



International Christian College

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

February 2012

Key findings about the International Christian College

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in February 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 Aberdeen.

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

The team considers that **reliance can** be placed on the 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**:

- the extensive use of external members on the College committees and groups helps to ensure the maintenance of academic standards (paragraph 1.2)
- the establishment of a Professional Advisory Group ensures that programmes are informed by wider developments in the voluntary and statutory sectors and meet the required standards (paragraph 1.7)
- the mapping of the College processes against the *Code of practice* has led to improvements in the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 2.3)
- the College's comprehensive range of methods for collecting student feedback ensures that the student voice informs enhancements to learning opportunities (paragraph 2.5)
- the College has recently reinstated a sabbatical leave scheme to further support research and development, and to inform the quality of teaching (paragraph 2.10)
- the well established College procedures and professional links effectively support student work placements (paragraph 2.14)
- visiting lecturers are provided with a comprehensive manual to familiarise themselves with the policies, operation and administration of the programmes at an early stage (paragraph 3.2).

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:

- produce a programme specification for the Certificate in Christian Studies which maps learning outcomes against the SCQF level 7 and assures progression to level 8 (paragraph 1.5)
- explore more formal ways to improve and enhance teaching and learning to build on good practice and to identify strategies to address any problems at an early stage (paragraph 2.6)
- implement a formal teaching observation scheme across the College to support the enhancement of pedagogy and inform future staff development (paragraph 2.7)

- continue to develop the virtual learning environment to provide all students with greater access to programme information, support and resources (paragraph 2.13).

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

- regularly review its institutional regulations and quality assurance policies and procedures to ensure their currency in the absence of a quality handbook (paragraph 1.4)
- establish a more systematic way of identifying and disseminating good practice to maintain standards and further enhance quality (paragraph 1.10)
- further develop systems, including the virtual learning environment, to ensure parity of access to information for full and part-time students and for students on placements (paragraph 3.3).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at the International Christian College (the provider; the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of the University of Aberdeen. The review was carried out by Ms Ann Kettle, Mr Dan Morgan and Mr Hayiath Qureshi (reviewers) and Mrs Mandy Hobart (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 Annual Monitoring Reports and Action Plans, College policy documents, minutes of meetings, partnership agreements and meetings with staff and students.

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

- the Academic Infrastructure
- Partnership Agreement with the University of Aberdeen and the University Quality Assurance Manual.

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

The International Christian College (the College) is a non-denominational Christian foundation within the evangelical tradition, with a wide range of denominations and backgrounds represented among the student body and staff. The College offers a range of externally validated programmes in theology and related specialisms. It was formed in 1998 by the merger of the Glasgow Bible College and Northumbria Bible College. The College's mission is 'to provide biblically grounded teaching and training for effective Christian service and mission, which integrates academic excellence with godliness and practical enabling, and to generate and promote mature Christian thinking on contemporary issues in different cultural contexts'.

Glasgow Bible College was accredited by the Open University Validation Service in 1992 and in 1996 gained a Joint Supervision Agreement with the University of Aberdeen to deliver the Master's in Theology by research. The partnership with the University of Aberdeen was expanded in 2001 to include the delivery of PhD and MPhil degrees. Since 2006 all undergraduate and postgraduate provision has been validated by the University of Aberdeen, and revalidated in 2011. There are 296 students currently enrolled, 87 on full-time programmes, 90 on distance learning and 119 undertaking part-time modes of study at the College. All taught provision is based on a single campus in Glasgow city centre.

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

University of Aberdeen

- BA and BA (Hons) Theology
- BA and BA (Hons) Youth and Community Work with Applied Theology

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

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

- MTh Biblical Interpretation
- MTh Ministry in an Urban World

Also

- A non-validated Certificate in Christian Studies (with St John's Theological College, Nottingham)

The provider's stated responsibilities

The management of standards and the quality of higher education is set out in a partnership agreement with the University of Aberdeen. The College is responsible for the management of standards and the monitoring of the quality of learning opportunities, as specified within the agreement. The overall responsibility for the standards of validated provision remains with the University. The College is required to comply with standards and quality monitoring procedures, as specified in the partnership agreement and the terms of programme validation.

Recent developments

The College has experienced a fall in student numbers in the last two years, particularly on master's programmes. It has recently submitted for validation a newly-designed programme entitled MTh Theology and Practice of Community Learning and Development, and a further master's degree is in development to replace the MTh Biblical Preaching and Biblical Interpretation. The BA (Hons) Youth and Community Work with Applied Theology is due for reapproval by the Scottish Standards Council for Community Learning and Development in 2013-14 to ascertain whether it continues to meet professional requirements in the field of Community Learning and Development.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a written submission to the review team. The submission was compiled by the student president and course representatives utilising information from recent student surveys, which the College made available. The team found the student submission helpful and explored its content in meetings with students both at the preparatory meeting and during the visit to gain a clear picture of the student learning experience.

Detailed findings about the International Christian College

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The clear development and review procedures are well documented and ensure that areas for development and strategies for enhancement are identified and implementation is monitored. The responsibility for oversight and maintenance of academic standards lies with the University of Aberdeen and is set out in the Validation Agreement. The standards of the College's programmes are further secured by the University's programme review and annual reporting arrangements. In 2011, a successful revalidation took place of the undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes offered by the College. The revalidation panel was impressed with the robust quality assurance procedures in place at the College, and by the work of the College's Quality Assurance Committee in the monitoring and review of current programmes and development of new and revised programmes and courses.

1.2 External membership of the College's Programme Development Group ensures proposals for new programmes are subject to extensive scrutiny. The revalidation panel was impressed with the externality embedded in the management structure. There is external representation at every level on the College committees and an external member chairs the Quality Assurance Committee. The team has found that the extensive use of external members on the College committees and groups helps to ensure the maintenance of academic standards.

1.3 The College has clear procedures for the development of new programmes and for the monitoring of the standards of validated programmes. Programme committees submit annual monitoring reports to the Quality Assurance Committee and to the Academic Board. The annual monitoring reports and action plan address the points raised in external examiners' reports and through student feedback.

1.4 Institutional regulations in the College Handbook are incorporated into programme handbooks and reflect the regulations of the validating university. These include sections on responsibility and accountability, assessment, board of examiners, plagiarism and appeal, and complaints procedures. The revalidation of programmes identified that not all regulations and policies reflected recent changes. In the absence of a quality handbook it is desirable that the College regularly review its regulations and quality assurance policies and procedures to ensure their currency.

1.5 The College also offers a Certificate in Christian Studies delivered by distance learning. The programme is not externally validated but is based on material provided by St John's Theological College, Nottingham. The College's website shows that the award can provide access to the second year of the BA Theology, following a decision by the Academic Board in 2010 that the completed certificate may qualify for advanced entry. In view of the growth in interest in distance learning programmes, a Distance Learning Committee has been set up and has produced support guidelines for students and tutorial staff. It would be advisable for the College to produce a programme specification for the Certificate in Christian Studies which maps learning outcomes against the Scottish Qualifications and Credit Framework (SCQF) level 7 and assures progression to level 8.

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

1.6 The College engages effectively with the SCQF and the Academic Infrastructure. All the validated programmes are between levels 7 and 12 and subject benchmark statements are used to inform the design and review of programmes. The University scrutinises programme specifications during approval and revalidation to ensure that they meet the appropriate standards, and the College ensures students have access to the specifications through programme handbooks.

1.7 The College also engages with the relevant professional bodies in order to set and maintain standards. The Scottish Standards Council for Community Learning and Development approved the BA (Hons) Youth and Community Work with Applied Theology programme in 2010 with 'full compliance'; and graduates at honours level have professional status within the field of community learning and development. The programme committee has established a Professional Advisory Group in order to ensure that it receives feedback on wider developments in the field from both voluntary and statutory agencies, and meets the required standards.

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

1.8 The team is able to confirm that assessment procedures are effective. Under the terms of the Validation Agreement the College is responsible for all aspects of assessment, subject to responses from external examiners that the University appoints on the recommendation of the College. Extensive guidance on the regulations governing assessment and re-assessment, the role of external examiners and the membership and conduct of boards of examiners is contained in the College Handbook. Effective assurance of standards is maintained through external examiners' moderation of samples of assessed work. Honours level and taught postgraduate assignments are blind double-marked internally. All new members of staff also have a sample of their work double-marked to ensure appropriate grades are awarded and feedback is clear.

1.9 External examiners' reports indicate satisfaction with academic standards and the team found evidence of careful reflection on the content of the reports. External examiners' reports are sent to the University of Aberdeen and copied to the Principal. Programme committees, the Academic Board and the Quality Assurance Committee give careful consideration to their comments and recommendations. Responses to the reports are formulated by programme committees and sent to the external examiners. Student representatives sit on programme committees, the Quality Assurance Committee and the Academic Board, and see and comment on the reports to ensure the student voice informs improvements.

1.10 The revalidation report of 2011 recommended that the College should consider a more formal approach to quality enhancement practices, including the sharing of internal and external good practice. The report also recommended greater use of existing quality assurance processes and feedback from the College's professional partners. The team has found the oversight of standards to be secure and that there is informal good practice in sharing outcomes of moderation and examining. The team considers that the College would benefit from establishing a more systematic way of identifying and disseminating good practice to maintain standards and enhance quality to further secure standards.

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 body.
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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 management of the quality of learning opportunities is delegated to the College by the University of Aberdeen, and the College meets its responsibilities through the completion of annual monitoring reports and action plans, as described in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.3. Integral to this process is consideration of the external examiners' reports, as outlined in paragraph 1.9. The roles of programme leaders, the Quality Assurance Committee and the Academic Board are all part of clear processes for ensuring that the quality of learning is monitored and enhancements are identified.

2.2 The mechanisms for quality assurance at programme level are effective. Programme leaders are required to submit an annual monitoring report to the Quality Assurance Committee before the annual report is submitted to the University. The procedures follow the requirements of the University and are overseen by the Vice Principal (Academic and Quality) to ensure that analysis of external examiners' reports supports the enhancement of programmes.

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

2.3 Staff have a clear understanding of the Academic Infrastructure and utilise subject benchmark statements when developing programmes and writing assignments. The College has recently mapped the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*) against the College's practices and the results demonstrate mostly clear alignment. This has led to improvements in the quality of learning opportunities, including the training of staff in disability awareness to help identify additional student support needs, and the need to provide clear feedback to prospective students on their applications in order to support the development of good practice. There is also clear evidence that the College responds effectively to feedback through annual monitoring reports. Where external examiners have expressed concern over the clarity of the marking scheme devised by the awarding body, for example, this has been subject to internal scrutiny to ensure the scheme is effective in informing students about their performance.

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

2.4 The College has a well qualified team of 11 full-time and two part-time academic staff, supported by three professional library staff, and seven full-time and two part-time administrative staff. All academic staff have postgraduate and/or professional qualifications, with seven academic staff having doctoral degrees. A documented agreement is in place between the College and visiting lecturers which identifies their operational responsibilities. New staff have an induction and are provided with a mentor who moderates their marking during the first year and provides advice.

2.5 An explicit teaching and learning strategy is under development. A variety of teaching and learning methods are used and are informally discussed by staff. Established student surveys and external examiners' reports help measure the effectiveness of teaching and learning. Student representatives sit on the College and programme committees, the College carefully considers the issues raised in the Student Council and feedback is provided to the Student President. Students also meet annually with external members of

the Quality Assurance Committee to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the programmes. The College's comprehensive range of methods for collecting student feedback ensures that the student voice informs enhancements to learning opportunities.

2.6 Students report that they are generally satisfied with the quality of teaching; however, the College acknowledges that poor teaching has occurred on occasion. Strategies for developing teaching and learning are informal, and there is no overarching process to ensure the consistency of monitoring and sharing of good practice. The team considers it advisable that the College explores more formal ways to improve and enhance teaching and learning to build on good practice and to identify strategies to address any problems at an early stage.

2.7 While teaching and learning is not formally observed and recorded, the College has recently introduced a pilot peer review scheme managed by a senior member of staff who is currently completing a Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching in Higher Education. In the longer term, the College plans to implement formal observation of teaching. Staff on the BA (Hons) in Youth and Community Work with Applied Theology programme report that they informally observe each other's teaching to help develop their own methods. The team considers it advisable that the College should implement a formal teaching observation scheme to support the enhancement of pedagogy and inform future staff development.

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

2.8 The College Admissions Policy clearly sets out the admissions criteria and outlines the admissions process, including advanced standing for entry to programmes. Criteria for accreditation of prior learning are detailed in programme handbooks and through the Accreditation of Prior Learning Policy. Once enrolled, all students are allocated an adviser and they meet at least once per semester. The right to pastoral care is documented in the College Handbook and is well established with appropriately trained staff on hand to help students.

2.9 A three-day induction event provides students with clear guidance on programme expectations and entitlements, including support in English language and study skills. As part of additional support, considerable guidance is provided in assisting students to achieve their career ambitions, including a personal review process. Following a request from students, two career workshops have been held and more are planned to assist students with improving their profiles and interview skills. Students are complimentary about the College's support services. There is a Disability Support Officer who deals with a variety of learning support needs upon request. Students also have access to tutorials, and support for study skills is available on request.

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

2.10 The College has a strong culture and focus upon research and subject-level staff development, with scholarly activity underpinned by 30 designated days per annum. The Staff Development Committee meets once per year and produces a plan approved by the Academic Board. To further support research and development, and to enhance the quality of teaching, the College has recently reinstated a sabbatical leave scheme for staff to pursue their research interests, following a temporary suspension of one year, which in turn supports the currency of teaching and learning.

2.11 The development of staff is underpinned by individual annual reviews conducted by senior staff. Staff are expected to 'hone' their teaching strategies through reflecting both on feedback from student surveys and from external examiners, and to respond appropriately

to arising issues. A planned external review of teaching and learning has not yet taken place, but remains an action point for senior management.

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

2.12 The College occupies premises in the centre of Glasgow with excellent classrooms, offices, student spaces, and a lift which provides access for disabled students. The building includes a well stocked and equipped library that students value. Students are also able to access resources from a neighbouring university library. Formal student feedback on learning resources is gathered through questionnaires and is discussed at programme committee meetings. To ensure student views inform new resource purchases, the College's librarian attends programme committee meetings and is able to respond to concerns and to understand priorities.

2.13 The College has recently introduced a virtual learning environment to enhance communication with students and to support student learning and access to resources. The students welcome the development as it offers a more flexible approach to learning support and materials. The use of the virtual learning environment was piloted through the BA (Hons) Youth and Community with Applied Theology and is now being implemented across all programmes. It is advisable that the College continues to develop the virtual learning environment to provide all students with greater access to programme information, support and resources.

2.14 Students reported very favourably on the support they receive at every level of the placement process. The team concludes that the well established College procedures and professional links effectively support students' work placements, which is good practice. There are well established procedures for the support of work-based learning which features in a number of programmes, and in particular the BA (Hons) Youth and Community with Applied Theology. The College has well developed links with the professions which support opportunities for work-based learning. The *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* is used to inform placement procedures and this is reinforced by an informative handbook.

The review team has **confidence** that the provider is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of the intended learning opportunities it provides for students.

3 Public information

How effectively does the provider's public information communicate to students and other stakeholders about the higher education it provides?

3.1 The primary source of programme information for prospective students is the College's website. Additional programme information is available at the College open days and through course leaflets available on request. The College has well developed links with local churches and theological groups which play an important role in promoting the provision in the community. The development of additional detailed website information about the programmes would further support potential students' understanding of provision.

3.2 Students reported that pre-enrolment information provided through course leaflets and on the website is clear and helpful in informing their choice of programme. Students also confirmed that programme handbooks contain essential information on programme content, assessment methods and grading, academic regulations, facilities and support services, which is accurate and complete. Most handbooks are provided in hard copy and are also available in the library. All staff, including visiting lecturers, are also provided with a comprehensive manual to familiarise themselves with the policies, operation and administration of the programme at an early stage to ensure consistency and clarity of programme management.

3.3 The College has limited electronic communication with students. Students feel that there is insufficient information available through the virtual learning environment, though they are aware that the College is seeking to develop this area. Students who have to travel some distance to the College would like to see more assessment feedback available electronically, and would value online access to their examination results. Updates and announcements are mainly provided on the College's noticeboards which are not easily accessible to part-time students and students on placement. The team considers it desirable that the College further develops systems, including the virtual learning environment, to ensure parity of access to information for full and part-time students and for students on placement.

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

3.4 Responsibilities for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of published information are clearly defined. The Communications Officer and Vice Principal (Academic and Quality) receive programme information compiled by programme teams and approved by programme leaders. The Vice Principal signs off all materials once they have been checked internally for accuracy, currency and consistency. Although the College has no formal publications policy, there is clear understanding of the process for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information.

3.5 The College has a range of well presented handbooks for undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses, along with guidance documents for staff. All handbooks include clear guidance on academic regulations and details of programme learning outcomes and support. Programme handbooks are updated annually by programme teams and signed off by the College before being passed to the University of Aberdeen for approval. Where new programmes are being developed for validation, the College may publish information with the agreement of the University, but clearly indicating that programmes are subject to approval. The College also provides information for international students who may come to study on a full-time basis, or for a semester as part of study abroad or exchange agreements.

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

Action plan³

International Christian College action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight January 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:						
the extensive use of external members on the College committees and groups helps to ensure the maintenance of academic standards (paragraph 1.2)	Annual Report written documenting the number of external members at each committee	November annually	Vice-Principal (Academic)	Each committee having a minimum of one external member in regular attendance	Academic Board	Annual Report
the establishment of a Professional Advisory Group ensures that programmes are informed by wider developments in the voluntary and statutory sectors and meet the required standards	Ensure that the current BA (Hons) Youth and Community Work with Applied Theology Professional Advisory Group continues to meet annually Consider the	November annually	BA (Hons) Youth and Community Work with Applied Theology Professional Advisory Programme Leader Programme Leaders	Minutes are recorded of the Professional Advisory Group Report to the Academic Board	Academic Board	Programme Committee meetings Academic Board

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 body.

(paragraph 1.7)	establishment of a Professional Advisory Group for each of the College's programmes	November 2012			Academic Board	
the mapping of the College processes against the <i>Code of practice</i> has led to improvements in the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 2.3)	Implement a review timetable for the <i>Code of practice</i> to ensure that it is regularly reviewed and updated	March 2013	Chair of the Quality Assurance Committee	A review timetable is written and agreed	Academic Board	Minutes of the Quality Assurance Committee
the College's comprehensive range of methods for collecting student feedback ensures that the student voice informs enhancements to learning opportunities (paragraph 2.5)	Annual Report written documenting the number of students participating at each committee	November annually	Vice-Principal (Academic)	Each committee having a minimum of one student representative in regular attendance	Academic Board	Annual Report
the College has recently reinstated a sabbatical leave scheme to further support research and development, and to inform the quality of teaching	Promote the opportunity for staff to apply for sabbatical leave at the appropriate juncture	January annually	Chair of Staff Development Committee	Applications received by suitable applicants for sabbatical leave	Board of Directors	Staff Development Committee minutes

(paragraph 2.10)						
the well established College procedures and professional links effectively support student work placements (paragraph 2.14)	Monitor the volume and nature of student placements in undergraduate programmes	December 2013	BA (Hons) Youth and Community Work with Applied Theology, Professional Advisory and BA (Hons) Theology Programme committees	Maintained and improved volume and nature of student placements in undergraduate programmes	Academic Board	Programme Committee minutes
visiting lecturers are provided with a comprehensive manual to familiarise themselves with the policies, operation and administration of the programmes at an early stage (paragraph 3.2).	Update the 'Working in the BA (Hons) Theology' document Develop appropriate documents pertaining to each of the College's programmes	September annually	Programme Committees	Completed and updated documentation	Academic Board	Feedback from visiting lectures

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is advisable for the provider to:						
produce a programme specification for the Certificate in Christian Studies which maps learning outcomes against the SCQF level 7 and assures progression to level 8 (paragraph 1.5)	Review of the Certificate of Christian Studies including SCQF level 7 mapping exercise and assessing its appropriateness for access to SCQF level 8 of the BA (Hons) Theology	November 2012	Vice-Principal (Academic)	Report of the Review	Quality Assurance Committee	Acceptance of Report by the Quality Assurance Committee
explore more formal ways to improve and enhance teaching and learning to build on good practice and to identify strategies to address any problems at an early stage (paragraph 2.6)	Development of a Learning and Teaching Strategy	September 2012	Vice-Principal (Academic)	Implementation of Learning and Teaching Strategy	Academic Board	Student feedback (annual and course)
implement a formal teaching observation scheme across the College to support the enhancement of pedagogy and inform future staff	A formal teaching observation plan, including an appropriate Teaching Observation form and guidance will be developed	February 2013	Vice-Principal (Academic)	Teaching Observation forms received by Leadership Team	Academic Board	Student feedback

development (paragraph 2.7)						
continue to develop the virtual learning environment to provide all students with greater access to programme information, support and resources (paragraph 2.13).	A development plan for the virtual learning environment will be introduced in response to student feedback	September 2012	Academic Registrar	Production of a development plan	Academic Plan	Feedback from students
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:						
regularly review its institutional regulations and quality assurance policies and procedures to ensure their currency in the absence of a quality handbook (paragraph 1.4)	Develop a strategy for a regular review of quality assurance processes	February 2013	Chair of the Quality Assurance Committee	Development of a review document	Academic Board	Quality Assurance Committee
establish a more systematic way of identifying and disseminating good practice to maintain standards and	Development of a system for disseminating good practice	February 2013	Chair of the Quality Assurance Committee	Development of a proposal document to the Academic Board	Academic Board	Quality Assurance Committee

further enhance quality (paragraph 1.10)						
further develop systems, including the virtual learning environment, to ensure parity of access to information for full and part-time students and for students on placements (paragraph 3.3).	A development plan for the virtual learning environment will be introduced in response to student feedback	September 2012	Academic Registrar	Production of a development plan	Academic Plan	Feedback from students

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 one to eight, with levels four and above being classed as 'higher education').

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) and The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland.

highly trusted sponsor An education provider that the UK government trusts to admit migrant students from overseas, according to Tier 4 of the UK Border Agency's points-based immigration system. Higher education providers wishing to obtain this status must undergo a successful review by QAA.

learning opportunities The provision made for students' learning, including planned **programmes of study**, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios) and staff development.

learning outcome What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

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

programme (of study) An approved course of study which provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

programme specifications Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of **programmes of study**, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

provider An institution that offers courses of higher education, typically on behalf of a separate **awarding body or organisation**. In the context of REO, the term means an independent college.

public information Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

reference points Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured. Internal reference points may be used by providers for purposes of self-regulation; external ones are used and accepted throughout the higher education community for the checking of standards and quality.

quality See **academic quality**.

subject benchmark statement A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

threshold academic standard The minimum standard that a student should reach in order to gain a particular qualification or award, as set out in the **subject benchmark statements** and national qualifications frameworks. Threshold standards are distinct from the standards of performance that students need to achieve in order to gain any particular class of award, for example a first-class bachelor's degree. See also **academic standard**.

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

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