

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

## **Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts Ltd**

January 2014

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## Key findings about Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts Ltd

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

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

The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the 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 mutually supportive and comprehensive partnership with the University of East Anglia (paragraph 1.1)
- the comprehensive annual monitoring process (paragraph 1.3)
- the detailed understanding, mapping and implementation of the Quality Code (paragraphs 1.5 and 2.5)
- the review approach to module enhancement (paragraph 2.3)
- the embedded and deliberative approach to student employability (paragraph 2.11).

### 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:

- provide feedback to students in a timely manner (paragraph 2.4)
- implement a resources strategy to address information technology and communication issues (paragraphs 2.14 and 3.2).

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

- work with the awarding bodies to make external examiner reports available to all stakeholders (paragraphs 1.7 and 3.3)
- fully implement the peer review process (paragraph 2.13).

## About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Specific Course Designation](#)<sup>1</sup> conducted by [QAA](#) at Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts Ltd (the Academy), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of the University of East Anglia and Middlesex University. The review was carried out by Dr Elizabeth Briggs, Dr Philip Davies, Miss Emma Hedges (reviewers) and Mrs Suzanne Richardson (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](#).<sup>2</sup> Evidence in support of the review included the following:

- confirmed validation reports
- Programme Committee terms of reference and minutes of these meetings
- annual monitoring reports
- the Institutional Review Report, October 2013
- responses to external examiners
- student representative meeting minutes for all awards
- staff development sessions
- student and partnership handbooks from the University of East Anglia
- action tables reflecting discussions held between the Deputy Principal and Partnership Manager
- graduate destination data
- a report from Drama UK.

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

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)
- the regulations and guidelines of the awarding bodies
- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)
- Drama UK
- Arts Council England, the national development agency for the arts in England.

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

The Academy is one of the UK's leading drama schools with a long-standing and international reputation for providing high-quality training to actors, musical theatre performers, directors and theatre technicians. The Academy is one of a small group of drama schools offering Drama UK-accredited courses. The approach combines a traditional conservatoire focus on skills-based training with the development of individual creativity and student preparedness for modern careers in the theatre industry.

The Academy was founded in 1945. It has been a higher education provider since 1999 and fully located in the Wood Green Cultural Quarter of North London since 2005. It occupies a number of buildings that offer a range of specialist facilities for performance, production and

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<sup>1</sup> [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)

<sup>2</sup> [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)

short courses and community engagement. In total there are currently 361 students at the Academy.

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

### **University of East Anglia**

- BA (Hons) Performance Acting (126)
- BA (Hons) Performance Musical Theatre (128)
- MA Performance Acting (13)
- MA Performance Musical Theatre (15)
- MA Theatre Directing (6)

### **Middlesex University**

- BA (Hons) Theatre Production Arts (56)

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

The Academy is responsible for curriculum development including programme specifications and intended learning outcomes, setting assessments, first and second marking of assessments, and providing feedback, academic tutorial support and progression information to students. The Academy also has responsibility for providing staff development opportunities and supporting staff to achieve higher qualifications. Library and learning resources and the collation and analysis of student feedback are also within its remit, as is strategic development.

The Academy and the awarding bodies share responsibility for the oversight of the quality and review of all higher education, which includes responding to the annual review initially prepared by the Academy and the provision of public information, including the website and prospectus. They also share responsibility for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning. Middlesex University has responsibility for the student appeal system and the University of East Anglia shares this with the Academy.

## **Recent developments**

In 2011 the Academy entered into a strategic partnership with the London Borough of Haringey with an agreement to relocate the Academy to a site at the former Hornsey Town Hall in Crouch End (Haringey Council determined that Hornsey Town Hall was surplus to their requirements in 2003). Towards the end of 2013, the Academy secured significant financial backing from both the local authority and the Heritage Lottery Fund to enable it to revitalise this Grade II listed former town hall. This will enable the Academy to develop and achieve its strategic vision and mission in upgraded facilities with its own theatres.

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

Students studying on higher education programmes at the Academy were invited to present a submission to the review team. The President of the Mountview Academy Students' Union took the lead in writing the student submission with contributions from a variety of student representatives. The Academy provided details of student feedback to assist the process but the students were given complete editorial control. Students were present both at the preparatory meeting and the review visit, and the team found their views helpful in informing their discussions.

## Detailed findings about Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts Ltd

### 1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The Academy works effectively in partnership with its two awarding bodies. All processes are followed, and are well embedded into the Academy's provision. The Academy is in the process of moving all higher education provision to the University of East Anglia from September 2014. Each University employs a Joint Board of Studies with staff from both institutions, which includes student representatives. Both Universities have a Partnership Office which manages the relations between the Academy and the Joint Board of Studies. The management of academic standards is enhanced significantly through frequent meetings with the University of East Anglia at both strategic and operational levels. These regular partnership meetings are well developed, highly supportive and proactive in the way they address joint academic issues. They assist Academy developments, have a clear agenda to deliver improvements to programmes and are derived from the strong working relationship with the University of East Anglia. The mutually supportive and comprehensive partnership with the University of East Anglia is **good practice**.

1.2 There are clear reporting lines for management decisions within the Academy. Heads of Discipline are responsible for monitoring standards at team level. They report to the Directors of Production and Performance who in turn report to the Deputy Principal. The Deputy Principal manages all processes for academic standards. The Academy Programme Committee is chaired by the Deputy Principal and is responsible for academic standards, planning, and quality and enhancement of learning. The Committee reports directly to the Joint Board of Studies and the Principal who is responsible to the Board of Governors. The Joint Board of Studies has an extensive remit as evidenced in the terms of reference, which include acting as a forum for debate about teaching and learning philosophies. Attendees include the Head of Partnerships, Principal, Deputy Principal, directors and heads and student representatives. The Joint Board of Studies reviews termly the enhancement of academic standards with further scrutiny provided by the Programme Committee. The committee structure and clear reporting lines provide an effective mechanism for the management of academic standards.

1.3 The Academy has a robust system for internal quality review. The Heads of Discipline produce an annual monitoring report for each programme. The report includes data on enrolment, assessment and achievement as well as student and assessor feedback. These reports are reviewed at the annual Monitoring Meeting composed of academic staff, student representatives, recent graduates, professional practitioners, link tutors and partnership representatives. The report is submitted to the Joint Board of Studies which meets three times per year. The Academy produces an annual quality enhancement plan drawn from the outcomes of the annual monitoring reports. Each module contains a range of production or performance components, and these components are reviewed on a three-yearly cycle as part of the annual monitoring process. Individual components are subjected to in-depth analysis; the results act as a rolling action plan for the subsequent year and are reviewed weekly by the Heads of Discipline. The Academy regularly seeks student feedback which is extensive, well documented and includes a regular review of module components. The comprehensive annual monitoring process is **good practice**.

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

1.4 The Academy makes informed use of relevant external reference points. At validation, programmes are aligned to the FHEQ and the subject qualification benchmarks. University regulations, guidelines and due diligence processes are specified in the partnership handbook and are followed closely. External examiners' reports confirm alignment with external reference points. The Academy adheres to their guidelines and the benchmarks of Drama UK.

1.5 The Academy is making effective use of the Quality Code and considers this to be its primary source for setting and maintaining academic standards. The Expectations and Indicators within the Quality Code are well understood and articulated by staff. The Academy has undertaken an extensive mapping exercise of its provision and policies against the Quality Code. This working document has identified gaps and informed improvement and adjustment to practice across the Academy in line with sections of the Quality Code. For example, the mapping of *Chapter B7: External examining* has directly influenced the redesign of the external examiner template to ensure full compliance with the Quality Code Expectations. The detailed understanding, mapping and implementation of the Quality Code is **good practice**.

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

1.6 The Academy has effective processes for checking and verifying academic standards. It sets its own assessments, with all assessment questions approved by external examiners before being issued to students. The programme team carries out internal moderation on a range of assessment decisions, and summative assessment is conducted by a panel of core staff alongside independent marking. All marking is measured against intended learning outcomes and published criteria and moderated by the relevant Head of Discipline to ensure consistency. Following each assessment, the projects are reviewed at a moderation meeting with all internal markers and chaired by a Head of Programme. The moderation meeting ensures parity of marks across class groups. The Academy provides induction, mentoring and written guidance on assessment to all freelance staff to ensure they understand the assessment requirements, marking process and grading criteria.

1.7 The Academy gives full consideration to external examiners' reports. The Programme Committee proposes external examiners and formal nomination, and appointment is made by the awarding bodies. All external examiners receive an induction and briefing pack on appointment. They check assignments and assessment grading, are members of the assessment boards and regularly attend student productions. External examiners produce a report for the Joint Board of Studies which reviews all reports annually to identify Academy-wide issues. These reports are responded to by the Head of Course. External examiner reports are not made public, nor are they readily available to students, who were not aware of them or their importance. The Academy recognises that external examiners' reports should be more widely disseminated. It would be **desirable** for the Academy to work with the awarding bodies to make external examiners' reports available to all stakeholders.

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

## 2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 The Academy has clear and effective arrangements for fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, as described in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.3.

2.2 The Academy manages and enhances learning opportunities through systematic quality assurance arrangements. Action plans are reviewed during the year with initiatives to enhance student learning through curriculum development discussed routinely at weekly Heads of Discipline meetings. Discussions are reported to the Programme Committee which has oversight of programme modifications. The Programme Committee is currently central to the internal process of programme approval and modification, but the Academy plans to replace this with two new committees during the current academic year: the Academic Standards and Quality Committee, and New Programmes Committee. Both will operate with relevant terms of reference and include student representation.

2.3 Annual programme, module and component monitoring reports are extensive. The reviews collate in-depth evaluation of feedback from stakeholders to ensure course content is current and delivery is informed by best practice. Selected module components are reviewed annually. In 2012-13 there was a review of the radio component and the development of the Actor's Working Notebook, initiated following comments from an external examiner who then provided training support. The review approach to module enhancement is **good practice**.

2.4 Student work is assessed regularly, with formative feedback provided verbally and recorded on assessment sheets. Assessment packs contain all feedback from module components, which are reviewed at academic tutorials. There are instances where feedback was later than planned and students were not always able to use this constructively in future assignments. Double marking and moderation are evident in assessment of performance modules. Portfolios document individual and team contributions to theatrical stage productions. External examiners routinely attend final performances. The feedback is constructive and highly contextualised to enable student improvement but is not always provided to the students promptly. It is **advisable** for the Academy to provide feedback to students in a timely manner.

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

2.5 The extent and nature of the use of the Quality Code to manage and enhance learning opportunities is as described in paragraph 1.5.

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

2.6 As part of the Quality Code mapping process, a working group was set up with a specific remit to revise the existing strategy for Learning, Teaching and Assessment. The emerging strategy is informed by the Arts Council England 10-year Strategic Framework and intended for completion in April 2014.

2.7 Student representation has increased significantly over the last two years. The representatives are provided with an induction and follow-up during the year.

Student representative meetings address all aspects of the student experience. Resulting action plans and outcomes are displayed on noticeboards.

2.8 Students complete an annual student questionnaire towards the end of the academic year with any short-term recommendations considered at the weekly Heads of Discipline meetings. Annual monitoring reports incorporate substantial student feedback which is used to inform action plans at both programme and discipline levels. Students are represented on the Board of Governors, the Joint Board of Studies, annual monitoring meetings and validation events.

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

2.9 The Academy endeavours to give students an experience as close to the theatre industry as possible, which includes instilling high levels of discipline and an intensive learning programme with contact time of around 35 to 40 hours per week. This indicates the need for consistent and effective support mechanisms. Students confirm they feel well supported and appreciate all the support available. There is a free counselling service and the programme handbooks contain comprehensive information on the support available to students. The induction process enables students to engage in a comprehensive series of social, study skills support and welfare sessions.

2.10 There is a formal tutorial system which includes both personal and academic-related matters and details are made available to the students in the course handbooks. All students are assigned a personal tutor and attend at least one meeting per term. There are also group meetings with students and tutors operate an 'open door policy'. Tutor groups are selected from across the Academy's programmes and levels, which allows students to provide informal mentoring to others. Feedback from the students confirmed they found this both helpful and positive. Students also benefit from continuous academic and professional support and feedback through the assessment packs.

2.11 Employability is a key feature of all programmes at the Academy, with high levels of immediate graduate employment. Employability is fully embedded across the curriculum, underpinned by contributions from contracting freelance tutors. There are many examples of wide-ranging professional development curriculum activities and evidence of involvement of professional practitioners at Academy events such as annual monitoring meetings and the Joint Board of Studies. There is a Professional Development and Industry Liaison Manager who provides professional support and career advice, develops employability skills with students and capitalises on links with key industry stakeholders. Students confirm they value this support and the vocational opportunities available to them. The embedded and deliberative approach to student employability is **good practice**.

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

2.12 The Academy has responsive arrangements to support staff development needs identified on an individual basis. Management supports a variety of staff development activities including access to continuous professional development at the University of East Anglia and professional industry engagements. At present there is no formal staff development strategy, although the Academy identifies this as an area for development. The Academy will encourage existing teaching staff to achieve Associate Teacher Status of the University of East Anglia during the current year. A register of staff development activities has been compiled recently to inform future development needs.

2.13 Annual peer-to-peer teaching observations take place with reports of observations by core teaching staff reported to the Programme Committee. Teachers receive verbal and



written feedback with identification of areas for development, but these are not consistently followed up through staff development. Staff appraisals are conducted by line managers using appropriately designed procedures. At present, there are no formalised systems for linking peer review with staff appraisal and the identification of staff developmental needs, or for the dissemination of good practice. It would be **desirable** for the Academy to fully implement the peer review process.

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

2.14 Students are provided with a suitable learning and teaching environment, which contains a variety of studios and appropriate learning resources. The Academy plans to move to new premises in the next three years. It recognises that some of the facilities are now slightly dated and continues to hire theatre space, although these are increasingly expensive. Two recent introductions are the Digital Design Suite and the embryonic virtual learning environment. There is no resources strategy to support student learning, information technology or capacity for future growth. The Academy recognises student dissatisfaction with the outdated computers and information technology, and plans to review these and provide further support for electronic communication methods in the short term. It is **advisable** for the Academy to implement a resources strategy to address the information technology and communication issues.

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

## **3 Information about learning opportunities**

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

3.1 The Academy has overall responsibility for public information about learning opportunities which is disseminated through the prospectus, annual reports, programme handbooks, induction activities and the website. All public information is overseen by the Director of Marketing to ensure consistency and accuracy. The Director is currently leading a project to ensure that policy documents are routinely published on the website and the developing student intranet. The Quality Code mapping exercise identified a number of areas where further information such as policy documents require uploading to the website. Feedback from students on public information is not collected formally; however, the student voice is heard and the Students' Union is increasing its contribution to the development of the Academy.

3.2 Students describe day-to-day communication as an ongoing issue resulting from a lack of internet and computer access and subsequent reliance on verbal communication. This has contributed to students missing important notifications such as room changes and information relating to assignment feedback. The Academy recognises that information technology and communications is an area that requires further investment, and has plans to implement an Information Technology and Student Communications Strategy during the current academic year. One action was the very recent introduction of online learning resources which contain information such as course representative meeting minutes and programme specifications, and will also provide updates and advance notices. This requires

further development and population before it fully addresses the communication needs of the student body.

3.3 Students expressed satisfaction with the information received prior to their arrival. The recruitment process includes at least one day of workshops to enable prospective students to understand the opportunities available and the commitment required at the Academy. Students are provided with comprehensive programme handbooks which contain information about student support, complaints, appeals and assessment regulations. External examiners' reports are discussed at the Joint Board of Studies and with student representatives. At present, the full reports are not made accessible to the whole student body. Discussions are taking place between the Academy and the awarding bodies to enable these to be made readily available to all students.

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

3.4 The University of East Anglia Partnerships Office takes overall responsibility for reviewing the accuracy of public information on their validated courses. The University produces, checks and reports on the quality and accuracy of published information such as the website and programme handbooks. These reviews contain recommendations and are considered and actioned by the Academy at the Joint Board of Studies. The arrangements are similar for Middlesex University where websites are checked to ensure information is complete and accurate. The expectations for the management of information from both awarding bodies are set out in the partnership agreements for both Universities. The Academy has recently updated all programme handbooks to ensure consistency. All programme handbooks are now available in a standard template as provided by the Universities.

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

## Action plan<sup>3</sup>

Mountview Academy of Theatre Arts Ltd action plan relating to the Review of Specific Course Designation February 2014						
Good practice	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The review team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the Academy:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the mutually supportive and comprehensive partnership with the University of East Anglia (paragraph 1.1)</li> </ul>	<p>All action tables resulting from the monthly update meetings to be published on the Staff Intranet with a brief report on issues emailed to all staff</p> <p>All outstanding issues to be dealt with in the month of recording</p>	Update actions on Staff Intranet and email report to all staff. Report on University of East Anglia (UEA)/Mountview Action Plan to be disseminated at Executive and APQC	<p>31 March 2014</p> <p>31 March 2014</p>	Deputy Principal	<p>Executive Team</p> <p>Executive Team</p>	<p>APQC and Executive Minutes</p> <p>APQC and Executive Minutes</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the comprehensive annual monitoring process (paragraph 1.3)</li> </ul>	Embed annual monitoring process across Head of Discipline (HOD) meetings in all departments and report	Annual monitoring action tables to be included on agenda and reviewed at student representative meetings	31 March 2014	Deputy Principal	Student Rep and APQC	Student Rep and APQC Minutes

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

	to student representative meetings with communication of upload to Student Intranet to all students					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the detailed understanding, mapping and implementation of the Quality Code (paragraphs 1.5 and 2.5)</li> </ul>	Briefing session on the Quality Code mapping exercise with HODs	Upload all Quality Code Action Tables to the Staff Intranet	31 March 2014	Deputy Principal	HODs and APQC	HOD and APQC Minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the review approach to module enhancement (paragraph 2.3)</li> </ul>	Embed annual monitoring process across HOD meetings in all departments and report to student representative meetings with communication of upload to Student Intranet to all students	Annual monitoring action tables to be included on agenda and reviewed at student representative meetings	31 March 2014	Deputy Principal	Student Rep and APQC	Student Rep and APQC Minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the embedded and deliberative approach to student employability (paragraph 2.11)</li> </ul>	Further develop and embed Industry Liaison across all departments  Further develop graduate destination recording to include all departments	Industry Liaison Manager to develop briefing sessions for all student groups  Industry Liaison Manager to further refine graduate tracking methodologies and present data	31 July 2014	Industry Liaison Manager	Student Rep Meetings, APQC, Executive and Joint Board of Studies (JBOS)	Student Rep Meetings, APQC, Executive and JBOS 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 <b>advisable</b> for the Academy to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provide feedback to students in a timely manner (paragraph 2.4)</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure that all feedback is received by all students within the stated period of time agreed with students and communicated in Programme Handbooks</p> <p>Programme managers to monitor feedback return and report actual return dates on assessment schedule</p>	<p>Consult with students and agree feedback policy for each course and each course component</p> <p>Clearly publish in Programme Handbooks agreed feedback policy</p>	<p>31 July 2014</p> <p>31 July 2014</p>	<p>Heads of Programme</p> <p>Programme Managers</p> <p>Deputy Principal</p>	<p>APQC and JBOS</p> <p>APQC and JBOS</p>	<p>APQC and JBOS minutes</p> <p>Programme Handbooks 2014-15 to be published 1 September 2014</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>implement a resources strategy to address information technology and communication issues (paragraphs 2.14 and 3.2)</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure that an IT resources strategy is developed and agreed by Executive and UEA Partnerships Office with clear deadlines for implementation</p> <p>Ensure that a student communications strategy is developed and agreed by Executive with clear deadlines for implementation</p>	<p>IT resources strategy to be agreed by Executive and student representatives</p> <p>Student communications strategy to be agreed by Executive and student representatives</p>	<p>31 March 2014</p> <p>31 March 2014</p>	<p>Business &amp; Operations Director</p> <p>Director of Marketing and Deputy Principal</p>	<p>Executive, APQC, Joint Board of Studies and Student Intranet</p> <p>Executive, APQC, Joint Board of Studies and Student Intranet</p>	<p>Minutes of Executive, APQC, Joint Board of Studies and Student Intranet</p> <p>Minutes of Executive, APQC, Joint Board of Studies and Student Intranet</p>

Desirable	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date/s	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The team considers that it would be <b>desirable</b> for the Academy to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>work with the awarding bodies to make external examiner reports available to all stakeholders (paragraphs 1.7 and 3.3)</li> </ul>	Ensure that all external examiner reports and accompanying responses are disseminated across all Academy stakeholders	Publish external examiner reports on Staff and Student Intranet	28 February 2014	Deputy Principal	APQC and Joint Board of Studies	<p>APQC Minutes and JBOS minutes</p> <p>All minutes to be referenced and directed to in Programme Handbooks</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fully implement the peer review process (paragraph 2.13)</li> </ul>	All teaching staff undergo a teaching observation every academic year	<p>Implement and embed teaching observation process across all departments</p> <p>Teaching observations to be held on staff files and reviewed at appraisal</p>	30 June 2014	Deputy Principal	APQC and Annual Monitoring Meeting	APQC and Annual Monitoring Meeting 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 Specific Course Designation can be found at: [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).

## 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 \(and for specific course designation\): Handbook, April 2013](#).<sup>4</sup>

**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 Courses 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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<sup>4</sup>[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)



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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