understand what is expected of them, but lack information about the complaints and appeals arrangements of awarding bodies. The Academy's course handbooks contain programme specifications and module guides that specify detailed assessment arrangements and indicative reading lists. Students are required to sign and adhere to a learning contract that specifies mutual expectations and norms for the profession. The Academy's complaints and appeals procedures are given in the student and course handbooks but not those for the awarding bodies. It would be **desirable** for the Academy to provide students with a description of the process for making complaints and appeals directly to the awarding body.

3.4 The Academy's intranet provides access to general and course-specific information but needs to be kept up to date and publicised to students. The Academy uses its intranet to provide information to students about which they are largely unaware. The intranet contains schemes of work, lesson plans and timetables but the minutes of meetings are not up to date. The Academy plans to refresh the materials given on its intranet and publicise it for students.

3.5 The Academy does not itself provide external examiners' reports for students, but the reports are available through an awarding body's online portal. Students reported that they had not seen any external examiners' reports and were unaware of how to access them. It would be **desirable** for the Academy to direct students to the location of the external examiners' reports.

3.6 The Academy is developing a new website, the layout of which is intended to be clearer and easier to navigate. An important consideration for the Academy is to improve the functionality of the video streaming service containing students' work.

3.7 The Academy has strong links with its alumni that provide a valuable professional context to courses and yield employment opportunities for graduates (see paragraph 2.11). The Academy launched an effective alumni website in July 2012 and is building an active communication network for its alumni. The Academy also produces a newsletter, which among its current news stories provides casting information for alumni. The connection established between the Academy and its alumni is **good practice**.

3.8 The Academy assembles a cumulative record of written feedback on each student's performance and attainment on an electronic Student Tracker system. Students can access their personal record at any time and tutors can access the records of all students at any time. This fosters close and constructive working relationships between tutors and students. The access for students and staff to current and comprehensive student records on the Student Tracker system is **good practice**.

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

3.9 The Academy has yet to introduce formal arrangements to assure the quality of the information it provides and publishes. Heads of department create content for the student and programme handbooks, the prospectus and the website which is then authorised by the Co-Directors. The Academy must secure approval for its marketing and publicity materials from the awarding bodies. The University of Greenwich link tutor routinely checks publicity materials during liaison visits to the Academy, twice a year. Students expressed concern about the currency of some of the information provided on the website. It is **advisable** for the Academy to formalise the processes for maintaining the accuracy and currency 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 plan³

ALRA (Academy of Live and Recorded Arts) action plan relating to the Review for Specific Course Designation, January 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 good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the Academy:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the comprehensive and supportive audition, admission and induction arrangements (paragraph 2.9) 	<p>Ensure that all permanent staff interfacing with potential students understand the arrangements and support on offer</p> <p>Ensure potential candidates are aware of processes before application</p>	<p>Awareness session in staff training day for front line staff</p> <p>Include detailed information on website</p>	<p>18 July 2014</p> <p>1 May 2014</p>	<p>Registrar</p> <p>Marketing Officer/ Website Manager</p>	<p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Senior Management Team</p>	<p>Minutes of Staff Training Day to be held on 18 July</p> <p>Auditionee feedback</p> <p>Minutes of Staff Training Day to be held on 18 July</p> <p>Auditionee feedback</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the targeted creation of opportunities 	Understand and accept the value outreach offers at heads of department	Include an outreach student review at heads of department meetings	7 April 2014	Head of Curriculum	Senior Management Team	Heads of department meeting minutes

³ The Academy 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 Academy's awarding bodies.

afforded by the outreach programme (paragraph 2.10)	level Create further outreach events using black and minority ethnic ALRA graduates as workshop leaders	Advertise workshops to schools and colleges Train graduates to run workshops	1 October 2014	Marketing Officer Student Liaison Officer	Senior Management Team	Workshop bookings
• the thorough and embedded approach to career development (paragraph 2.11)	Ensure all freelance tutors and visiting directors are aware and enhance the practice	Awareness session at Tutor Training Day Specific detail added to staff handbook	19 September 2014 19 September 2014	Head of postgraduates Programmes Manager	Senior Management Team	Minutes of Annual Tutor Conference Staff handbook
• the extensive and helpful information about student support (paragraph 3.2)	All heads of department to be aware and understand who students can be referred to	Awareness session at Staff Training Day	18 July 2014	Registrar	Senior Management Team	Minutes of Staff Training Day to be held on July 18
• the connection established between the Academy and its alumni (paragraph 3.7)	Encourage staff and freelance tutors to use alumni website	Show staff the uses of the alumni site at Staff Training Day Show freelance tutors and directors the uses of the alumni site at Annual Tutor Conference	18 July 2014 19 September 2014	Student Liaison Officer Student Liaison Officer	Senior Management Team	Alumni website usage log
• the access for students and staff to current and comprehensive student records	Encourage freelance staff to access tracker system to understand student learning and positioning in advance of teaching	Discussion point at Annual Tutor Conference Further specific information to be included in the	19 September 2014 19 September 2014	Head of Voice Programmes Manager	Senior Management Team	Minutes of Annual Tutor Conference Staff handbook Tutor/Director Evaluation Form

on the Student Tracker system (paragraph 3.8).		handbooks				
Advisable	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The team considers that it is advisable for the Academy to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that the marking of assessments is transparent and verified (paragraph 1.7) 	<p>Standardise assessment methods across all programmes</p> <p>Clarify assessment processes in staff and student handbooks</p> <p>Clarify second marking across Studio Presentation/practical exercises/written assessment</p>	<p>Heads of department to standardise assessment processes and practices, and clarify second marking process at next heads of department meeting</p> <p>Action points from above to be included in all handbooks and disseminated to relevant assessing tutors; external markers; external examiners; student reps</p>	<p>7 April 2014</p> <p>19 September 2014 (handbooks)</p> <p>28 April 2014 (dissemination)</p>	<p>Head of Curriculum</p> <p>Programmes Manager</p>	<p>Senior Management Team</p>	<p>Heads of department meeting minutes</p> <p>Course specifications</p> <p>External examiner reports</p> <p>Student evaluation</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider formally comments made by external examiners in their reports and ensure that 	<p>Ensure external examiner comments and recommendations are incorporated into curriculum and working practices</p>	<p>Include fixed agenda item in heads of department meetings on external examiner reports</p> <p>Action plan to be</p>	<p>7 April 2014</p>	<p>Head of Curriculum</p>	<p>Academic Board</p>	<p>Heads of department meeting minutes</p> <p>Annual review of external examiner reports</p>

agreed actions have been completed (paragraph 1.8)		formulated with time frames which can be reported on and evaluated at subsequent heads of department meetings Include review and evaluation of previous year's action plan with each new report				External examiner reports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide written feedback on assessed student work that consistently reflects assessment criteria and intended learning outcomes (paragraph 2.3) 	All written feedback on assessed student work will be provided against the learning outcomes	Learning outcomes to be embedded into the reports on the Student Tracker system for all feedback specifically related to assessments	1 May 2014	Programmes Manager	Heads of department	<p>Student Tracker system - heads of departments to ensure written feedback is provided against assessment criteria and learning outcomes</p> <p>Student evaluations</p> <p>Student Personal Development Plans</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> formalise the processes for maintaining the accuracy and currency of information (paragraph 3.9). 	Termly meeting to check, correct and update all information on the website	Create public information committee Initial meeting to determine areas of responsibilities for information for key members of this meeting	30 May 2014	Website Manager	Public Information Committee	Public Information Committee minutes - action points reviewed each term

		Members to scrutinise areas or responsibility and send corrections to website manager within given time frame				
Desirable	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date/s	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The team considers that it would be desirable for the Academy to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> formalise and enhance the arrangements for the recording and reporting of meetings (paragraph 1.4) 	All Academy meetings will adopt the same minuting format which incorporates as action points the dissemination of relevant information to other meetings	<p>A review of the meetings structure will be undertaken</p> <p>A universal minutes template will be adopted to allow for and encourage information and action points to be taken to other relevant meetings</p>	1 May 2014	Co Director (Business and Development)	Senior Management Team	All Academy meetings structure and information flow to be reviewed annually at senior managers meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide students with a description of the process for making complaints and appeals directly to the awarding body (paragraph 3.3) 	Students will be able to access the process for making complaints and appeals directly to the awarding bodies	Details to be included in student handbook	1 May 2014	Programme Manager	Senior Management Team	Student representatives will review the revised student handbook

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> direct students to the location of the external examiners' reports (paragraph 3.5). 	<p>Students will be able to access external examiner reports with ease from the Academy</p>	<p>External examiner reports to be published in a designated area on the Academy website</p>	1 May 2014	Website Manager	Senior Management Team	Student representatives will review the revised Website
		<p>Information on where external examiner reports can be found to be included in the student handbooks</p>	1 May 2014	Programmes Manager		Student representatives will review the revised student handbook

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 Specific Course Designation can be found at: 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. Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Review for Educational Oversight \(and for specific course designation\): Handbook, April 2013](#).⁴

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.

⁴ 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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