



# **London Centre of Contemporary Music**

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

April 2012

## Key findings about the London Centre of Contemporary Music

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in April 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 Middlesex University and Edexcel.

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**:

- the embedding of professional standards, through an extensive range and variety of opportunities and practice, in the student experience (paragraphs 1.8, 2.3, 2.9 and 2.14)
- the Summer Review action planning process (paragraph 2.5 and 2.15)
- the consistent provision of full and detailed feedback to students identifies and critically analyses individual achievement and supports students' creative development (paragraph 2.8).

### 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:

- adopt a more formal approach to recording the business of committees and boards (paragraphs 1.6 and 2.1)
- adopt a system for the collection and analysis of data relating to student achievement which enables it to reflect on trends and the attainment of academic standards (paragraph 1.12).

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

- improve systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning so that they better inform the planning of staff development (paragraph 2.6 and 2.12)
- develop further the formal processes for the gathering and collation of student feedback and for ensuring that students are informed of actions taken (paragraph 2.11 and 2.13)
- make programme specifications more easily accessible to current and potential students (paragraph 3.2).

## About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)<sup>1</sup> (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at The London Centre of Contemporary Music (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 Middlesex University and Edexcel. The review was carried out by Mr Paul Chamberlain, Mrs Rozina Hashmi, Ms Angela Maguire (reviewers) and Mr Peter Clarke (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).<sup>2</sup> Evidence in support of the review included a self-evaluation report, memoranda of agreement with awarding bodies, external examiner reports, handbooks and assessment materials, and meetings with staff and students.

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

- the Academic Infrastructure.

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

The Centre was founded in 2002 as a single subject higher education institution for popular music. It operates from two buildings in south-east London, which between them house specialist teaching facilities, practice rooms, performance spaces, general teaching rooms and administrative offices. It also makes use of external music venues and recording studios. The self evaluation states that the Centre 'strives to provide pre-professional musical training of the highest national and international standards; to produce solo artists, session players, bands, composers and producers who understand the art of music - its performance, theory, technology, history, and context within human culture. The Centre aims to equip its graduates with the breadth of skills necessary for sustaining professional careers in today's industry'.

The Centre offers two programmes, an Honours degree and a Higher National Certificate (HNC). It has 240 full-time students taught by 42 academic staff, many of whom are freelance musicians working part-time at the Centre. There are three support staff assigned to maintenance and estates. In addition to its core higher education programmes, the institution provides a range of evening classes, instrumental lessons, performance workshops and summer schools.

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

### **Middlesex University**

- BMus (Hons) Music Performance and Production

### **Edexcel**

- HNC Music Performance

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<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4).

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx).

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

The BMus(Hons) Music Performance and Production programme was designed by staff at the Centre and validated by the University. The Centre takes the lead on curriculum design and development and on the design of assessments. Both are subject to agreement by the University. The University publishes the programme specifications. The University appoints external examiners, following recommendations from the Centre. For the HNC programme, the Centre identifies particular needs, and meets these through the use of a range of Edexcel-approved units. Centre staff are responsible for the design and marking of assessments, while Edexcel is responsible for appointing external examiners and for the design of programme specifications and intended learning outcomes.

## **Recent developments**

Initially, the Centre operated from a single building and offered a Higher National Diploma and an NVQ level 4 award. In 2008-09, these were replaced by the current programmes. To facilitate these changes, the Centre acquired a second building to ensure that it was able to provide appropriate facilities. These latter premises are on a short lease. The Centre is considering several available options to lease premises designed to meet its specific needs for the foreseeable future.

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

Students studying on higher education programmes at the Centre were invited to present a submission to the review team. It did not prove possible for such a submission to be produced. A student representative met the coordinator at the preparatory meeting and the team met a group of students during the visit. These meetings made a helpful contribution to the review.

# Detailed findings about the London Centre of Contemporary Music

## 1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The Centre has effective management processes in place to fulfil its responsibilities for the academic standards of its two programmes. The Academic Board takes clear responsibility, within the framework of its agreements with the awarding bodies, for all aspects of academic quality and standards. It oversees the implementation of, and compliance with, academic regulations and arrangements for teaching, learning, assessment, examination and progression. The Academic Board's composition reflects the intention to advance a consistent institutional culture in support of a clearly stated mission statement and ensure that all departments are involved in decision-making. The Board of Studies, chaired by the Programme Leader, reports to the Academic Board. Its membership includes student representatives and tutors from each of the programme disciplines. These Board of Studies tutors have sole responsibility for devising instrumental examinations. They also manage other tutors in their instrumental discipline or pathway and provide a significant proportion of the instrumental tutorials in their field. Their role is clearly distinguished from that of other teaching staff, some of whom only have teaching roles and some of whom combine teaching roles with either module leadership responsibility or administrative duties. These arrangements provide a robust framework for ensuring that student assessment is administered appropriately and effectively, while enabling students to benefit fully from an impressive diversity of learning opportunities provided by an extensive network of specialist staff.

1.2 There are appropriate arrangements for the monitoring of the provision, with checks to ensure the closing of the quality loop. Monthly departmental meetings monitor and discuss operational matters. The Academic Board, chaired by the Head of Quality, meets bimonthly and receives summary presentations from each department head, which include reports from the Board of Studies. The Board of Studies, which meets twice a year, monitors the teaching, learning and assessment of students as they apply to specific instrumental disciplines and pathways. Minutes confirm that student views are represented and considered in the management of academic standards. The Academic Board is monitored by the Board of Governors, which receives an annual report prepared by the Head of Quality and the Chief Operating Officer. These arrangements enable the Centre to assure itself and the validating bodies that its management of academic standards is effective. In meetings, staff confirmed their confidence in the efficacy of the committee structure.

1.3 The departments of Education and Quality, which manage all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment, provide effective oversight of the management of academic standards at an operational level. These arrangements meet the distinctive requirements of the Centre and offer appropriate flexibility. Roles of the heads of department are clearly defined. The arrangement of formal structures and differentiation of tutor roles and responsibilities sustain and enhance the practical and professional development of students. This is central to the conservatoire principles upon which the management of academic standards at the institution is based.

1.4 There are effective links with Middlesex University. The University's Link Tutor is responsible, to his or her senior manager, for ensuring the maintenance of academic standards, the quality of delivery, and effective liaison between the two institutions. A representative from the University and staff at the Centre confirmed the effectiveness of

these arrangements and the strong communication links between the institutions. Both programmes are subject to the quality assurance monitoring and review processes set out in the University's quality handbook. In meetings with the team, staff confirmed their knowledge of these processes.

1.5 The Centre's assessment practices and individual assignment briefs provide clear details on deadlines, weighting, formats, submission conventions, content and grading criteria. Assessments conform to these policies. Students confirmed the effectiveness of assessment information and their confidence in the application of grade criteria. Overall, assessment practices support achievement of appropriate academic standards.

1.6 Minutes of meetings do not always clearly or concisely record recommendations, decisions and the progress of agreed actions. The language used in some minutes is inappropriate for the formal recording of proceedings. This makes some of the records difficult to use for purposes of decision making. The team considers it advisable that the Centre adopts a more formal approach to recording the business of committees and boards.

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

1.7 Staff engage effectively with the Academic Infrastructure. This is evident in preparations for the validation of the BMus(Hons) programme in 2008. As part of this process, documents were amended in response to the updating of the subject benchmark statement for music. The Centre's staff work closely with the University Link Tutor who not only provides externality within the validation arrangements but also brings wider international specialist professional expertise of value to the provision. The Centre is an active member of the University's Partner Institute Quality Forum. In preparation for validation, the Centre prepared a summary of the implications for the institution of acknowledging and responding to precepts of the *Code of Practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*). This summary document was updated in 2011.

1.8 The conservatoire nature of the Centre requires that its academic standards are informed by external elements representing current professional practice as demonstrated at the highest level. The profile of the extended tutor team together with the additional master classes delivered by international artists in relevant disciplines ensures that students are provided with a very extensive and varied range of experiences. The embedding of professional standards through an extensive range and variety of opportunities and practice enhances the student experience and represents good practice.

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

1.9 The Centre effectively assures academic standards in partnership with its validating bodies and their appointed external examiners. The Centre holds its own assessment boards as part of the annual review cycle. All procedures follow the guidance provided during validation and the university regulations. The BMus(Hons) assessment board is chaired by a member of the University and consists of key internal academic staff, institutional link staff, the University Link Tutor and the external examiner. The effective operation of these procedures was confirmed by a representative of the University, the staff team and reports by external examiners. HNC assessment boards, which are chaired by the internal head of quality, are conducted according to the same procedures. Conventions for double marking, second marking and sampling are those defined by university regulations. The processes ensure appropriate levels of internal moderation.

1.10 Processes for the consideration of external examiner reports ensure effective scrutiny. They are considered by the Board of Study, internal departments and the Academic Board. They are also sent to all tutors and made available to students through the Board of Studies. The external examiner for the BMus(Hons) has access to all student work and scrutinises a representative sample. The examiner for the HNC scrutinises a defined sample of student work, and meets assessors, moderators and students.

1.11 External examiner reports confirm strong achievement by students and confidence in the academic standards achieved. Minutes from various committees record that issues raised by external examiners are being addressed. For example, the BMus (Hons) external examiner has raised issues regarding a potential conflict between the outcomes of the University's profiling-based degree classification system and the pedagogical imperatives of the validated programme designed by the Centre. This complex issue is being effectively addressed through the structures in place at the Centre and the University.

1.12 Although the process of annual monitoring is appropriate and effective, scope exists to give greater attention to the details of student achievement and its analysis on a comparative basis. Data is available but is not analysed in detail and is not subject to formal scrutiny. The team consider it advisable that the Centre adopts a system for the collection and analysis of data relating to student achievement which enables it to reflect on trends and the attainment of academic 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 bodies.

## 2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

The Centre's processes for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities mirror those for academic standards outlined in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.7. The key responsibilities delegated to the Centre concern the delivery and monitoring of learning and teaching, provision of learning resources, staff development, admissions and student support. The short, and sometimes informal, lines of communication within the Centre facilitate efficient decision-making, allowing enhancements to programme delivery to take place quickly. However, as noted in paragraph 1.6, this informality extends inappropriately to the recording of minutes of meetings. Through its discussions with staff and review of documentation, the team concludes that the Centre has effective mechanisms for ensuring that it meets its obligation to its awarding bodies to provide appropriate learning opportunities for its students.

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

2.1 The use of external reference points is as outlined in paragraph 1.7. The Centre engages with the Academic Infrastructure in its management of learning opportunities through its adherence to Middlesex University's quality procedures. There is also evidence of direct engagement with the *Code of practice* in key areas, through a periodic mapping process to evaluate alignment to the *Code of practice*. Staff awareness of external reference

points is raised through explicit reference to the *Framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* in the Centre's quality manual (White Book). This supports staff in providing learning opportunities appropriate to the level of achievement.

2.2 The professional experience and expertise of academic teaching staff provide a valuable reference point for students. Their contributions are outlined in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.8. Further benefits arise from attendance at the University's Partner Institute Quality Forum.

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

2.3 Staff give due consideration to the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning. This is aided by the Centre's adoption of the University's enhancing learning, teaching and assessment strategy. Staff use of the strategy is demonstrated through the development of detailed module narratives, which outline the teaching and assessment strategy at module level. Both staff and students report that module narratives act as a useful reference point and their constant evolution in response to student feedback ensures the continual enhancement of learning opportunities.

2.4 Operation of an annual programme quality cycle provides an effective oversight of teaching, learning and assessment. This is informed by staff and student feedback along with comments from external examiners. The Board of Studies monitors and oversees enhancement of the quality of learning with evidence of steps taken to modify the delivery of programmes in the light of tutor and student experiences. The review of higher education provision culminates with a Summer Review Action Plan; this allows improvements to be made over the summer period in time to take effect for the next academic year. The enhancements to learning opportunities take place quickly and efficiently with demonstrable benefits to current students. The Summer Review action planning process represents good practice.

2.5 The Centre's systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning are generally effective. However, they are informal and not fully developed. Much comes from extensive joint teaching and a high level of double marking of practical assessments. Some peer observation of teaching has taken place, but not as a formalised system. A draft peer observation form has been developed but it has not yet been implemented and it is unclear how the outcomes of this are intended to contribute to the enhancement of learning opportunities. Some students reported that teaching staff are well qualified musicians and performers but this does not always translate into good teaching practice. The team considers it desirable for the Centre to improve systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning so that they better inform the planning of staff development. Students' views about the quality of teaching are generally positive and these views are shared with the Centre through informal communication with staff and formal written feedback. Students were satisfied that, where concerns had been raised, appropriate action had been taken by staff to maintain the quality of teaching. The Centre's commitment to attracting and retaining high calibre staff with professional experience underpins its ability to provide high quality teaching and learning; this view is supported by students and the external bodies with which it is accredited.

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

2.6 The Centre offers good support to prospective students during the application process through its well designed admissions policy and dedicated admissions staff. The high level of interaction between staff and prospective students and the constant

channelling of information ensures students are able to make an informed decision about pursuing their application with the Centre. Once accepted, students are provided with a comprehensive three-day induction to brief them on the Centre's rules and regulations as well as to provide detailed information about their programme structure and its delivery. Returning students receive a one-day induction to prepare them for their new level of study. Both staff and students commented on the helpfulness of the induction process for students.

2.7 The nature and level of academic support provided to students is good, and is consistent with written information contained within programme handbooks. Great emphasis is placed on individual feedback on assessment tasks and the provision of one-to-one academic tutorials. Assessment feedback to students is comprehensive, rigorous and imaginative. It provides detailed responses which combine summative judgements with analytical formative observations. Assessment of group project and performance work effectively differentiates the contributions of individuals. The consistent provision of full and detailed feedback to students, which identifies and critically analyses individual achievement and supports students' creative development, represents good practice.

2.8 Further support is available through optional extra-curricular classes and dedicated master classes by musicians who are experts in their particular discipline. The opportunity to perform at live events at external venues provides students with learning opportunities which prepare them for life as a musician beyond graduation.

2.9 Pastoral support is generally satisfactory, but informal. While the Centre does not have a dedicated member of staff for the provision of career information and guidance, it embeds this within the curriculum, by, for example, placing students in contexts which will assist them in making industry contacts. This provides them with exposure for their creative work, including performing at external venues. The Centre has produced a detailed student life and housing guide, providing key information for students who are new to London. Academic administrative staff also provide advice and guidance on accommodation and finance along with signposting students to external sources of advice. The Centre is currently exploring ways to develop its provision for pastoral support.

2.10 The Centre uses a set of effective proactive informal processes for collecting the views of students and these are used to inform enhancements to programme delivery. However, formal participation by the student body is limited. Mechanisms for seeking student views include informal discussions with tutors, completion of written feedback questionnaires, and student representation at the Board of Studies. The number of students completing questionnaire surveys has been low, and involvement at the Board of Studies has been limited, although the Centre is now working to improve this. Where students' views have been obtained, staff have generally been responsive. Students are informed about the outcomes of any changes made at subsequent induction sessions and through informal communication with staff. Some students report they are unclear about how their feedback is processed. The team considers it desirable that the Centre develops further the formal processes for the gathering and collation of student feedback and for ensuring that students are informed of actions taken.

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

2.11 The staff training and development policy outlines the Centre's identified responsibilities in providing staff with appropriate development opportunities. This includes support for pursuing postgraduate qualifications and training events at Middlesex University. The staff appraisal process, referred to in the policy, concentrates on the review of modules rather than on the performance of teachers. As a result, it has limited usefulness for the identification of staff development needs. The induction process for new staff is well

supported by the tutor handbook and a quality manual, the White Book. Considerable support for new staff is also available, on a more informal basis, from the Head of Education and other experienced full-time staff.

2.12 Part of the business of the Academic Board and the Board of Studies has involved the sharing and dissemination of perceived good practice. This has resulted in changes to teaching or assessment practices to enhance the quality of learning. For example, sharing of lecture notes and handouts by tutors has enhanced consistency in information provided to students. Staff report that good channels of informal communication ensure staff are up to date with any changes, although some students feel that not all tutors are aware of their teaching responsibilities for curriculum delivery and there needs to be better coordination between teaching staff. Reviewers conclude that the enhancement processes are developing appropriately but clearer communication between staff and students would be beneficial.

2.13 Teaching staff have relevant academic qualifications commensurate with maintaining the Centre's culture of excellence and conservatoire ethos. Most of the academic staff employed by the Centre are also professionals working in the industry; this ensures subject currency.

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

2.14 The Centre has appropriate procedures in place to ensure students have access to relevant resources. The Academic Board oversees the application of the Centre's resources policy and this is applied principally through the Education and Resources departments. The Academic Board has an explicit remit to recommend new resources for programme enhancement. The Summer Review Action Plans demonstrate the commitment to the continuous enhancement of all resources both human and physical.

2.15 The Centre's policies relating to the provision of information technology and other physical resources reflect its role as a specialist music education Centre. The Centre is committed to providing students with the opportunity to use professional industry standard equipment and technology at all times. As part of this commitment, it is updating its information technology resources in a phased approach, which commenced in March 2012 and is planned to be completed by the end of the year. This will enable remote access to the institution through the new website and the creation of an online learning environment. Currently staff ensure that hard copies of course and assessment related materials are made available to all students.

2.16 The Centre has made considerable investment to ensure that students have access to appropriate industry standard equipment, with sufficient space and resources for professional practice. All workshop rooms are supplied with complete, working backline at all times. Effective timetabling helps maximise student access to resources. The Centre also has a small library stocked with the key resources which are adequate for programmes. The team found that the Centre has effective mechanisms to ensure that the physical infrastructure and learning resources are appropriate.

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 Centre has a range of effective mechanisms for communicating information about its provision to students and other stakeholders. The website holds much of the information for prospective students, including module outlines which the Centre is responsible for publishing. The website contains comprehensive and useful information on tutor profiles and facilities, as well as video clips from professionals holding master classes at the Centre.

3.2 The programme specification is updated annually, approved by the University prior to the start of the academic year, and incorporated within the programme handbook. However, it is not well signposted within this large document. The team considers it desirable that the Centre takes steps to make programme specifications more readily accessible to current and potential students. The White Book is a concise amalgamation of three previously distinct handbooks: Assessor Training, Internal Verification and Quality Assurance. It is made available to everyone at the Centre to promote the easy understanding of the quality systems. This book is more student friendly than the 90 page official programme handbook, and is available for the students to download remotely from the Centre's intranet.

3.3 The Centre has evolved in a highly specialised, competitive market and has, from its inception in 2003, paid close attention to the quality, accuracy and comprehensiveness of the information it publishes externally and internally. It does not use UCAS and does not significantly advertise its provision, choosing to rely on academic reputation and word of mouth from staff, current students and alumni. The institution's website and downloadable brochures are its main source of external public information. Any changes to public information required to reflect changes in fees, payment terms and conditions are managed by the Head of Quality, with proofreading and other checks performed by both the Board of Governors and the Academic Board. This is particularly relevant to the process of updating the full-time registration forms. Fee information for full-time courses is available from the admissions department by email or telephone.

3.4 The Centre provides prospective students with a General Syllabus document, which has useful details of the current academic year and sample timetable. In addition, it contains precise details on contact hours, optional classes and individual tutorials, which ensure the students have sufficient hours for professional 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 has appropriate mechanisms for ensuring public information meets the requirements of awarding bodies. The University retains the right to approve and monitor the programme handbook and material relating to the programme. This information is approved by the relevant school within the University and sanctioned by a yearly audit by the University's collaborations department. The Head of Quality and the Academic Board ensure that the Centre's website correctly represents its collaborative arrangements with the University and provides a hyperlink to the University.

3.6 Appropriate processes are in place to ensure the accuracy of information on the Centre's website. This provides key information on the institution's legal incorporation and all forms of accreditation. The mission statement is published on the website and in all handbooks. As with all external public information, editorial control of website content is

managed by the Head of Quality in collaboration with the Academic Board. Once it is finalised, the copy is published and departmental staff are asked to double check both for errors and to ensure staff are aware of any changes. This process is conducted annually as part of the Summer Review Action Plan. The procedure for assuring the accuracy of printed material is managed in the same effective manner as for the website. Editorial control is managed by the Head of Quality. As an additional safeguard, only the heads of Quality and Resources have the authority to instruct the designers or printers to undertake work.

3.7 Departmental heads supervise all agreed developments within their departmental area. The Head of Education and the Head of Quality manage all enhancements and changes to programme handbooks and related module briefs in liaison with the University Link Tutor. The Head of Education ensures that such alterations are then added to the academic timetable and finally any changes that affect the accuracy of the published course content are also made to the external website and brochures under the supervision of the Head of Quality.

3.8 Given that the Centre relies on its reputation to attract students, great care has always been paid to how the institution portrays itself, and more significantly how public information accurately reflects the curricular offer. To date, no specific formal written policy has been required to assure this process and no problems have ever arisen as a result of inaccurate information. However, as the new website, the online learning environment and greater use of social media are introduced, the institution acknowledges that enhanced policies will be needed to enable more staff to play a role in the process.

3.9 The accuracy and completeness of public information is assured through input from programme teams, feedback from students and the coordinating role of the Head of Quality. Students are able to provide feedback on the quality of information through evaluation of induction programmes, student surveys and through student representatives' feedback at programme committee meetings. Students indicated that the information they receive is both accurate and sufficient, a view shared by the team.

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<sup>3</sup>

London Centre of Contemporary Music action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight April 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The review team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the embedding of professional standards, through an extensive range and variety of opportunities and practice, in the student experience (paragraphs 1.8, 2.3, 2.9 and 2.14).</li> </ul>	Explore new ways to attract the best master class practitioners particularly in subjects such as piano, voice and brass	June 2013	Heads of Resources and Social	More master classes with world-class artists	Academic Board	Board of Studies, student feedback questionnaires and Summer Review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the Summer Review action planning process (paragraph 2.5 and 2.15).</li> </ul>	Enhance the template of the Summer Review Action Plan further  In particular divide 'Time table quality assurance' into two - standards and opportunities	July 2012	Head of Quality	The new template to be in place for the July 2012 review period	Academic Board and Board of Governors	Board of Studies, Student feedback questionnaires, annual reports to Middlesex University and Board of Governors

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

	Expand 'Resources', add relevant elements of public info to all sections					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the consistent provision of full and detailed feedback to students identifies and critically analyses individual achievement and supports students' creative development. (paragraph 2.8).</li> </ul>	<p>Improve the speed and flexibility of how students access their feedback through remote learning platforms and other online resources agreed with the Student Committee</p> <p>Enable tutors to publish feedback from home using appropriate checks</p>	July 2013	Academic Board	Feedback will be available to students on the new virtual learning environment	Academic Board and Board of Studies	Board of Studies and student feedback questionnaires
<b>Advisable</b>						
The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adopt a more formal approach to recording the business of committees and boards (paragraphs 1.6 and 2.1)</li> </ul>	Ensure all minutes are written in detail using the latest guidance and templates	July 2013	All internal departmental heads	All minutes will be written in accurate, but concise, long form	Academic Board	Summer Review action plan 2013
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adopt a system for the collection and analysis of data relating to student achievement which</li> </ul>	Add new data summary columns to the results system particularly to give cohort results by	June 2012	Heads of Education and Quality	A revised results summary page will be in place by end of June 2012	Academic Board	Autumn Board of Studies 2012  Final reports for Middlesex

enables it to reflect on trends and the attainment of academic standards (paragraph 1.12).	module					University and Board of Governors
<b>Desirable</b>						
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improve systems for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning so that they better inform the planning of staff development (paragraph 2.6 and 2.12)</li> </ul>	Conclude and select a method for peer review, either building on the developments made from the Board of Studies meeting of 26 March 2012 or devise a new system for Board of Studies tutors to observe other tutors in their discipline/pathway	Easter 2013 Board of Studies meeting	Head of Education	To have agreed the most appropriate system and have created all structures and documents necessary to implement system by the start of the final term of year 2012-13	Academic Board	Board of Studies and student feedback questionnaires
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop further the processes for the gathering and collation of student feedback and for ensuring that students are informed of actions taken (paragraph 2.11 and 2.13)</li> </ul>	Use the proposed new remote learning system and other online tools to gather and communicate the responses to student feedback and Board of Studies minutes to the student body  Continue to analyse student feedback building on from the system introduced in	July 2013	Heads of Education, Quality and Social	To publish Board of Studies minutes and all other formal enhancement-related documents that affect students on the virtual learning environment	Academic Board	Board of Studies and student feedback questionnaires

	2011					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• make programme specifications more easily accessible to current and potential students (paragraph 3.2).</li> </ul>	Add downloadable versions of the programme specifications to the new website	August 2012	Head of Quality	Programme specifications will be available from the public, open website	Academic Board	Admissions Department minutes

## About QAA

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

QAA's aims are to:

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

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

More information about the work of QAA is available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk).

More detail about Review for Educational Oversight can be found at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/tier-4](http://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](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary). Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#)<sup>4</sup>

**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:

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<sup>4</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx](http://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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