



**Simply Alliance Ltd t/a  
Docklands Academy, London**

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

September 2013

## Key findings about Simply Alliance Ltd t/a Docklands Academy, London

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in September, 2013, the QAA review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in how Simply Alliance Ltd t/a Docklands Academy, London (the Academy) manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality and Pearson.

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

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

### Good practice

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

- the responsiveness to student requests for support and learning resources (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 Academy to:

- establish an assessment board that is constituted separately from the Academic and Advisory Board, which includes all internal examiners and to which external examiners are invited (paragraph 1.3)
- ensure that its strategic planning and oversight of standards is informed by systematic and documented analysis of management information (paragraph 1.5)
- use reputable plagiarism-detection software to screen students' work (paragraph 1.6)
- formally consider and respond to comments made by external examiners in their reports (paragraph 1.8)
- ensure that publicity materials are correctly aligned with the formal agreements with university partners (paragraph 3.2)
- formalise and document its approval process for the publication of information (paragraph 3.4).

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

- include student representatives as full members of the Academic and Advisory Board except for legitimate reserved business (paragraph 1.4)
- amend the staff recruitment policy to specify the essential and desirable characteristics required for teaching staff appointments (paragraph 2.8)
- revise the Quality Manual to remove duplication of description within procedures and to improve precision and clarity (paragraph 3.3).

## About this report

This report presents the findings of the Review for Educational Oversight<sup>1</sup> (REO) conducted by QAA at Simply Alliance Ltd t/a Docklands Academy, London (the Academy), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the Academy 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 Academy delivers on behalf of the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality and Pearson. The review was carried out by Mr Chris Maguire, Professor Tony Whitehouse (reviewers) and Dr Anne Miller (Coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook.<sup>2</sup> Evidence in support of the review included reports from the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality, and Pearson. In addition, evidence was gained from meetings with staff and students and from scrutiny of samples of assessed student work.

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

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- the guidelines provided by the awarding organisations
- the Qualification and Credit Framework.

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

Docklands Academy, London (the Academy) was originally established in August 2009, located in Aston Science Park, Birmingham. In July 2011, the Academy relocated under a new trading name to premises in the City Harbour district of Docklands in London. It occupies four floors totalling nearly 10,000 square metres. There are 12 full-time and eight part-time members of staff. In August 2011, the Academy offered its first higher education programme, the Diploma in Business and Administrative Management at level 5 awarded by the Institute of Administrative Management (IAM). Nine students were enrolled and completed in August 2012. There are no students enrolled on the IAM programmes at the Academy, which has retained its relationship with IAM pending future developments.

The Academy is accredited to run professional programmes for the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality, and Pearson. In September 2013, there were nine students enrolled on programmes of the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality (CTH) and eleven students were enrolled on Pearson programmes. The Academy has signed a memorandum of articulation with Leeds Metropolitan University. The agreement supports progression of successful students from level 5 at the Academy to level 6 on designated business and hospitality awards at the University. The partnership with Leeds Metropolitan University is relatively new and no students have yet progressed to the University. Beyond the scope of this review, the Academy also offers programmes in general English language that are studied on a short-course basis.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/educational-oversight](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/educational-oversight)

<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)

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

### **Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality**

- Level 5 Diploma Catering and Restaurant Management (4)
- Level 6 Diploma Catering and Restaurant Management (2)
- Level 7 Diploma Catering and Restaurant Management (3)

### **Pearson**

- Level 5 BTEC HND Business (5)
- Level 5 BTEC HND Hospitality Management (4)
- Level 7 BTEC Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership (2)

Student numbers are shown in brackets and were correct in September 2013.

## **The Academy's stated responsibilities**

The mission statement of the Academy is to 'build leaders of the future'. The Academy aims to provide progression opportunities for its existing students and to respond to a growing local demand for vocational education at levels 5, 6 and 7.

The Academy has the following responsibilities for all courses: recruitment and selection, monitoring, retention and completion, staff development, learning and teaching, student support and learning resources. The Academy is also responsible for collecting and acting on student feedback and opinion, and for public information, including course and module details, the prospectus and the website.

The awarding organisations are responsible for curriculum planning, overall quality assurance of the awards and provision of programme specifications, the curriculum, core teaching materials, and study manuals as part of their collaborative partnership agreements. In the case of courses from CTH the awarding organisation is responsible for setting, marking and moderating assignments with a shared responsibility for providing feedback to the students. For the Pearson awards the Academy has responsibility for the setting of assignments, initial summative marking and providing feedback to the students. Pearson has responsibility for external verification of assessments conducted by the Academy.

## **Recent developments**

The Academy signed a memorandum of articulation with Leeds Metropolitan University in December 2012 that was updated in August 2013. The agreement enables students who successfully attain designated qualifications from the Academy to apply to the University to study for bachelor's degrees. The Academy has established a range of cooperation agreements with higher education providers in cognate subjects from other European countries to support academic exchange. It also organised and hosted an academic conference on catering and hospitality to which it invited fellow members of the European Association of Hotel and Tourism Schools.

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

Students studying on higher education programmes at the Academy were invited to present a submission to the review team. Two student representatives from the Academy attended a QAA briefing on the Review for Educational Oversight. Following this, a group of four students sought their colleagues' views of their experience at the Academy. Using this information, they wrote a submission on the learner experience. This document was helpful

to the team in preparing for the review. The team also met students during the preparatory meeting and at the review visit. These meetings allowed the team to gather more detailed information about the student perspective.

## Detailed findings about Simply Alliance Ltd t/a Docklands Academy, London

### 1 Academic standards

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

1.1 Responsibilities for the management of academic standards are clearly defined by the respective awarding organisations and understood by Academy staff. The awarding organisations retain overall responsibility for the academic standards of their awards. The memorandum of articulation with Leeds Metropolitan University offers successful students the opportunity to progress onto a relevant bachelor's degree at the University. The Academy has agreed memoranda of understanding with nine overseas organisations to promote awareness of the Academy and opportunities for cooperation. The memoranda of understanding do not reveal any risk to standards.

1.2 The organisational structure of the Academy offers effective management of academic standards and quality. The executive structure comprises a Principal, who has overall responsibility for academic standards, supported by a Deputy Principal, plus Heads of Academics, IT, Operations, Administration, Finance/Accounting and Marketing. The Head of Academics has responsibility for assuring academic standards and quality and is supported by a Head of Quality. Strategic and commercial direction of the Academy is managed through its Board of Directors, which oversees resource allocation. The Academic and Advisory Board is responsible for oversight of academic standards and quality. It is supported by the Quality Committee and the Student Committee. The Quality Committee has a remit to monitor and review programmes and promote quality enhancement. Student performance is a focus of the Quality Committee and Academic and Advisory Board. There is an appropriate division of powers in that responsibilities for academic standards and commercial matters are managed separately. The Principal acts as a bridge between the Academic and Advisory Board and the Board of Directors.

1.3 A lack of clarity in the terms of reference for the Academic and Advisory Board inhibits its effectiveness. The Academic and Advisory Board has strategic and operational responsibility for standards and quality and also fulfils the function of a board of examiners. The mixed remit of the board restricts student participation and limits the formal scrutiny of assessment by an appropriately constituted board. The membership of the Academic and Advisory Board is suitable for oversight of academic standards and quality. It includes executive officers, the programme coordinators, student representatives and an external adviser. It is **advisable** for the Academy to establish an assessment board that is constituted separately from the Academic and Advisory Board, which includes all internal examiners and to which external examiners are invited.

1.4 A student committee reports to the Academic and Advisory Board but student representatives only attend the Board to provide their reports. This arrangement inhibits student engagement and the Board misses the valuable perspective that students can bring to the management of academic standards. It would be **desirable** for the Academy to include student representatives as full members of the Academic and Advisory Board except for legitimate reserved business.

1.5 The Academy's use of management information is limited and the current approach is not practicable for the growth that is planned. The Quality Committee considers annual programme review reports and management information but there is little evidence of detailed and rigorous scrutiny of management information. Annual monitoring relies on

generic reports about undergraduate and postgraduate provision, which are not well designed to provide effective scrutiny of individual programmes. The small size of the Academy enables close management of students' learning which protects standards and enhances quality, at present. External examiners confirm that standards are well managed while progression and completion statistics show suitable student attainment. It is **advisable** for the Academy to ensure that its strategic planning and oversight of standards is informed by systematic and documented analysis of management information.

1.6 The Academy provides guidance on the nature of plagiarism, yet has an imperfect approach to its detection. Closer and more effective oversight of assessment procedures and feedback to students has been introduced. Presentations and oral examinations are used to verify the authenticity of students' work in some but not all modules. Students are allowed to submit multiple drafts of assignments and receive formative feedback but assignments are not routinely checked with plagiarism-detection software. Instead, tutors rely on their detailed knowledge of each student, as their work develops, to detect plagiarism. It is **advisable** for the Academy to use reputable plagiarism-detection software to screen students' work.

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

1.7 The Academy ensures that members of staff are aware of the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) and the regulations of its awarding organisations. The Head of Academics and Quality Manager seek to align the management of standards with the Quality Code and relevant regulations. The Academy has modified its use of policies to ensure that they are translated into academic practice. Academic policy and good practice are discussed and developed at monthly staff meetings, programme standardisation meetings and staff training events. The inclusion of an external academic adviser as a member of the Academic and Advisory Board and the Quality Committee provides helpful externality. External examiners' reports confirm adherence to regulations of awarding organisations and alignment with the Quality Code.

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

1.8 The Academy does not yet have formal procedures for considering external examiners' reports, which are currently only reviewed by senior managers. The Academy has effective arrangements with its two awarding organisations for external assessment and for external moderation and verification. Reports from both awarding organisations confirm the acceptability of academic standards and the quality of learning at the Academy. The staff and students are not involved in consideration of external examiners' reports in line with the Quality Code, Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality, *Chapter B7: External examining*. It is **advisable** for the Academy to formally consider and respond to comments made by external examiners in their reports.

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

## **2 Quality of learning opportunities**

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

2.1 There are effective structures and arrangements for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. The Academy is responsible to its awarding organisations for teaching and learning, student support and the provision of accommodation and learning resources. Members of the academic and administrative staff understand and fulfil the responsibilities for the quality of learning.

2.2 The Principal and the Head of Academics manage the operational delivery of learning and teaching and the allocation of resources to programmes. The Principal is responsible for the overall management and administration while the Head of Academics manages academic matters and the quality of delivery. The Academy has strengthened its academic staff with the appointment of the Head of Quality and two programme coordinators, on full-time contracts. The programme coordinators are responsible to the Head of Academics for programme administration and supervision of academic tutors, including the verification of assessment. Academic tutors on full and part-time contracts are responsible for planning and delivery of learning, assessment and tutorial support for students.

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

2.3 The Academy has recently revised its programme documents to ensure their alignment with the Quality Code. Programme specifications are provided in student handbooks and programme content is informed by the relevant subject benchmark statements. Appropriate reference to the Quality Code is assisted by the Academy's use of the policies and procedures of its awarding organisations. There is strong industry support for work-based learning which provides students with additional external reference points for the quality of their learning. The Academy plans to extend its influence through cooperation with cognate organisations across Europe.

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

2.4 The Academy systematically reviews the effectiveness of its teaching and learning through formal and informal processes. The teaching and learning policy supplies detailed guidance from the awarding organisations in programme specifications. Academic tutors write and use suitable schemes of work and lesson plans that are published through the virtual learning environment. The quality of learning is reviewed by all programme teams and used with student feedback, derived from module reviews, to identify areas for staff development. Students confirm that the quality of teaching is very good.

2.5 Programme coordinators take full responsibility for assessments, teaching and learning observation, plus the approval of teaching and learning materials. They ensure that tutors follow agreed approaches to learning, teaching and assessment.

2.6 The Academy has recognised and responded to a need to ensure that assessment arrangements conform to the requirements of its awarding organisations. The Academy has trained its tutors in the design of assessment to test learning outcomes and in the provision of prompt and helpful feedback. It has modified its grading schemes to ensure that they adhere to awarding organisation guidance. All members of academic staff have recently been trained as internal verifiers for the assessment process and implemented a formal



programme of standardisation. Students confirm that feedback from staff is prompt and assists their understanding of the syllabus. External examiners and awarding organisations have provided positive reports on the impact of the recent changes to assessment. For example, the feedback provided for students is described as good and a reflection on the skills and knowledge of the staff.

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

2.7 The Academy operates a welfare and conduct policy and has appointed two welfare officers plus a specialist in learning needs to ensure that students are supported effectively. New students are provided with a helpful induction during which they receive an introduction to studying at the Academy. Students are assisted in creating individual learning plans to identify their learning goals and given a general Academy handbook as well as a programme handbook. Students are given staff contact details to enable contact with all full and part-time tutors. The Academy evaluates its provision of support through a variety of formal and informal methods. Comments from staff are discussed at team meetings while students' views are captured during tutorials and through the effective student representative system. The student representative on the Academic and Advisory Board provides reports on behalf of the student committee. Students confirmed that tutors are easily accessible and that support is readily available, responsive and helpful.

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

2.8 The Academy expects new tutors to possess formal teaching qualifications that its recruitment policy does not yet specify. The staff recruitment policy is broad and does not specify the attributes required for selection of teaching staff. The Academy seeks to improve the quality of learning opportunities through efficient selection and effective continuing professional development of staff. Currently only two staff hold formal higher education teaching qualifications. By 2015 all teaching staff will be expected to have a teaching qualification recognised by the Higher Education Academy. All tutors recently completed the Preparation for Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) qualification. All newly-appointed tutors are mentored by the relevant programme coordinator. Tutors also follow an informal induction with the teaching team to ensure their familiarity with the requirements of their role. The role of tutors includes the use of the virtual learning environment for which guidance and training are provided. It would be **desirable** for the Academy to amend its staff recruitment policy to specify the essential and desirable characteristics required for teaching staff appointments.

2.9 The Academy evaluates the quality of teaching and learning through teaching observations by programme coordinators under a new peer review scheme. The Academy has enhanced its peer review scheme by introducing an annual requirement for new staff to be observed four times and existing staff twice. Teaching observations and progress in completing continuing professional development are monitored and recorded by programme coordinators on behalf of the Head of Academics. An annual staff development plan is produced and training is provided internally or externally for individuals or groups of staff. In determining its staff development plan, the Academy prioritises provision of professional development for teaching staff on teaching and learning strategies and approaches. The staff development priorities are determined following consideration by the Quality Committee of the programme monitoring reports. Examples include a two day workshop on the assessment arrangements that best meet the awarding organisations' requirements. Staff recognise the benefits of the training provided and of the opportunities to share good practice during team meetings.

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

2.10 The Academy's teaching accommodation is of a high standard, with impressive facilities that provide a good learning environment for students. This includes a library with a silent study area, a welfare office, an information technology laboratory and social facilities. Lecture rooms are equipped with modern teaching and learning equipment. The library holds over 1,700 texts and is open during college operating times, which students confirm to be adequate for their needs. A comprehensive virtual learning environment is provided and contains programme handbooks and specifications plus information on the Academy, assignments, resources, lesson plans and schemes of work. Resource provision is more than adequate for the current and planned student numbers. Accommodation and the provision of learning resources are highly rated by student surveys. The reports of awarding organisations verify that the resources meet their requirements. The Academy confirmed that further teaching staff would be appointed to match proposed student intake.

2.11 The Academy is committed to developing and enhancing its provision of learning resources and is responsive to requests from students. Members of staff discuss resources and submit requests to the directors through the Academic and Advisory Board. Students reported that they frequently request that the Academy library acquires specific texts. Staff and students confirm that requests for learning resources are approved promptly. The Academy's responsiveness to student requests for learner support and learning resources is **good practice**.

The review team has **confidence** that the Academy 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 principal source of information the Academy provides is its website, which students regard as comprehensive, accurate and helpful. The information on the website includes programme details, application requirements, and the circumstances for studying at the Academy and for living in London. The Academy provides programme specific handbooks and a general student handbook, which together contain the information required to support students. Guidance includes information about teaching and learning styles, assessment, facilities and resources. Programme specifications are included with some general advice about studying at the Academy. Assignment briefs provide clear information for students about what is expected of them and include criteria for assessment of intended learning outcomes. Students confirm that they understand what they are expected to demonstrate when completing assignments and are satisfied with the information they receive.

3.2 Inaccurate information is published in the prospectus and on the Academy's website that has the potential to mislead applicants. The inaccurate information concerns the availability of a BA (Hons) Business Management. It indicates that applicants might register with the Academy for levels 4 to 6 of the degree. The award belongs to Leeds Metropolitan University with which the Academy has established a memorandum of articulation. Under the terms of the written agreement, students who attain a level 5 Pearson award may apply

to progress to the University to study at level 6. As the Academy is not approved to deliver the BA (Hons) Business Management on behalf of the University, the published information is misleading. A representative of the University had approved the published text for inclusion in the Academy's prospectus and website. For this reason, senior members of the Academy staff appeared to be unaware that the relevant information was inaccurate and misleading. It is **advisable** for the Academy to ensure that publicity materials are correctly aligned with the formal agreements with its university partners.

3.3 The Academy publishes its policies and procedures for the management of academic standards and quality in a comprehensive but overlong Quality Manual. The manual contains a large number of excessively long procedures, some of which make extensive claims. A management of information policy addresses the Freedom of Information Act but since that Act is only relevant to public bodies, it does not apply to private providers. It would be **desirable** for the Academy to revise the Quality Manual to remove duplication of description within procedures and to improve precision and clarity.

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

3.4 The Academy has a three-stage approval process for assuring the accuracy of public information that is not fully documented nor working as intended. The approval protocol assigns responsibilities for the approval of information to three tiers of staff. The Deputy Principal is authorised to make immediate minor amendments and corrections to published information. Substantive changes must be recommended by the relevant head of function and approved by the Principal. Despite the use of this protocol, members of staff were unaware of mistakes in a published general student handbook. It is **advisable** for the Academy to formalise and document its approval process for the publication of information.

3.5 Consistency in core programme information is assured through the use of standard templates for programme handbooks and assignment briefs. These are checked by the Head of Academics or relevant internal verifier. There is consistency in the information published in the Quality Manual and the information provided for students in programme handbooks. The Academy undertakes reviews of the consistency of information provided on its website and the virtual learning environment using the protocol outlined in paragraph 3.4.

3.6 The Academy is using a new recruitment partner appointment and monitoring policy to strengthen its oversight of external recruitment agents. Formal agreements with 13 agents include specific conditions relating to the management of information that is distributed by the Academy. Under this new policy the Academy supplies agents with standard information packs, and monitors compliance quarterly.

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

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

Simply Alliance Ltd t/a Docklands Academy, London action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight September, 2013						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The review team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the Academy:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the responsiveness to student requests for support and learning resources (paragraph 2.11).</li> </ul>	<p>Facilitate and consider further requests from students regarding learning resources</p> <p>Include agenda items on learner support and learning resources on the Academic and Advisory Board agenda on a regular basis</p>	31 January 2014 and the beginning of every term	Management Team	<p>Students' requests are dealt with promptly and the decided actions to be completed and recorded</p> <p>Learner support and learning resources are reviewed at Academic and Advisory Board meetings</p>	Board of Directors	<p>Academic and Advisory Board meeting minutes</p> <p>Review report on requests and responses produced annually as part of the Annual Report</p>
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the Academy to:						

<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 organisations.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>establish an assessment board that is constituted separately from the Academic and Advisory Board, which includes all internal examiners and to which external examiners are invited (paragraph 1.3)</li> </ul>	<p>To establish an Assessment Panel that reports to the Academic and Advisory Board</p> <p>Ensure that membership includes all internal examiners</p> <p>Relate to UK Quality Code Chapter for Higher Education (the Quality Code), Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality: <i>Chapter B6: Assessment of student and recognition of prior learning</i> when revised version is published</p> <p>Extend regular invitation to external examiners</p>	31 January 2014	Head of Academics and Principal	To establish an Assessment Panel and to prepare its structure, terms of reference, membership, reporting and recording arrangements (taking account of revised Quality Code, <i>Chapter B6: Assessment of student and recognition of prior learning</i> )	Academic and Advisory Board	<p>Assessment Panel and Academic and Advisory Board Meeting</p> <p>Minutes to demonstrate effective operation of the Assessment Panel</p> <p>To include record keeping and reporting to the Academic and Advisory Panel</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that its strategic planning and oversight of standards is informed by systematic and documented analysis of management information</li> </ul>	Implement the strategic plan for undergraduate and postgraduate level programmes related to student numbers, resource planning and standardisation of assessment and	30 July 2014	Head of Academics	<p>Programmes and effective monitoring system in place through standardisation meetings</p> <p>Developed</p>	Quality Committee and Academic and Advisory Board	<p>Minutes of standardisation meetings</p> <p>Evaluation of the management information, conducted by the Head of</p>

(paragraph 1.5)	<p>review at the Quality Committee and Academic and Advisory Board meetings</p> <p>Ensure that all data including student performance sheets, end of module survey results, and observation outcomes are brought together in a coherent report on an annual basis</p>			strategic plan for undergraduate and postgraduate level programmes related to student numbers, resource planning and standardisation of assessment which has taken place across programmes		<p>Academics, as part of the Annual Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programme reports</p> <p>This report will be written by the Academic Department</p> <p>This report will be considered by the Academic and Advisory Board</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>use reputable plagiarism-detection software to screen students' work (paragraph 1.6)</li> </ul>	<p>Internal verifier and teaching staff to review and ensure that all assignments are checked by plagiarism-detection software</p> <p>In the case of any plagiarism issues, the lecturer will deal with the issue promptly, in accordance with plagiarism procedures</p>	31 January 2014	The internal verifier and teaching staff	Plagiarism-detection software is put in place to tackle plagiarism promptly and effectively	Head of Academics	<p>Plagiarism-detection software reports</p> <p>Section in Annual Undergraduate and Postgraduate Programme reports on the plagiarism issue</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>formally consider and respond to comments made by external examiners</li> </ul>	To consider comments and recommendations in external examiner	31 January 2014	Head of Academics and Programme coordinators	Discuss external examiner reports in detail in the Assessment	Academic and Advisory Board	Academic and Advisory Board and Assessment Panel minutes

in their reports (paragraph 1.8)	reports in line with expectations in the Quality Code, <i>Chapter B7: External examining</i>  To ensure that there is a formal and timely written response to the comments and recommendations made by external examiners in their reports			Panel and then report to the Academic and Advisory Board		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that publicity materials are correctly aligned with the formal agreements with university partners (paragraph 3.2)</li> </ul>	<p>To ensure that consent for publicity materials is given by the Quality Assurance Services department of the university partners</p> <p>In other words, to ensure that what it says on our website and in our prospectus reflects what is in the written agreement with the university partners</p>	31 January 2014	Quality Manager and Principal	To ensure that all correspondence is conducted with the Quality Assurance Services of the university partners	Academic and Advisory Board	Quality Assurance Services' memorandum from the university partners regarding the verification of public information to be published
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>formalise and document its approval process for the publication of information</li> </ul>	Implement the system of public information approval (three stage approval form) from	31 January 2014	Quality Manager and Principal	Successful implementation of a public information approval that is	Academic and Advisory Board and Board of Directors	Minutes of (the Academic and Advisory Board and the Board of Directors) contain

(paragraph 3.4).	the Academic and Advisory Board and the Board of Directors  Record formally on meeting agendas (the Academic and Advisory Board and the Board of Directors) that public information has been checked and the approved form signed by the relevant people (the heads of department, Principal, Head of Quality, the chairs of the Academic and Advisory Board and the Board of Directors)			reported to and recorded by the Academic and Advisory Board and the Board of Directors		records of approval of public information and authorisation of documentation by Quality Manager and Principal
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the Academy to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>include student representatives as full members of the Academic and Advisory Board except for legitimate reserved business</li> </ul>	<p>To revise the terms of reference for the Academic and Advisory Board</p> <p>To discuss the issue of student</p>	31 January 2014	Chair of the Academic and Advisory Board	<p>The terms of reference for the Academic and Advisory Board to be revised</p> <p>Student</p>	Academic and Advisory Board	<p>The terms of reference for the Academic and Advisory Board</p> <p>Academic and</p>



(paragraph 1.4)	<p>involvement on the Academic and Advisory Board with the student body and to invite appropriate student representation accordingly</p> <p>Students will attend and participate fully in setting agendas and discussion of developments (except items related to confidential student matters such as assessment results)</p>			representation on Academic and Advisory Board meetings		<p>Advisory Board minutes</p> <p>Commentary in Annual Report on effectiveness of this action</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>amend the staff recruitment policy to specify the essential and desirable characteristics required for teaching staff appointments (paragraph 2.8)</li> </ul>	To ensure that the staff recruitment policy and documentation includes essential and desirable characteristics required for teaching staff appointments	31 January 2014	Quality Manager and Head of Academics	Staff recruitment policy to be amended	Academic and Advisory Board and Principal	<p>Staff Recruitment Policy</p> <p>Evaluative comment on overall staff recruitment in Annual Report</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>revise the Quality Manual to remove duplication of description within procedures and to improve precision and clarity (paragraph 3.3).</li> </ul>	To take steps to revise and simplify the Quality Manual	31 March 2014	Quality Manager and Quality Committee	A simplified and more operationally useful Quality Manual	Quality Committee and Academic and Advisory Board	Review of effectiveness of revised Quality Manual carried out by the Academic and Advisory Board

## About QAA

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

QAA's aims are to:

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

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

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

More detail about Review for Educational Oversight can be found at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/educational-oversight](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/educational-oversight).

## Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary). Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).<sup>4</sup>

**academic 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.

**designated body** An organisation that has been formally appointed or recognised to perform a particular function. QAA has been recognised by UKBA as a designated body for the purpose of providing educational oversight.

**differentiated judgements** In a Review for Educational Oversight, 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.

**highly trusted sponsor** An organisation that the UK Government trusts to admit migrant students from overseas, according to Tier 4 of the UK Border Agency's points-based

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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)

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 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.

**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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