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

## The Metanoia Institute

February 2014

## Contents

# Key findings about The Metanoia Institute

As a result of its Review for Specific Course Designation carried out in February 2014, the QAA review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of Middlesex University and London South Bank University.

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

The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

## Good practice

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

- the rigorous and supportive admissions processes (paragraph 2.7)
- the well-equipped training rooms to facilitate the particular nature of taught sessions (paragraph 2.12).

## 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:

- clearly articulate the Institute's approach to quality assurance and enhancement (paragraph 1.6)
- devise and implement a staff development policy linked to the strategic aims of the Institute (paragraphs 1.7 and 2.9)
- develop a strategic approach to teaching, learning and assessment (paragraph 2.1).

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

- devise a system of management communication so that all relevant stakeholders are engaged with Institute academic activity (paragraph 1.3)
- raise awareness of the use of the Quality Code to all stakeholders (paragraphs 1.9 and 2.2)
- develop further opportunities for student representation across the Institute (paragraph 2.3)
- develop a coherent system for gathering, analysing and acting upon student feedback (paragraphs 2.4, 2.8, 2.11 and 3.7)
- investigate the introduction of an online learning platform (paragraph 3.2)
- develop and articulate clear systems for checking and signing off information, both in paper and online formats (paragraph 3.3)
- review all published information to provide a consistent approach to branding and version control (3.4).

# About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Specific Course Designation](#)[1] conducted by [QAA](#) at The Metanoia Institute (the Institute), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of Middlesex University and London South Bank University. The review was carried out by Dr Helen Corkill, Mr Peter Green, Miss India-Chloe Woof (reviewers) and Mr Michael Ridout (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the *[Review for Educational Oversight (and for specific course designation): Handbook, April 2013](#)*.[2] Evidence in support of the review included the Middlesex University Learning and Quality Enhancement Handbook, handbooks, partnership agreements, accreditations, policies and procedures, and the programme documentation supplied by the provider and its awarding bodies. Evidence was also gathered from meetings with staff and students, and from scrutinising samples of student work.

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

- awarding bodies' requirements
- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)
- British Accreditation Council
- professional bodies.

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

Metanoia was established in 1984 as a training organisation and was among the first organisations in the UK to offer humanistic and integrative professional counselling and psychotherapy training programmes. In 1994, Metanoia became an Institute, registered as a charity and became a company limited by guarantee with developing links with Middlesex University. The Institute has two campuses in Ealing, West London, providing teaching environments that are conducive to the Institute's ethos. Teaching and academic management staff are part-time, many of whom have a long association with the Institute. Full-time staff comprise a Chief Executive Officer and a team of administrative staff that provide the support functions underpinning the Institute's activity.

The Institute's vision is 'to invest in the life of individuals, organisations and communities through excellence in training, practice and research in the psychological therapies'. This is achieved through offering high-quality humanistic and integrative programmes of study in the professional fields of counselling, psychotherapy, counselling psychology, coaching, supervision, child psychotherapy and organisational development. The Institute also has professional relationships with a number of bodies including: the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy; the UK Council for Psychotherapy; the Health and Care Professions Council; the British Psychological Society; the European Association for Psychotherapy; and the European Association for Transactional Analysis. At the time of the review, 867 students, the majority of whom were mature and part-time, were enrolled on level 4 to level 8 programmes and 176 students were enrolled on continuing professional development programmes.

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[1] [www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx)
[2] [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx)

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

**Middlesex University**
- Foundation Degree in Counselling Studies (3)
- Diploma/BA (Hons) in Person Centred Counselling (109)
- Diploma in Humanistic Counselling with BSc (Hons) in Reflective Therapeutic Practice (33)
- Diploma/MSc Gestalt Psychotherapy (81)
- Diploma/MSc Integrative Psychotherapy 101)
- Diploma/MSc Transactional Analysis Psychotherapy (199)
- Diploma/MSc Contemporary Person Centred Psychotherapy and Applications (42)
- Diploma/MSc Therapeutic Fostering and Adoption (11)
- MSc in Creative Writing for Therapeutic Purposes (31)
- MSc in Organisational Change and Facilitation (16)
- Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Professional Studies - Joint Programme (60)
- Doctorate in Psychotherapy by Public Works - Joint Programme (1)
- Doctorate in Counselling Psychology and Psychotherapy by Professional Studies - Joint Programme (164)

**London South Bank University**
- MSc in Child Psychotherapy (0)
- MA in Psychological Coaching/MSc in Coaching Psychology (16)

## The provider's stated responsibilities

For both Middlesex University and London South Bank University, the Institute is responsible for curriculum development, programme specifications, recruitment and admissions, course delivery and management, setting and marking assessments, and annual monitoring and reporting. In addition, the Institute has responsibility for the quality of teaching and learning, provision of resources, publicity, monitoring student admissions, retention and completion relating to Middlesex University programmes. In the case of London South Bank University these responsibilities are shared. For joint programmes, there are clear responsibilities set out and adhered to between the Institute and Middlesex University.

## Recent developments

In 2012, the Institute acquired nearby premises in Gunnersbury Avenue, Ealing, as a second campus to support the growth in provision and the continuing professional development programme offered. The Institute is involved in a British Association of Counselling & Psychotherapy-funded project looking at how the person-centred counselling approach may reduce psychological distress in young people. Future areas for course development include humanistic counselling and cyberculture. An international summer school is being organised for July to August 2014. The Institute was accredited by the British Accreditation Council in May 2013. As part of its development plan, the Institute has identified the need to appoint a quality manager to help sustain its recent growth and future direction.

## Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. The opportunity was not taken up by the students. During the review, the team met with a group of students who were very supportive of the Institute and appreciative of the personal development and academic opportunities provided.

# Detailed findings about The Metanoia Institute

## 1 Academic standards

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

1.1     The Institute has a clear strategic vision and a mission statement underpinning its operation. Staff and students at the Institute have a strong belief in and commitment to its ethos. Currently, the Institute is considering strategically whether to submit an application for taught degree awarding powers.

1.2     The Institute is governed by a Board of Trustees drawn from a range of professions, who are responsible for managing its business affairs. There is a Management Committee and Academic Committee which report through the Chief Executive Officer (CEO) to the Board of Trustees. The Academic Committee is the sovereign body for academic decisions and is responsible for academic standards and the quality of programmes. The Management Committee is responsible for the organisation and financial management of the Institute. The Institute also operates a Board of Studies where students from all its Middlesex University programmes provide critical feedback. All committee activity operates within a formal structure. Institutional minutes provide a full record and audit trail of internal academic activity.

1.3     Academic information is cascaded down informally largely because academic staff are part-time. The Institute has five academic departments managed by a head or joint heads with programme and module leaders and academic tutors reporting to them. Each academic department operates as a team and heads communicate information from the Academic and Management Committees to the academic tutors. While the CEO and heads critically review the awarding bodies' annual monitoring reports, information from these as well as the self-evaluation document are not cascaded down effectively to academic tutors. Academic tutors showed little awareness of outcomes from the respective committees and academic reports. It would be **desirable** for the Institute to devise a system of management communication so that all relevant stakeholders are engaged with Institute academic activity.

1.4     All policies and procedures governing the quality of academic programmes delivered by the Institute are contained in the universities' quality assurance and enhancement handbooks. Middlesex University offers the Institute a high degree of academic autonomy over its programmes after 20 years of collaboration. London South Bank University retains a greater degree of control of a relatively new collaborative arrangement.

1.5     For each programme of study, the Institute produces either annual monitoring reports (Middlesex University) or course monitoring reports (London South Bank University) that identify actions as part of the monitoring evaluation and review process. These are written by the heads of department working closely with each university link tutor.

1.6     The Institute does not have its own quality handbook. The CEO expressed the need to strengthen its academic and administrative infrastructure, including its quality systems, to support the rapid growth in student numbers. It intends to recruit a quality manager within six months to underpin and advance a more robust internal quality assurance and enhancement system. It is **advisable** for the Institute to clearly articulate its approach to quality assurance and enhancement.

1.7     The Institute does not have a fully articulated system of staff development. It supports staff in their continuous professional development and encourages a range of development activities, including workshops, conferences and some opportunities for teacher training. The impact of staff development activities on teaching and learning is informally considered, and there is no formal evaluation process. There is no central overview as to how staff development activities link to or support the strategic direction of the Institute or developments in learning and teaching provision. Although a policy for staff development is contained in the Staff Handbook, peer review and a staff appraisal system for academic tutors is overlooked. It is **advisable** for the Institute to devise and implement a staff development policy linked to the strategic aims of the Institute.

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

1.8     The Institute encourages staff to attend conferences and make conference presentations as well as to be research-active and contribute papers to academic journals and author books. The Institute is also accredited by the British Accreditation Council from May 2013 and has entered into a partnership with UCAS (the universities and colleges admissions service).

1.9     The Institute has not fully disseminated the Quality Code or mapped its requirements to its academic activity. Some level of knowledge was demonstrated by one or two senior managers but little by the tutors. It would be **desirable** for the Institute to raise awareness of the use of the Quality Code with all stakeholders.

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

1.10     All Student Assessment Boards include the university link tutor and external examiners. External examiners produce reports on the performance of each student cohort. They are appointed by Middlesex University on a recommendation from the Institute for a minimum period of three years. London South Bank University appoints the external examiners without recommendation by the Institute. The annual monitoring reports are received by Middlesex University and London South Bank University and traverse their respective internal committee systems. Concerns arising from the universities' monitoring processes are fed back orally to the relevant head of department at the Institute to take action.

1.11     Overall, the Institute is effective in managing its responsibilities in maintaining academic standards. The Institute has been accorded a high degree of autonomy particularly with regard to its management of programmes validated by Middlesex University. However, it needs to take greater responsibility and ownership of the management of academic standards to deliver its strategy and mission. To achieve the appropriate level of standards, management requires an articulation of the approach the Institute takes to quality assurance and enhancement. It also needs to devise and implement a staff development policy to support and further embed its strategy. At the same time, a more effective system of management communication across the whole Institute is needed to help foster a more collegiate culture and staff awareness of all academic activity.

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

## 2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 The Institute has a strategic plan and its aims for 2012-18 are clearly outlined. The plan does not explicitly mention enhancement of the student experience. The Institute does not have a learning, teaching and assessment strategy, and staff point to the strategic plan and programme specifications within handbooks as evidence of institutional-level underpinning of learning and teaching. However, institutional oversight is not consistently maintained in all areas, and departments operate without a clear plan setting out the link between learning, teaching and assessment activities and the broader strategic aims of the Institute. It is **advisable** for the Institute to develop a strategic approach to teaching, learning and assessment.

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

2.2 Staff make reference to professional and external bodies (such as the British Association for Counselling & Psychotherapy and the UK Council for Psychotherapy) to inform their practice. However, it is not clear how academic staff are supported in developing their knowledge and understanding of how external reference points such as the Quality Code relate to the principles that underpin the delivery of their programmes.

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

2.3 Student representatives sit on Boards of Studies, which are held by the Institute for validated programmes twice a year. Middlesex University also chairs separate meetings for joint programmes of study. Students on programmes validated by London South Bank University do attend Boards of Studies. Informal Community Group meetings are held within the Person Centred and Transactional Analysis departments. Other departments do not hold such meetings. Student representatives are not provided with formal training for their role and are not currently made aware of training opportunities at Middlesex University. Students are not represented on the Management and Academic Committees. Although opportunity is provided for students to feed back on their programme of study, there is no forum for all students, irrespective of awarding body, to feed back on their experience at the Institute. It would be **desirable** for the Institute to develop further opportunities for student representation across the institution.

2.4 The Institute undertook an internal adapted version of the National Student Survey in 2012. Minimal benchmarking of results was undertaken, the survey was not repeated in 2013, and it is not clear how outcomes of the survey are used to inform learning and teaching developments. Students complete departmental evaluation forms at the end of each teaching weekend, module and academic year. The head of department collates this information at a departmental level, which the CEO sees. However, departmental data is not collated at an institutional level. It would be **desirable** for the Institute to develop a coherent system for gathering, analysing and acting upon student feedback.

2.5 Assessment feedback is commented on favourably by external examiners and students. Some departments have standardised feedback sheets and staff receive a briefing sheet on marking.

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

2.6     Students see staff as accessible and helpful. Candidates on post-qualification doctoral programmes have an academic advisor throughout their studies, and also an academic consultant when they have completed the taught modules of the programme and commence their research. All other students have a primary tutor, with two compulsory tutorials a year. Support is adapted when possible to take into account students' needs, such as video-link meetings for distance-learning and part-time students

2.7     Prospective students attend an information weekend as part of the application process, which forms part of the selection procedure. Students found this experience exceptionally useful preparation for studying at the Institute. The rigorous and supportive admissions processes are **good practice**. There is currently no explicit study skills training for students on validated programmes - those on joint programmes can use support offered by the 'Uni Hub' at Middlesex University. Guidelines on plagiarism are clearly published in student handbooks, and the Institute recently introduced plagiarism management software. There is further support available for students, if required, through academic support teams.

2.8     Progression data is collected by departments and included in annual monitoring reports, and the CEO sees all data. Leaver destination data is collected using a members' survey and collated by individual heads of department. However, there is no institutional-level analysis of departmental progression or destination data.

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

2.9     Continuous professional development is encouraged and participation in development activities is recorded using an annual summary sheet which is held centrally. Development activities are primarily subject-related and/or research-focused, with little emphasis on higher education teaching and learning skills development, such as involvement in Higher Education Academy accreditation or Middlesex University activities. There is no central overview and evaluation of staff development. It is not clear how internal good practice is identified and what routes are available for internal dissemination.

2.10    The induction process for new staff is clearly outlined in the Staff Handbook. Teaching staff speak positively of the informal mentoring in the Institute, with new staff being supported by a relevant more experienced member of the teaching team.

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

2.11    The Institute formally considers resourcing needs through the strategic planning process, involving staff, management committees and the Board of Trustees. Resourcing needs are considered at each programme validation. Staff and students channel resourcing requests through heads of department. There is no formal mechanism for gathering student feedback on the appropriateness and level of resources.

2.12    The Institute is housed in two large Edwardian houses, which have been sympathetically converted to accommodate the specialist training needs of the Institute. Small group rooms are equipped with webcams. All training rooms are well furnished, with multiple sofas and multimedia projectors. This facilitates the particular nature of the taught sessions which is **good practice**.

2.13    The Institute provides a small specialist library, which includes key texts, journals, theses and a collection of videos and DVDs. Some key texts have been written by the Institute's staff. Students confirmed that they considered the library a small but rich resource and would like more electronic resources, including e-books. The searchable library catalogue is available on the website, but some students and staff did not find it intuitive to access. Students valued being able to reserve and renew books online. The library is staffed weekdays and on teaching weekends by two qualified librarians, who are also psychotherapists. Students on joint programmes with Middlesex University and London South Bank University-validated programmes have access to additional learning resources. Staff from Middlesex University contribute to student induction.

2.14    In summary, the Institute is effective in fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of the learning opportunities it provides. It has developed a learning environment within which students and staff feel valued and able to make their voice heard. Students feel prepared for and supported in their studies. However, the lack of learning, teaching and assessment strategy means that oversight at an institutional level is not maintained consistently. To ensure that the quality of learning opportunities is consistently developed and enhanced, the Institute needs to make more use of feedback and evaluation processes. Further opportunities are also needed for students to be represented formally at all levels of the Institute.

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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.

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# 3    Information about learning opportunities

**How effectively does the Institute communicate information about learning opportunities to students and other stakeholders?**

3.1    The Institute produces a useful range of information for prospective and current students, including a well-illustrated prospectus, course brochures and website. Students confirmed they found these helpful in making application decisions. The Staff Handbook provides useful information on access and disability but little is offered for prospective students. Current students are provided with a Student Information Booklet and programme handbooks, which include programme specifications and a curriculum map.

3.2    The website includes a limited secure access section providing library and placements information, pre-course reading and a programme information repository. There is limited evidence of the website being used actively to support teaching and learning. The Institute has not fully explored the use of online resources to support teaching and learning in an expanding institution. It would be **desirable** for the Institute to investigate the introduction of an online learning platform.

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

3.3    The Institute has a variety of informal and formal methods for checking the completeness and accuracy of information. The Management Committee formally approves the prospectus, although the Institute has not developed overarching systems for assuring the consistency and completeness of information in all formats. It would be **desirable** for the Institute to develop and articulate clear systems for checking and signing off information, both in paper and online formats.

3.4    While awarding bodies check and approve published information for accuracy and branding, not all programme materials adhere to this. There is no overarching system to ensure version control of documents, but a variety of informal methods are in use. It would be **desirable** for the Institute to review all information, both in print and online, to provide a consistent approach to branding and version control.

3.5    Current students confirmed that programme information is detailed, updated annually and made available in hard copy and on the website. Some students found the format of the awarding body handbook template confusing. This has been addressed by some programmes producing an additional series of quick guides, with essential information presented in a more accessible format. Students found these useful.

3.6    The Institute currently makes limited use of electronic systems. It has a website, but no electronic management information system or virtual learning environment. Study materials are posted on the website by a part-time web technician. The website is checked periodically by administrative staff but there is no agreed procedure for this. The Institute has recently introduced the use of social media. While outgoing posts are controlled, there is no agreed system for monitoring incoming posts.

3.7    The Institute does not formally invite feedback from students on the accuracy and accessibility of information. Prospective students attending introductory events are invited to give feedback on application information.

3.8    Overall, the Institute produces a comprehensive range of documentation for prospective and current students and reliance can be placed on the information produced. Much of this is extremely detailed and valued by students. There are informal processes in place to check the reliability and validity of information, but few systems run uniformly across the whole institution. Similarly, the Institute is aware of the need to develop complementary electronic systems to provide a professional web presence, management information system and interactive online learning platform. It appreciates that students could play a greater role in providing feedback on enhancing communications.

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The team concludes that reliance **can** be placed on the information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

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# Action plan[3]

| The Metanoia action plan relating to the Review of Specific Course Designation February 2014 | | | | | | |
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| **Good practice** | **Intended outcomes** | **Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes** | **Target date(s)** | **Action by** | **Reported to** | **Evaluation (process or evidence)** |
| The review team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the Institute: | | | | | | |
| • the rigorous and supportive admissions processes (paragraph 2.7) | Maintain a rigorous admissions process<br><br>Study skills for students on validated programmes | Ensure potential students are aware of the admission process through introductory workshops and the website<br><br>Introduce study skills for students on validated programmes | May 2014<br><br><br><br><br><br>October 2014 | Subject/ modality specialists | Faculty Heads | Tutor Reports<br><br>External Examiners' Reports<br><br><br>Report progress to Academic Board<br><br>Feedback from students |
| • the well-equipped training rooms to facilitate the particular nature of taught | Pilot (Adapted NUS) Student Questionnaire to gain feedback on the resourcing levels in the Institute | Analysis of the questionnaire<br><br>Where appropriate implement student responses concerning | June 2014<br><br><br>Implement October 2014 | Research Officer | Facilities Manager<br><br>Joint Staff-Student Committee | Joint Staff-Student Committee Minutes |

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[3] The Institute 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 Institute's awarding bodies.

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| sessions (paragraph 2.12). | | accommodation and support technology | | | Interim report to Academic Board | Academic Board Minutes |
| **Advisable** | **Intended outcomes** | **Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes** | **Target date(s)** | **Action by** | **Reported to** | **Evaluation (process or evidence)** |
| The team considers that it is **advisable** for the Institute to: | | | | | | |
| • clearly articulate the Institute's approach to quality assurance and enhancement (paragraph 1.6) | A Quality Handbook will be devised that will help staff manage academic standards and enhance the learning opportunities for students | Establish a small staff working party to develop a Quality Handbook<br><br>Introduce Handbook to staff at departmental team meetings<br><br>Seek advice from awarding bodies | Terms of reference of working party to be established by October 2014<br><br>Draft Handbook January 2015<br><br>Handbook to be introduced in April 2015 | Faculty Head<br><br>Quality Manager | Academic Quality and Standards Committee<br><br>Academic Board | Minutes of Academic Board<br><br>Production of Quality Handbook<br><br>Supported by awarding bodies<br><br>Feedback from staff |
| • devise and implement a staff development policy linked to the strategic aims of the | A comprehensive Staff Development Policy Handbook that links with the strategic aims of the Institute<br><br>Establishment of an | Establish working party to design a Staff Development Policy Handbook<br><br>Consult staff on design of appraisal system | May 2014<br><br>May 2014 | Head of Central Services | CEO and Executive Group | Staff Development Policy. Evidence recorded in files<br><br>Appraisal System Minutes of the |

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| Institute (paragraphs 1.7 and 2.9) | appraisal system for all staff | Proposals to Executive | October 2014 | | | Working Party |
| | | Update Staff Handbook to include Staff Development and Appraisal Policies and circulate to all staff | January 2015 | | | Minutes of the Executive |
| | | Implement Staff Appraisal Scheme | May 2015 | | | Staff feedback on the appraisal scheme and process |
| • develop a strategic approach to teaching, learning and assessment (paragraph 2.1). | Introduce a comprehensive Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy Handbook that will raise awareness among staff of curriculum design, teaching methods and ways in which to enhance the students' learning experience | Establish (as part of restructuring) a Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee. Remit to be approved by Academic Board and to include both senior academic staff and subject/modality specialists | Committee established January 2015<br><br>Outline structure/ content of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Handbook agreed February 2015 | Chair of Committee | Academic Board | Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee Minutes<br><br>Teaching Learning and Assessment Strategy Handbook |
| | | Develop Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy Handbook | First draft prepared April 2015<br><br>Implemented September 2015 | | | Minutes of Academic Board<br><br>Staff/student feedback |

| Desirable | Intended outcomes | Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes | Target date/s | Action by | Reported to | Evaluation (process or evidence) |
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| The team considers that it would be **desirable** for the Institute to: | | | | | | |
| • devise a system of management communication so that all relevant stakeholders are engaged with Institute academic activity (paragraph 1.3) | Devise a formal committee structure with Academic Board and supporting committees that will allow greater participation of staff in the decision-making processes and a wider dissemination of academic knowledge | Remodel structure to establish an Academic Board supported by subcommittees: Learning, Teaching, Assessment Committee, Academic Quality Standards Committee, Research Committee, Ethics Committee, Joint Staff-Student Committee | Academic Board to be established October 2014<br><br>Sub-committees January 2015<br><br>Structural changes completed September 2015 | CEO | Board of Governors | Minutes of the Academic Board and its subcommittees, with actions, how these have been enacted and closed, and how successfully this information has been distributed to stakeholders<br><br>Feedback to awarding bodies |
| • raise awareness of the use of the Quality Code to all stakeholders (paragraphs 1.9 and 2.2) | Embed the use of the Quality Code and other best practice initiatives in the development and operation of the Institute<br><br>Ensure that the Quality Code is disseminated to all stakeholders via the Quality Handbook | Implement the Quality Code during the design and development of existing and new programmes and in all relevant processes<br><br>Quality Code link to be included in all Student Handbooks<br><br>Staff Team Meetings to ensure staff are aware of | June 2014 ongoing<br><br><br><br>June 2014<br><br><br><br>October 2014 | Faculty Heads<br><br><br><br>Quality Manager<br><br><br><br>Faculty Heads | Academic Quality Standards Committee<br><br><br><br>Academic Board | Academic Quality Standards Committee Minutes<br><br><br><br>Quality Handbook<br><br>Student Handbook |

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| | | the role of the Quality Code in securing academic standards | | | | |
| • develop further opportunities for student representation across the Institute (paragraph 2.3) | Develop formal mechanisms that ensure greater representation of students in structures and processes across the Institute | Establish a small working party of staff and student representatives to identify opportunities for student-led representation across the Institute | November 2014 | Head of Central Services | Chair of Staff-Student Committee<br><br>Board of Studies<br><br>Academic Board | Wider inclusion of students in the decision-making process and greater dissemination of information throughout the Institute |
| | | Report findings to Academic Board and seek approval to implement | January 2015 | | | Minutes of Academic Board |
| | | Introduce new mechanisms | October 2015 | | | Board of Studies Minutes |
| | | | Annual feedback to be given to November 2015 Board of Studies | | | Seek feedback from students at May Boards of Studies |
| • develop a coherent system for gathering, analysing and acting upon student feedback (paragraphs 2.4, 2.8, 2.11, and 3.7) | Develop a system that provides a coherent mechanism for gathering, analysing and acting upon student feedback across the Institute | Develop standardised annual questionnaires for all academic programmes to allow benchmarking of academic quality and student engagement in the decision-making process | January 2015 | Head of Central Services | Chair of Staff-Student Committee<br><br>Board of Studies<br><br>Academic Board | Wider inclusion of students in the decision-making process and greater dissemination of information throughout the Institute |
| | | Analyse questionnaires and report findings to Academic Board and Boards of Study | Feedback to be given to November | | | Minutes of Academic Board |

| | | Where appropriate, seek Academic Board approval to implement findings | 2015 Academic Board and Board of Studies | | | Board of Studies Minutes |
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| | | Continue to participate in the National Student Survey and publish results on website | | | | Feedback from questionnaires |
| • investigate the introduction of an online learning platform (paragraph 3.2) | Introduce, recommend and action an appropriate virtual learning environment (VLE) | Clarify Institute's learning requirements through investigating VLE platforms in conjunction with website development and consider potential solutions by all stakeholders | November 2014 | Head of Central Services/ faculty heads/tutors/ academic coordinators/ librarians | Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee | Introduction of online learning platform<br><br>Report student participation to Academic Board |
| | | Ensure staff/students know how to access VLE remotely | January 2015 | | | Minutes of Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee |
| | | Train Academic Coordinators to consistently upload material on VLE | June 2015 | | | Staff/student feedback on the impact of using the VLE |
| • develop and articulate clear systems for checking and signing off information, both in paper | An overarching system for ensuring the consistency and completeness of information in all formats with clear systems for checking and signing off | Develop publication processes and systems to review creation, editing and approval of all text and record changes to existing publications in all formats for accuracy, | Systems designed October 2014 Academic Board October 2014 | Head of Central Services/Mar keting Subgroup | Academic Board | Corporate Publication and Branding Handbook<br><br>Tracking sheets record all |

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| and online formats (paragraph 3.3) | Corporate Publication and Branding Policy Handbook published | currency and comprehensiveness<br><br>A paper to Academic Board outlining the review undertaken and the recommended actions | Handbook published and implemented January 2015 | | | changes in public information<br><br>Academic Board Minutes |
| • review all published information to provide a consistent approach to branding and version control (paragraph 3.4). | Corporate Publication and Branding Policy Handbook published | Devise processes for systematic review of all information to ensure adherence to Corporate Publication and Branding Policy | October 2014 | Head of Central Services/Marketing Subgroup | Academic Board | All published information produced in line with Corporate Publication Branding Handbook<br><br>Tracking sheets confirm review of published information |

# About QAA

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

QAA's aims are to:

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

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

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

More detail about Review for Specific Course Designation can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx.

# Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary. Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the *Review for Educational Oversight (and for specific course designation): Handbook, April 2013*.[4]

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

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

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

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

**differentiated judgements** In a Review for Specific Course Designation, separate judgements respectively for the provision validated by separate awarding bodies.

**enhancement** The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in QAA's review processes.

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

**framework for higher education qualifications** A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland*.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**provider(s) (of higher education)** Organisations that deliver higher education. In the UK they may be a degree-awarding body or another organisation that offers programmes of higher education on behalf of degree-**awarding bodies** or **awarding organisations**. In the context of Review for Specific Course Designation the term means an independent college.

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

**quality** See **academic quality**.

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

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

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

**threshold academic standards** The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national **frameworks for higher education qualifications** and **subject benchmark statements**. See also **academic standards**.

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