



Oxford Business College

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

May 2012

Key findings about Oxford Business College

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in May 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 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 this awarding body.

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

Good practice

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

- the engagement of the College with its students, using social media in ways that enhance their learning experience (paragraph 3.4).

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:

- communicate the new committee structure for the management of academic standards to all staff (paragraph 1.2)
- formalise the student feedback system to monitor actions taken and inform students and staff of the outcomes (paragraph 2.3)
- publish a formal teaching and learning strategy (paragraph 2.4)
- develop a more formal system of staff appraisal linked to teaching observation and staff development (paragraph 2.7).

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

- introduce a systematic approach to taking action on reports from external agencies to maintain and enhance its effectiveness in managing academic standards (paragraph 1.1)
- use annual reviews to inform its strategic decisions and curriculum development and to disseminate good practice (paragraph 1.3)
- engage more fully with the Academic Infrastructure in order to continue to apply recognised practice in the management of academic standards and quality (paragraph 1.4)
- place all policies within its quality assurance framework, including the internal verification policy in its Quality Policy document (paragraph 1.6)
- offer careers information, advice and guidance to students to help them make informed career and progression choices (paragraph 2.5)
- analyse the retention data to inform recruitment policy and monitor achievement (paragraph 2.6)

- encourage tutors to use the virtual learning environment system to enhance student learning (paragraph 2.9)
- make it clear which pathways and related modules they offer to students in different cohorts (paragraph 3.3).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Oxford Business College (the provider; the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of Edexcel. The review was carried out by Ms Brenda Eade, Mr Jonathan Doney (reviewers), and Mr Christopher Mabika (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).² Evidence in support of the review included:

- policy documents
- records of internal activities in the form of reports and minutes of meetings
- external verifier's reports from the awarding body
- meetings with management, academic and support staff and students
- inspection reports by the British Accreditation Council.

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

- the Academic Infrastructure
- terms of reference of the awarding body.

Oxford Business College (the College) was founded in 1985, to offer professional qualifications. In particular, it offered the Chartered Institute of Marketing's programme which served as an alternative to a degree course both on a full and part-time basis. It also taught an externally accredited Diploma in Business Studies and diplomas in travel and tourism, hotel and catering, management and computing. The College shifted from further education business qualifications towards higher education qualifications that included undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes between 2005 and 2010. Since 2005, it has taught BTEC Higher National Certificate and Higher National Diploma programmes in business, awarded by Edexcel. Travel and tourism and a level 7 professional diploma were introduced in 2010. The College regards its teaching in small groups, interactively and with close attention to individual needs, as a distinctive advantage for students.

Based in George Street, Oxford, in the centre of the city, the College's current enrolment is 80 students studying at the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) levels 4, 5 and 7 from the EU and overseas in equal proportion. It is accredited by the British Accreditation Council.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath their awarding body, with the number of students given in brackets:

Edexcel

- HNC Business Management (17)
- HND Business Management (57)
- Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership - QCF level 7 (5)

The College offers English language tuition to some international students before they embark on their chosen courses. It has arrangements with a number of universities,

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

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

including Oxford Brookes University, for its learners to proceed directly onto their business degrees, through UCAS. Students who are awarded the HNC may proceed to the first year, while those awarded an HND have the opportunity to progress into the second or final year of the degree depending on their level of achievement.

The provider's stated responsibilities

The College teaches and assesses its students. It monitors the quality of its teaching and assessment through an internal verification process. Edexcel maintains oversight of the framework that the College uses to achieve academic standards, through course and module descriptions, expected outcomes, and level descriptors. It carries out regular external verifier's visits to the College to check that it has effective systems and resources to maintain and enhance the quality of learning opportunities for its students.

Recent developments

Management of the College was restructured in October 2011. The College has a new Principal who, together with the Vice Principal, manages academic achievement and the quality of learning opportunities. A newly appointed Quality Assurance Manager monitors quality and advises on standards.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. This was made in the form of a video in which student responses to a questionnaire were recorded. The College provided a script for the video.

The students were invited to a meeting with the review team during the visit. The College sent invitations to this meeting through social media, reaching out to current and past learners. A large number of students attended, including those that attended the preparatory meeting and former students, some of whom had progressed to university and/or are now in work. All students participated actively at this meeting. Their responses to the reviewer's questions together with the video made a useful contribution to the review.

Detailed findings about Oxford Business College

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The College currently fulfils its responsibilities for the management of academic standards. The programmes offered by the College are developed and awarded by Edexcel. The division of responsibilities between the awarding body and the College is clearly defined. The College is responsible for the recruitment and admission of students and assessment of all courses. Edexcel is responsible for the external verification of assessments. The College develops and implements its own policies and procedures, following guidelines provided by the awarding body. Edexcel maintains oversight of these through quality assurance and annual centre verification inspections. The College applies feedback in reports produced during these inspections to raise academic standards and improve the quality of its provision. The College also received reports from the British Accreditation Council in the past two years with recommendations for the College to improve its management of academic standards. The Vice Principal receives all external reports and disseminates them to both management and academic staff. There is, however, no clear system of monitoring feedback from these external bodies. Although some recommendations in these reports are acted upon, the team could not find evidence that all issues are followed through and signed off as completed. It is desirable for the College to introduce a systematic approach to taking action on reports from external bodies to maintain and enhance its effectiveness in managing academic standards.

1.2 The College has a committee structure through which it manages academic standards. This structure was formed in response to a report by the British Accreditation Council in 2011, urging the College to design clear lines of responsibility, develop a robust quality assurance system and institute an annual review of its policies among a number of organisational and quality requirements. There are now two senior management teams, namely the strategic and operational teams. The Strategic Team is chaired by the Managing Director and advises the Board of Directors on the strategic direction of the College and on changes in policy needed to achieve the College's goals, meeting formally every two months. The Operational Team assumes oversight for the Academic Team and of the General Management Committee and is responsible for the day-to-day running of the College, dealing with academic and administrative issues as these arise. Tutors report to the Operational Team through the Academic Committee. A later inspection report by the British Accreditation Council stated that the College had made good progress on a variety of operational aspects and with the majority of the requirements and recommendations detailed in their previous report. However, despite this progress, teaching staff were largely unaware that the committees exist. The team did not find evidence that the organisation of this committee structure is communicated to all staff. The team therefore considers it advisable for the College to communicate the new committee structure for the management of academic standards to all staff.

1.3 The College has appointed senior members of staff to manage the committees, outlined in paragraph 1.2, and academic standards. This places the management of academic standards at the highest level. The Principal chairs the Operational Team meetings. The Principal and the Vice Principal are responsible for academic achievement and the maintenance of academic standards. The Principal has overall responsibility for the management of all higher education courses. The Vice Principal is responsible for the operational management of academic standards, develops the academic programmes and monitors student progress. The Quality Assurance Manager is a member of the Academic

Team and both senior management teams, and is also the College's nominated internal verifier. In this role, the incumbent reviews the College's processes, procedures and systems to ensure compliance with the standards required by external agencies, including the awarding body, advising on their management and maintaining an overview of academic standards. The Academic Team conducts end-of-term reviews of all academic issues and reports to the Principal, who records and takes them up to the Senior Management Team for consideration. At the end of each year, the Senior Management Team and the Academic Team undertake an annual review. Although annual reviews are formally recorded, the review team did not see evidence that they are consolidated into action plans or used effectively to make strategic decisions or as a forum to share good practice. The review team considers it desirable that the College uses annual reviews to inform its strategic decisions and curriculum development and to disseminate good practice.

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

1.4 The College does not make direct reference to the Academic Infrastructure, although there is evidence that it engages with it through the delivery of Edexcel programmes. Staff have limited awareness of the Academic Infrastructure and the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*), and cannot articulate how these inform their working practices. It is desirable for the College to engage more fully with the Academic Infrastructure in order to continue to apply recognised practice in the management of academic standards and quality.

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

1.5 The College has an internal verification policy designed to promote constructive and ongoing dialogue between individual tutors and the internal verifier regarding the appropriateness of assignments and their delivery. The policy contains details of the publication of verification plans with timelines and responsibilities for any changes to assignments. According to this policy, tutors design unit briefs, schemes of work and assignments, and submit them to the internal verifier and Vice Principal for approval. Once approved, these documents are signed off using a checklist provided by Edexcel that has been modified by the College in order to help tutors give more developmental feedback to students. The Vice Principal guides staff on the implementation of agreed changes when required. When completed, marked and internally verified, assessments are subjected to the external verification process by the awarding body. External verifier's reports from the awarding body state that the verification procedures are effective. Members of the Academic Team showed a clear understanding of the processes involved.

1.6 The internal verification policy described in paragraph 1.5 is one of the policies developed by the College as part of its role in the management of academic standards stated in paragraph 1.1. The College considers the internal verification policy as part of the College's quality assurance framework, which has been consolidated into the Quality Policy document. However, the review team could not find any evidence that it is contained in this document. The review team considers it desirable for the College to place all policies within its quality assurance framework, including the internal verification policy in its Quality Policy document.

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

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 The College has well documented responsibilities and effective processes for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. As for the management of academic standards (paragraph 1.3), the Principal maintains oversight while the Vice Principal assumes operational management of the learning opportunities. The Head of Quality scrutinises all teaching schedules and assessments and, in this way, also maintains an overview of the quality of the learning opportunities. Each module leader is responsible for delivering the curriculum, in accordance with the Edexcel module specification, and for the design of the assessment to test the specified learning outcomes for the unit. The internal verification process assures that the criteria set by Edexcel are met both in terms of delivery and assessment. External verification reports from Edexcel confirmed that the internal verification process is effective.

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

2.2 The College indirectly engages with the Academic Infrastructure through its association with Edexcel (paragraph 1.4). It has developed policies for admissions and recruitment and assessment of students, which are in line with the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students* and *Section 10: Admissions to higher education*. Staff use the standards set by Edexcel as the external reference point for teaching, learning and assessment. They also receive regular training in relation to Edexcel courses. This has encouraged them to engage with and understand the purpose of level descriptors, as laid out in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). Students who successfully complete the College's diploma programmes progress to university at the appropriate level, indicating that they are adequately taught and assessed and that the College is effectively engaging with external reference points. The College is considering extending its higher education provision with the development of new partnerships with universities for both undergraduate and postgraduate degree programmes. This makes it even more pertinent for the College to engage more directly with the Academic Infrastructure in managing and enhancing learning opportunities.

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

2.3 It was evident from meetings with students that the College is responsive to issues that they raise. The College collects feedback from students through a range of methods to assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced. These methods include student surveys during induction and at the end of each term and feedback from Student Council meetings. Students attend scheduled weekly skills training sessions and tutorials each term with the Vice Principal. These events are also used to provide feedback on the quality of teaching and learning. The Principal analyses the feedback and holds one-to-one meetings with staff where necessary. The review team scrutinised some of the feedback sheets and concluded that students were satisfied with the teaching and learning they receive. Students are well prepared for their assessments and enjoy a close relationship with the Academic Team. There is little evidence, however, that student feedback is translated into formally recorded action plans. There is no audit trail showing that action plans are signed off and reported back to students. In their meeting with the review team, academic staff also stated that they were not aware of the outcomes of the end-of-course surveys. The team considers it advisable for the College to formalise the

student feedback system to monitor actions taken and inform students and staff of the outcomes.

2.4 The College has effective systems in place to assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is maintained. Classes of 10 to 15 students are taught by an established team of well qualified tutors with industrial experience. Students confirmed in the meeting with the review team that this had a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning they received. They also confirmed that the skills training and tutorials with the Vice Principal, referred to in paragraph 2.3, had a positive impact on their learning experience. Outcomes of these tutorials are formally recorded and a copy given to the student. However, students do not seem to always take up their scheduled tutorials with the Vice Principal. The Head of Quality gives staff guidance on the requirements of the awarding body, but there is no formal assessment of the effectiveness of the teaching and learning achieved and there is no evidence that the College has published a formal teaching and assessment strategy. It is advisable for the College to publish a formal teaching and learning strategy.

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

2.5 The College's support for students starts at the admission and induction stage when students are interviewed to determine their prior learning and any support they require with their learning. Students on the HND are placed onto a 12 or 18-month programme depending on the result of these assessments. All students whose language skills are considered inadequate are given additional English language support before they start their programme. Tutors also provide additional support outside teaching hours through email contact and informal meetings. Learners also receive study skills sessions as part of their main timetable and staff indicated that these have improved student performance. All learners are able to access pastoral support from the Student Welfare and Maintenance Officer while they are at the College. They also receive support with their applications for progression into university, which they confirmed that it is effective and readily available. They, however, indicated that it would be helpful for the College to provide them with careers information, advice and guidance. The team recommends that it is desirable for the College to offer careers information, advice and guidance to students to help them make informed career and progression choices.

2.6 As a measure of the effectiveness of the support it gives to its students, the College analyses and maintains detailed records of student recruitment, retention and progression. These track the performance of each student. It is, however, not evident how this data is used to influence future recruitment or monitor achievement. This is particularly important in planning the recruitment of students onto the Higher National Diploma, which can be completed within 12 or 18 months. The team considers it desirable for the College to analyse the retention data to inform recruitment policy and monitor achievement.

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

2.7 All new members of staff receive effective induction on College policies and the requirements of the awarding body in terms of teaching and assessment through one-to-one sessions with the Head of Quality. Academic staff confirmed that this has a positive effect on the quality of teaching and assessment. The College encourages academic staff to enrol on teacher's training courses. A number of staff have completed the Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTTLS) programme as part of their staff development and two were enrolled onto the course during the review. Staff confirmed that the College encourages them to attend conferences relating to their subject areas, but there are no formal channels through which they can apply for training. The College introduced a

teaching observation scheme in December 2011, but there is no set timetable for them. The Principal conducts the observations using a standard form and discusses the outcomes and required action with each member of staff. However, there is neither a formal process for producing a summary of actions required nor a mechanism for capturing and disseminating good practice from these observations. The Quality Policy document contains a staff appraisal policy, but there is no evidence that it is being formally used. It is not clear how staff development links to teaching observations or curriculum development. The team considers it advisable for the College to develop a more formal system of appraisal that links to teaching observation and staff development to enhance the quality of students' learning opportunities.

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

2.8 The College ensures adequate staffing to support its current cohort of 80 students. It has a complement of 14 part-time teaching staff, three full-time members of staff and 11 administrators of which seven are full-time. Learning resources are also appropriate for the programmes provided. There is a small library with key texts. This has recently been restocked to meet the requirements of the Edexcel programmes. Tutors provide lists of the recommended texts for their modules to the Vice Principal for purchase, using a budget that the College has put in place to cater for such requests. The College has purchased an online library system accessible to students. It allows students to purchase recommended texts, which it buys from them at the end of their course. Students have access to the Oxford Brookes' Library and the local library. Tutors also provide guidance to students on accessing appropriate internet resources. The College has recently updated and replaced all its computers in order to meet the students' needs for information technology resources. Students confirmed that the resources are adequate for their needs and that the College has responded positively to requests for further resources through the Student Council.

2.9 The College currently makes limited use of its virtual learning environment. This can provide academic support and additional learning resources to the students outside the classroom. Students expressed interest for the system to be extended to all members of staff and students, as they considered that it could enhance their learning experience. Staff were, however, less committed to its development. The team considers it desirable for the College to encourage tutors to use the virtual learning environment system to enhance student learning.

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 College provides comprehensive information to its stakeholders. Both paper and electronic methods are used to disseminate information. It considers its website as the first point of contact for prospective students and its most effective marketing tool. An admissions and induction pack provides comprehensive guidance for students. Information provided to students includes details of the courses offered, a general student

handbook, fees and admission requirements and procedures, information on progression opportunities and an academic calendar. Information on operational issues is displayed on noticeboards managed and monitored by the Vice Principal. Programme handbooks provide clear information on course content, assessment regulations and other College policies. The marketing materials that the College produces are designed to provide information on the courses offered and possibilities for progression available to students after completing their courses. These also include student testimonials.

3.2 Comprehensive course handbooks, timetables and study plans are distributed to students at induction. These documents are updated every term. Students and staff confirmed that they received these documents, that they are aware of their content and that they find them useful. The College distributes urgent and important information to students and staff either by email, text messaging, face-to-face, or by posting on noticeboards. The College is investigating alternative methods to obtain a more effective and immediate information system for students, which may include online messaging or social media.

3.3 In its marketing materials the College details several distinct pathways for the Higher National Diploma courses and core modules available to students. However, the current cohort is following only the business management pathway. Although most students knew that they were on a business management course, a few did not appear entirely clear about which pathway they were following or whether or not optional modules are available to them. The review team considers that it is desirable for the College to make it clear which pathways and related modules they offer to students in different cohorts.

3.4 The College effectively uses a social media site for staff and current and past students to interact. Members of staff use this site to discuss various topics with students, including their modules, teaching, learning, and assessment deadlines in addition to the normal discussions concerning College events and use of the site as a social forum. The review team saw postings of academic discussions by staff and contributions from the students. This site is managed and monitored by the Student Welfare Officer and the Marketing Coordinator. Students are enthusiastic about it as evidenced by the overwhelming response to the invitation for them to attend the meeting with reviewers. The review team considers the College's engagement with students through social media in ways that enhance their learning experience to be good practice.

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

3.5 The College has arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information that it is responsible for publishing. The Marketing Coordinator collates all the information from staff, updates the website and checks to confirm that changes have been implemented correctly. The Managing Director provides the final approval for publishing the information. The College has commissioned an external audit of the website to ensure that its content is compliant with UK Border Agency protocols. The upkeep of the site is managed externally by an agency. The College reviews the website annually, but recently has instituted a three-month review to ensure that the information remains accurate and current. The Managing Director keeps a calendar of key dates for the review of public information. At these points the Marketing Coordinator collects information from appropriate staff to be included in brochures and other marketing materials. The Principal and Vice Principal check the accuracy of academic information before it goes to the Managing Director for approval and to the Marketing Coordinator for publication.

3.6 The College plans to start collecting feedback from students on how useful and effective its publications are in meeting their needs. It considers that this feedback would ensure the credibility of the messages it communicates and that the information it provides

meets the students' needs. The Marketing Coordinator has set up focus groups involving students to review the College's public image and literature.

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

Action plan³

| Oxford Business College action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight May 2012 | | | | | | |
|---|--|-------------------|---|--|-------------------|---|
| Good practice | Action to be taken | Target date | Action by | Success indicators | Reported to | Evaluation |
| The review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider: | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the engagement of the College with its students, using social media in ways that enhance their learning experience (paragraph 3.4). | Continuous review, improvement and promotion of social media Offering demonstrations to all staff and students on best usage Link to the new website homepage to allow ready access for potential students | July 2012 ongoing | Student Welfare Officer and Marketing Coordinator | Level of usage Number of active members | Principal | Quarterly recording and analysis of usage figures |
| Advisable | Action to be taken | Target date | Action by | Success indicators | Reported to | Evaluation |
| The team considers that it is advisable for the provider to: | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> communicate the new committee | Structure to be communicated to staff via email and during | August 2012 | Vice Principal | Familiarity of staff with the committee | Managing Director | Discussion with staff during staff meetings |

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

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| structure for the management of academic standards to all staff (paragraph 1.2) | tutor meetings Structure to be displayed on staff noticeboard and included in the induction packs for new tutors | | | structure | | Staff feedback |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> formalise the student feedback system to monitor actions taken and inform students and staff of the outcomes (paragraph 2.3) | Written action plans to be created, following one-to-one meetings between tutors and the Principal to address issues highlighted by students in quarterly student surveys | From July 2012 quarterly | Principal Vice Principal | The creation of an auditable formal feedback system Publishing a summary of the action plans agreed with tutors and Principal | Senior Management Team (Operational Team) | Discussions with students/Student Council Quarterly review of action plans Reports submitted to Senior Management Team (Operational Team) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> publish a formal teaching and learning strategy (paragraph 2.4) | Formalising and communicating our teaching and learning strategy in document form with reference to the <i>Code of practice</i> | September 2012 | Vice Principal Quality Assurance Manager | Publication of the teaching and learning strategy | Principal | Review of document updates by Senior Management Team (Strategic Team) Tutors to sign a form stating they have read and understood the new strategy Close monitoring |

| | | | | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|---|---|--|
| | | | | | | during observations (observation form to include a section on the approach of tutors to applying the new strategy) Question and answer discussion at tutor meetings |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a more formal system of staff appraisal linked to teaching observation and staff development (paragraph 2.7). | <p>Timetabled observations and annual appraisals</p> <p>Tutor meetings to discuss good practice and how best to meet needs through training/development programmes</p> | October/November 2012 ongoing | Principal Vice Principal | <p>Implementation of the new observation/ appraisal system</p> <p>Assessment (by trainers and through self-assessment) against specified learning outcomes for training courses</p> | Senior Management Team (Operational Team) | <p>Senior Management Team (Operational Team) annual reviews</p> <p>Tutor feedback and course success rates</p> <p>Student feedback</p> |
| Desirable | Action to be taken | Target date | Action by | Success indicators | Reported to | Evaluation |
| The team considers that it is desirable for the provider to: | | | | | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> introduce a systematic approach to taking action on reports from external | Creating action plans based on reports from external agencies | July 2012 | Principal Vice Principal | Introduction of an auditable system | Senior Management Team (Strategic Team) | Quarterly internal quality assurance checks |

| | | | | | | |
|--|--|----------------------|---|--|--|---|
| <p>agencies to maintain and enhance its effectiveness in managing academic standards (paragraph 1.1)</p> | <p>Creating a sign-off checklist for recording periodic checks on academic standards</p> | | <p>Internal verifier</p> | | | <p>External verification visits by Edexcel (on average four times a year)</p> <p>Quality assurance visits (periodically by Edexcel, British Accreditation Council and QAA)</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use annual reviews to inform its strategic decisions and curriculum development and to disseminate good practice (paragraph 1.3) | <p>Annual reviews to include the Senior Management Team decisions on future strategies</p> <p>Feedback at annual reviews to be disseminated to Senior Management Team for supporting strategic decisions</p> <p>Recognised good practice to be shared at annual and other tutor meetings and through follow-up discussion between individual tutors and academic/quality assurance staff</p> | <p>December 2012</p> | <p>Principal</p> <p>Quality Assurance Manager</p> | <p>Feedback from tutors, students, Senior Management Team, staff</p> | <p>Senior Management Team (Strategic Team)</p> | <p>Discussions and analysis of evidence at Senior Management Team strategic meetings</p> <p>Records kept</p> <p>Question and answer sessions with the Academic Team</p> <p>Monitoring during observations (observation forms to include a section on how tutors follow the areas of good practice identified)</p> |

| | | | | | | |
|--|---|-------------------------|---|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> engage more fully with the Academic Infrastructure in order to continue to apply recognised practice in the management of academic standards and quality (paragraph 1.4) | Identify relevant reference points in, for example, the <i>Code of practice</i> and ensure awareness and application of related good practice through actions decided at Senior Management Team operational meetings and incorporation of appropriate policies in the College's Quality Policy document | August 2012 and ongoing | Quality Assurance Manager | Timely completion of related documentation and Senior Management Team briefings | Principal | Outcomes reviewed at Senior Management Team (Operational Team) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> place all policies within its quality assurance framework, including the internal verification policy in its Quality Policy document (paragraph 1.6) | Compiling all quality policies in one single document, the Academic Quality Manual | December 2012 | Vice Principal Quality Assurance Manager | Completion of the Academic Quality Manual | Senior Management Team (Operational Team) | Periodic reviews by Quality Assurance Manager and Senior Management Team (Strategic Team) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> offer careers information, advice and guidance to students to help them make informed career and progression choices (paragraph 2.5) | Introducing careers information workshops Inviting careers advisers as guest speakers | September 2012 | Vice Principal | Carrying out careers information workshops (to include guest speakers where possible) | Principal | Feedback from students/Student Council Review at Senior Management Team (Operational Team) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyse the retention data to inform | Retention data to be presented at Senior | September 2012 | Vice Principal | Availability of analysed data to | Senior Management | Senior Management |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|--------------|--|--|--|---|
| recruitment policy and monitor achievement (paragraph 2.6) | Management Team strategic meetings and information to be disseminated to all departments | | | decision-makers | Team (Strategic Team) | Team's use of data in decision-making (Strategic Team) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> encourage tutors to use the virtual learning environment system to enhance student learning (paragraph 2.9) | Training provided for tutors, following completion of trial for uploading data to internal information system | October 2012 | Principal | <p>Feedback from tutors, students</p> <p>Increase in usage of the virtual learning environment</p> | Senior Management Team (Strategic Team) | Senior Management Team project review (Strategic Team) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> make it clear which pathways and related modules they offer to students in different cohorts (paragraph 3.3). | <p>Ensure information is correct at the time of student recruitment</p> <p>Include information on pathways in the student induction held at the start of every term</p> | July 2012 | <p>Admissions officers</p> <p>Vice Principal</p> | Increased clarity and awareness of course details | Head of Marketing and Admissions Principal | <p>Feedback from students</p> <p>Senior Management Team project review (Operational Team)</p> |

About QAA

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

QAA's aims are to:

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

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

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

More detail about Review for Educational Oversight can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/tier-4.

Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary. Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook⁴](#)

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 1 to 8, with levels 4 and above being classed as 'higher education').

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

quality See **academic quality**.

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

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

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

RG 973 07/12

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Fax 01452 557070
Email comms@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2012

ISBN 978 1 84979 627 9

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786