

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

St Nicholas' Training Centre for the Montessori Method of Education Limited

December 2013

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Key findings about St Nicholas' Training Centre for the Montessori Method of Education Limited

As a result of its adapted Review for Specific Course Designation carried out in December 2013, 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 programme it offers on behalf of London Metropolitan University.

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

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

Good practice

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

- the extensive and inclusive support for students with additional learning needs (paragraph 2.4)
- the comprehensive support for students before and while on teaching practice (paragraph 2.6)
- the clear developmental guidance for students about assessment (paragraph 2.7)
- the annual international Professional Development Conference (paragraph 2.13).

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:

- finalise the programme specification for the International Diploma in Montessori Pedagogy, Early Childhood 2.5-6 years, in line with *Chapter A3: The programme level* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 1.7)
- produce an overarching policy on assessment for the International Diploma in Montessori Pedagogy, Early Childhood 2.5-6 years, in line with *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 1.9)
- review the constitution and operation of the Montessori Examination Board and to ensure its alignment with *Chapter B7: External examining* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 1.11).

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

- extend annual monitoring to the International Diploma in Montessori Pedagogy, Early Childhood 2.5-6 years (paragraph 1.5)
- produce a strategic plan to guide the development of a virtual learning environment (paragraph 2.9)
- engage distance learning students in making a fuller contribution to the quality assurance of their education (paragraph 2.11).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the adapted [Review for Specific Course Designation](#)¹ conducted by [QAA](#) at St Nicholas' Training Centre for the Montessori Method of Education (the Centre), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of London Metropolitan University. The review was carried out by Ms Jenny Steer, Professor Donald Pennington (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 \(and for specific course designation\): Handbook, April 2013](#).² Evidence in support of the review included reports from the School Inspection Service, London Metropolitan University, the Montessori Examination Board, the Montessori Schools Association and the Montessori St Nicholas Charity. Further evidence came from reports of the Children, Young People and Families Workforce Development Council, the Open and Distance Learning Quality Council and the British Accreditation Council. In addition, evidence was gained from meetings with staff, students and from scrutiny of samples of assessed student work.

QAA carries out an adapted review for providers who are also reviewed by another approved body. The [Review for Educational Oversight \(and for specific course designation\): Handbook, April 2013](#) provides further details.

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

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- qualification and subject benchmark statements
- Skills for Health level descriptors
- the academic regulations of the awarding body, London Metropolitan University
- the Qualifications 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](#).

The St Nicholas Training Centre for the Montessori Method of Education (the Centre) can trace its origins to 1946 and is part of the Montessori St Nicholas' Charity. The Charity was incorporated in 1954 to promote Montessori education in the UK. The Centre operates from offices in central London and has one awarding body and an internal awarding organisation.

The Centre provides a teacher training programme that leads to an International Diploma in Montessori Pedagogy, Early Childhood 2.5-6 years (the Diploma), which is awarded by the Montessori Examination Board. The internal Montessori Examination Board has a remit for independent validation and examination of the Diploma, which is at level 4. Students can study for the Diploma on a part-time basis in three modes: face-to-face at the Centre, through recognised external centres and by distance learning. Diploma students are required to undertake teaching practice placements, preferably in schools which are Centre approved and, where possible, accredited by the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board.

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx

² www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

The Montessori St Nicholas Charity also includes the Montessori Schools Association and the Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board. The Montessori Schools Association is a professional member organisation supporting Montessori schools in the UK. The Montessori Evaluation and Accreditation Board accredits schools that demonstrate authentic Montessori practice. Such schools are preferred by the Centre as the location for student teaching practice placements.

Since 2009, the Centre has had a partnership agreement with London Metropolitan University to award a Foundation Degree in Montessori Early Childhood Practice. The strategic vision for the Centre as set out in the Montessori Community Manifesto (2012) is to achieve sustainable improvements in the quality of life for all children and their families, helping them to build a better world to live in. Its mission is to work with children, their families and those who support them in their early years, developing a sound foundation for sustainable, responsible citizenship from the earliest years of children's development. The current strategic aim of the Centre is to extend the Montessori approach to support the most disadvantaged communities.

The Centre is led by an Academic Director, a Director of Studies and a team of academic tutors, two of whom have full-time contracts and five of whom have fractional contracts, plus additional tutors who are employed on part-time hours. There are four full-time administrative staff. Additional contributions are provided by the staff of the Montessori St Nicholas' Charity.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education courses, listed beneath their awarding body and organisation with student numbers in brackets:

London Metropolitan University

- Foundation Degree in Montessori Early Childhood Practice - level 5 (26 full-time and five part-time students at the Centre).

Montessori Examination Board

- International Diploma in Montessori Pedagogy, Early Childhood 2.5-6 years - level 4 (153 part-time students at the Centre, 88 part-time students at 13 external centres in the UK and overseas, 488 part-time distance learning students and 271 students on teaching practice).

The provider's stated responsibilities

In the case of the Foundation Degree in Montessori Early Childhood Practice, the University is responsible for overall quality assurance of the award and moderation of the assessment of student work. The Centre and University share responsibility for curriculum planning, strategic developments, provision of programme specifications, provision of core teaching materials and handbooks, the setting of assignments, annual monitoring, staff development, learning and teaching, student support and learning resources. The Centre has the following responsibilities: recruitment and selection, monitoring retention and completion, the initial marking of assignments, providing feedback to students on assessment, collecting and acting on student feedback and opinion, and publication of information about courses in the prospectus and on the website.

In the case of the International Diploma in Montessori Pedagogy, Early Childhood 2.5-6 years the Montessori Examination Board is responsible for overall quality assurance of the award and for the student appeal system. The Centre and Montessori Examination Board share responsibility for curriculum planning, strategic developments, provision of programme

specifications, the setting of assignments, monitoring retention and completion, annual monitoring, learning and teaching, and provision of academic guidance. The Centre has the following responsibilities: recruitment and selection, provision of core teaching materials and handbooks, student support and learning resources, initial marking of assignments, providing feedback to students on assessment, collecting and acting on student feedback and opinion, and publication of information about courses in the prospectus and on the website.

Recent developments

The Montessori St Nicholas' Charity has moved out of the building that it shared with the Centre. As a consequence the Centre has benefitted from new teaching accommodation.

In recognition of the need for greater externality in the award of the International Diploma in Montessori Pedagogy, Early Childhood 2.5-6 years, the Centre is seeking external accreditation with a relevant awarding organisation. For this purpose the Centre has selected the Crossfields Institute which is an educational charity that offers a quality assurance service. The Crossfields Institute is currently seeking recognition by Ofqual as an awarding organisation in 2014. The Centre intends to establish a formal accreditation arrangement with the Crossfields Institute by the start of the academic year 2014-15.

London Metropolitan University reviewed and revalidated the Foundation Degree in Montessori Early Childhood Practice in April 2013. All conditions have been met and the recommendations on continuing professional development exceeded. New members of University staff have been assigned to the partnership under new arrangements at the University.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education courses at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. A seven minute film prepared by student representatives was produced using collated evidence from records of course committees and surveys of student opinion. Students met the coordinator at the preparatory meeting and the team during the review visit, and made a very helpful contribution to the review.

Detailed findings about St Nicholas' Training Centre for the Montessori Method of Education

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 Responsibilities for the management of academic standards are clearly defined by the awarding body in the Institutional Memorandum of Agreement between London Metropolitan University (the University) and the Centre. They are understood by Centre staff. The University uses clear and comprehensive quality assurance processes for the foundation degree. The memorandum of agreement with the University offers successful students the opportunity to progress onto a relevant bachelor's degree at the University.

1.2 The organisational structure of the Centre offers appropriate arrangements for the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. The executive structure comprises an Academic Director with overall responsibility for academic standards, supported by a Director of Studies who oversees programme delivery. Two programme leaders and the Distance Learning Operations Manager manage operational delivery in conjunction with the Director of Studies.

1.3 The Academic Committee of the Montessori St Nicholas Charity is effective in overseeing academic standards and quality of all provision. The Academic Director is responsible to the Montessori St Nicholas Charity Chief Executive and reports formally to the Academic Committee meetings three times a year. The Diploma is validated by the Montessori Examination Board that comprises three board members and an external examiner. The Montessori Examination Board is supported by the Academic Director, as internal examiner, and an examinations officer.

1.4 A non-hierarchical system of meetings matches the egalitarian ethos of the organisation. Each year staff associated with the Diploma meet three times to review student progression and achievement and to receive and discuss reports from the Montessori Examination Board. Three similar meetings of foundation degree staff consider programme delivery. Foundation degree students' achievement and progression and external examiner's reports are considered at Performance Enhancement Meetings with the University's staff and the external examiner. Arrangements for recording and reporting work well yet staff identified scope for standardised recording of the decisions made when working in task groups. Each semester foundation degree tutors and the University liaison tutor meet student representatives at student course committee meetings to obtain feedback. The course leader includes the student feedback in the annual course monitoring report for the University.

1.5 The Centre has effective arrangements for annual monitoring of the foundation degree, while arrangements for annual monitoring of the Diploma have been identified for development. Annual monitoring reports about the foundation degree comprise minutes of student committee meetings, a course log and a performance evaluation incorporating management information. Annual monitoring of the Diploma taught at the Centre is confined to reporting of examination results. Similarly delivery of the distance learning version of the Diploma is monitored by a descriptive rather than evaluative end-of-year report. It would be **desirable** for the provider to extend annual monitoring to the Diploma.

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

1.6 The Centre makes effective use of external reference points in the construction and development of the foundation degree and in the mapping of the Diploma. Members of staff have a sound and improving understanding of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) as they engage with it in developing the Diploma. The Centre's inclusive admissions policy and scrupulous practice align with the *Chapter B2: Admissions* of the Quality Code.

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

1.7 The Centre has not yet fully developed a programme specification for the Diploma and this is affecting the clarity of assessment information. The Centre uses task briefing sheets approved by the Montessori Examination Board to inform students about assignments on the Diploma. In the absence of specified intended learning outcomes, the task briefing sheets contain only generic or broadly specified criteria for assessment. The Centre wishes to bring assessment on the Diploma in line with the practice on the Foundation degree. Staff are identifying Diploma learning outcomes on which to base a full programme specification. It is **advisable** for the Centre to finalise the programme specification for the Diploma in line with *Chapter A3: The programme level* of the Quality Code.

1.8 The Centre has systematic protocols for assessment, moderation and resubmission. Examples of effective assessment practice include robust arrangements for moderation of assessment on the taught Diploma. The moderation process for the extensive provision in distance learning is fit for purpose. The Centre successfully recalibrated its pass mark for the Diploma to unify marking standards with those for the Foundation Degree.

1.9 The approach to handling extenuating circumstances on the Diploma lacks clarity. The emphasis placed on supporting the needs of the individual yields flexible and informal arrangements for late submission of work. It would be helpful for the Centre to specify and use definitive procedures for dealing with extenuating circumstances. It is **advisable** for the Centre to produce an overarching policy on assessment for the Diploma in line with *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning* of the Quality Code.

1.10 The arrangements for assessment and moderation on the foundation degree are substantial and rigorous. The Centre is responsible for first and second marking of coursework against the University's marking scheme. The University samples and moderates coursework, and performance analyses demonstrate that pass rates match University's benchmarks.

1.11 The Montessori Examination Board holds three meetings during each academic year. The recording and evaluation of assessment by the Montessori Examination Board has been rigorous and there is useful and effective reporting of results. Outcomes are disseminated to the extensive and international network of Montessori Centre International trainers in the annual Professional Development Conference. The constitution of the Montessori Examination Board does not specify criteria for the appointment and term of office for its members and the external examiner. As a consequence the term of office for the external examiner has exceeded the normal four years specified in the Quality Code. In addition, staff expressed a concern that the Board may lack the appearance of impartiality and independence. It is **advisable** for the Centre to review the constitution and operation of

the Montessori Examination Board and to ensure its alignment with *Chapter B7: External examining* of the Quality Code.

1.12 There are thorough arrangements for the University appointment of an external examiner for the Foundation Degree. Reports are made to the University and copies are sent to the Centre for consideration.

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

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 There is a clear structure for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities that is understood by staff and students (paragraph 1.2). The arrangements match the requirements of the awarding body and the Montessori Examination Board and yield improvements. For example, an Operations Manager for Distance Learning is tasked with enhancing arrangements for those studying at a distance.

2.2 The Centre makes competent and practical use of the Montessori method in its strategies for teaching, learning and assessment. It is a requirement that all teaching staff are Montessori trained as well as possessing degree level qualifications. There are plans to write a teaching and learning strategy that enshrines the Montessori approach.

2.3 A thorough admissions process for the Diploma operates in accordance with the Centre's policies which align well with the Quality Code. A standardised approach to interviewing all prospective students enables careful selection of suitable candidates. Staff from the Centre and the University jointly consider all applications for the foundation degree. Findings from surveys of students' opinions about the application and admissions process are used to identify and make improvements.

2.4 There is a strong commitment to an inclusive admissions process that enables students with additional learning needs to access higher education. The Centre skilfully enables the learning of students with additional needs and a designated tutor has responsibility for coordinating vital support. The extensive and inclusive support for students with additional learning needs is **good practice**.

2.5 Montessori principles inform and are translated into a student-centred approach to learning. The Centre successfully uses learning agreements to empower Diploma students to become proactive and independent learners. Students are provided with timetabled tutorials where they can discuss academic and other matters with a nominated group tutor. The Centre makes use of personal development portfolios for foundation degree students and is considering their use on the Diploma. One afternoon a week is designated for enrichment sessions which are open to all students and feature a range of external specialist speakers. The Centre supports students to undertake further learning opportunities, for example, foundation degree students may progress to the University to complete their studies.

2.6 Students on the Diploma are required to undertake teaching practice, for which the Centre provides effective support and guidance. Students are provided with a guide to

teaching practice, and a designated tutor offers regular teaching practice surgeries for students prior to starting their teaching practice. When students are ready to commence their teaching practice placement they are provided with a comprehensive Teaching Practice Handbook. The comprehensive support for students before and while on teaching practice is **good practice**.

2.7 The Centre provides clear and supportive guidance to students about its helpfully diverse range of assessment approaches. The provision of valuable formative feedback on assessment enables students to identify areas for improvement and contributes to a high quality learning experience. The clear developmental guidance for students about assessment is **good practice**.

2.8 The Centre is vigilant in its provision of learning resources to meet the needs of a wide range of learners. Students who study at the Centre report high levels of satisfaction with available learning resources. There is a library with a comprehensive range of early childhood publications, journals and multimedia resources. The library uses an annual budget allocation to maintain a stock of recent and relevant publications. Distance learning students confirmed that their learning and assessment is adequately supported by the range of physical and electronic learning resources. The Centre and University share a learning resources statement to assure resource provision for the foundation degree.

2.9 The Centre is carefully implementing an action plan to develop a virtual learning environment for all students. The Director of Studies and the Operations Manager for Distance Learning are evaluating relevant software tools against the Centre's pedagogic approach. Information and learning materials are currently provided through the internet and the Centre plans to introduce discussion boards and reflective journals. Despite these developments, the vision for a virtual learning environment consistent with the Montessori approach has yet to be clearly specified. It would be **desirable** for the Centre to produce a strategic plan to guide the development of the virtual learning environment.

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

2.10 The Centre engages with the Quality Code to map its policies, procedures and practices for student engagement and learning and teaching. The partnership with the University has provided the Centre with an opportunity to engage with *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland*. The Centre has adapted some University policies and procedures, such as its complaints procedure.

How does the Centre engage students in its quality assurance processes?

2.11 Student engagement is most effective for the students who study at the Centre, but is less well developed for distance learning students. A student forum has recently been introduced for those at the Centre and students reported that it is valuable. All foundation degree students attend a student course committee which meets once each semester. The Centre has responded positively to student participation in meetings by enhancing provision for learning, for example better access to online library resources. The Centre has provided a new online forum to stimulate discussion between students and with staff. Students have also been included in a stakeholder scoping day concerned with developing a new Early Years Educator qualification. Students at the Centre complete module evaluation surveys at the end of each module and course surveys of their opinions towards the end of their studies. Distance learning students provide feedback after completing each assignment but there are no other opportunities to engage in quality assurance of their education. It would

be **desirable** for the Centre to engage distance learning students in making a fuller contribution to the quality assurance of their education.

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

2.12 There are detailed and comprehensive arrangements for staff development with clear strategic aims and objectives. The Centre has recently revised its staff appraisal system and introduced peer observation of teaching as part of the process. The University provides staff development for learning and teaching in higher education, which is valued by the Centre's staff. Staff participate in whole staff training days on relevant topics, for example, assessment or support for students with additional learning needs. The Centre has set aside an afternoon each week to enable sharing and cascading of training for staff. Experienced tutors act as mentors to new staff who are also encouraged to attend staff development events offered by the University.

2.13 All teaching staff are required to participate in the annual international Professional Development Conference organised by the Centre. It provides essential continuing professional development for members of the worldwide Montessori movement. It is a forum at which delegates from teaching centres, schools and the Centre share news, information and effective practice. The annual international Professional Development Conference is **good practice**.

2.14 The Montessori International Magazine is published quarterly and staff are encouraged to contribute and to engage proactively with research. The Centre encourages and sponsors continuing professional development, research and attendance at conferences.

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

3 Information about learning opportunities

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

3.1 The Centre provides good range and quantity of information about learning opportunities for students, staff and other stakeholders. Information is provided through a range of media such as a website, a general prospectus, student handbooks and course handbooks. Foundation degree students are provided with a collaborative student handbook containing useful information about the Centre and the University. Centre staff and students make constructive use of social media. Staff use YouTube to demonstrate role play and other teaching techniques to students, which is valuable for those who learn at a distance. The Centre maintains various social media sites for communication and marketing purposes.

3.2 The information about learning opportunities on the interactive website is attractive, comprehensive and easy to navigate. It includes a range of documents including the general prospectus and specific course brochures, and has internal and external links which require considerable management to maintain currency and accuracy. Candidates can apply online for the Diploma but not for the foundation degree, where a UCAS application to London Metropolitan University is required.

3.3 Students appreciate the extensive and informative handbooks that the Centre provides. These include the Diploma Student Handbook; the Distance Learning Student Handbook; three teaching practice handbooks, one each for the student, tutor, and mentor; the FdA Student Handbook; the Dual Qualification Student Handbook; and the FdA Part Time Student Handbook.

3.4 Publication of information about learning opportunities is managed and authorised by the Communications Director in conjunction with the Director of Studies. The Communications Director conducts regular checks of the Centre's website for accuracy and acts as general gatekeeper. The Director of Studies is responsible for the content of publications and is the guardian of the student handbooks and other information made available to students. Handbooks are updated annually by the Director of Studies and proofread by the course leaders. Publication of any information on the internet or through social media on behalf of the Centre must be authorised by the Communications Director in conjunction with the Director of Studies. Staff or students seeking to publish films on the internet must follow a Centre protocol and use its technical direction and support. Under the agreement with the University the Centre is responsible for marketing and publicity but with a duty to gain prior approval from them before publication.

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

Action plan³

St Nicholas' Training Centre for the Montessori Method of Education Limited action plan relating to the Review of Specific Course Designation, December 2013						
Good practice	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the Centre:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the extensive and inclusive support for students with additional learning needs (paragraph 2.4) 	<p>Coordinator for students with additional learning needs extends her professional knowledge and skills to provide in-house subject-specific expertise and strategies to help adult dyslexic learners including an understanding of information technology</p> <p>Successful initiatives and strategies for supporting students</p>	<p>Coordinator for students with additional learning needs enrolls on Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching Adult Dyslexia Learners in Higher and Further Education at London Metropolitan University</p> <p>Coordinator for students with additional learning delivers session on</p>	<p>January 2014</p> <p>April 2014</p>	<p>Coordinator for students with additional learning needs</p> <p>Coordinator for students with</p>	<p>Director of Studies</p> <p>Director of Studies and Academic</p>	<p>Successful completion of Postgraduate Certificate in Teaching Adult Dyslexia Learners in Higher and Further Education January 2015</p> <p>Agenda and minutes of International</p>

³ The Centre 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 Centre's awarding body and organisation.

	with additional learning needs are shared with partners	supporting students with additional learning needs at International Professional Development Conference		additional learning needs	Director	Professional Development Conference
		Initiatives are reported in module logs and annual monitoring reports for FdA	February 2014 (annual monitoring) July 2014 (mod logs)	Course Leader FdA Module leaders	Director of Studies	Annual monitoring report Module logs External examiner report
	Distance learning tutors and external centre tutors adopt and implement policy and procedures for supporting and assessing students with additional learning needs	Policy and procedures introduced and discussed at International Professional Development Conference	April 2014	Coordinator for students with additional learning needs	Director of Studies and Academic Director	Supporting students with additional learning needs policy and procedures adopted and included in student handbook
	Strategies for supporting students with additional learning needs is embedded in training for new tutors	Coordinator for students with additional learning needs to deliver training session as part of trainers' workshop	April 2014	Coordinator for students with additional learning needs	Director of Studies and Academic Director	Evidence - timetable for trainers' workshop Evaluation - trainer's assessments
• the comprehensive support for students	Students will have increased	Teaching practice forum to be extended to all	Forum dates will be set	Teaching Practice	Director of Studies	Attendance records and

before and while on teaching practice (paragraph 2.6)	opportunities to discuss and gain peer support during placement	students face to face and online	twice per semester Online forum to be set up by November 2014	Coordinator		student evaluation Online forum is live and students are posting on it
	Support for new teaching practice tutors will be formalised and enhanced	Policy and procedure to be discussed at Academic staff meeting Policy to be implemented and reviewed	Academic staff meeting June 2014 September 2014	Teaching Practice Coordinator	Director of Studies	Minutes of Academic staff meeting Teaching practice tutor induction policy
	Placement mentors and teaching practice tutors are clear about their roles and obligations towards students	Teaching practice tutor and placement mentor meetings/training sessions to be held biannually Tutors and mentors to sign learning agreement	Meeting dates will be set each semester June 2014	Teaching Practice Coordinator Teaching Practice Coordinator	Director of Studies Director of Studies	Attendance records and notes taken at meetings Signed learning agreements kept on file
	Students will have an opportunity to contribute to the monitoring and evaluation process on their teaching practice experience	The use of module evaluation forms will be extended to all students	October 2014	Teaching Practice Coordinator	Director of Studies	Completed module evaluation forms

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the clear developmental guidance for students about assessment (paragraph 2.7) 	<p>Clear practice guidance on student assessment is embedded in assessment procedures in new qualification</p>	<p>Assessment policy is adopted, implemented and included in new student handbook</p>	<p>Adopted June 2014, implemented and included in student handbook September 2014</p>	<p>Internal Quality Assurer</p>	<p>Director of Studies and Academic Director</p>	<p>Assessment policy and procedures</p> <p>Student handbook</p>
		<p>Assessment strategies are shared and discussed at International Professional Development Conference</p>	<p>April 2014</p>	<p>External Quality Assurer, Crossfields Institute</p>	<p>Director of Studies and Academic Director</p>	<p>Agenda and minutes from Professional Development Conference</p>
		<p>All tutors will receive an induction and two days of training in principles of assessment and quality assurance processes in relation to delivery of new qualification</p>	<p>12 May and 19 May</p>	<p>Internal Quality Assurer</p>	<p>External Quality Assurer, Crossfields Institute and Director of Studies</p>	<p>Notes and feedback from training days</p>
	<p>All new tutors are aware of the importance of giving effective and constructive formative feedback to students</p>	<p>Assessment and feedback to students is included in the syllabus of the trainers' workshop</p>	<p>April 2014</p>	<p>Internal Quality Assurer</p>	<p>Director of Studies and Academic Director</p>	<p>Trainers workshop syllabus and participant assignments</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the annual international Professional Development Conference (paragraph 2.13). 	<p>Delegates will have the opportunity to discuss course developments and to share good practice</p> <p>Opportunities to continue professional development will continue beyond the conference</p>	<p>The annual International Professional Development Conference will be extended to three days and will include presentations on the new qualification, supporting students with additional learning needs and assessment</p> <p>An online forum for Montessori tutors will be promoted at the conference</p>	<p>14, 15 and 16 April</p> <p>14, 15 and 16 April</p>	<p>Director of Studies</p> <p>Distance Learning Academic Leader</p>	<p>Academic Director</p> <p>Director of Studies</p>	<p>Agenda and minutes from Professional Development Conference</p> <p>Online forum which is active and being used by tutors as a discussion forum</p>
<p>Advisable</p>	<p>Intended outcomes</p>	<p>Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes</p>	<p>Target date(s)</p>	<p>Action by</p>	<p>Reported to</p>	<p>Evaluation (process or evidence)</p>
<p>The team considers that it is advisable for the Centre to:</p>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> finalise the programme specification for the International Diploma in Montessori Pedagogy, Early Childhood 2.5-6 years, in line with <i>Chapter A3: The programme level of the UK Quality</i> 	<p>Programme specification is finalised and approved by Ofqual for Montessori Early Years Educator qualification in line with <i>Chapter A3: The programme level of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education</i></p>	<p>Work on draft template</p> <p>Submit to Ofqual</p> <p>Approved by Ofqual</p>	<p>January 2014</p> <p>February 2014</p> <p>March 2014</p>	<p>Qualifications team leader Crossfields Institute</p>	<p>Director of Studies and Academic Director</p>	<p>Programme specification for Montessori Early Years Educator qualification signed off by Ofqual</p>

Code for Higher Education (paragraph 1.7)						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produce an overarching policy on assessment for the International Diploma in Montessori Pedagogy, Early Childhood 2.5-6 years, in line with <i>Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning</i> of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 1.9) 	<p>Assessment policy is approved and implemented in line with <i>Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning</i> of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education</p> <p>Quality and Assessment policy and procedures</p>	<p>Assessment strategy including Reasonable Adjustments and Special Considerations policy is discussed at Academic staff meeting and International Professional Development Conference</p>	<p>Discussed April 2014</p> <p>Adopted June 2014</p> <p>Implemented September 2014</p> <p>Reviewed July 2015</p>	<p>Development team Crossfields Institute</p>	<p>Director of Studies and Academic Director</p>	<p>Minutes of Academic staff meeting and International Professional Development Conference</p> <p>Student handbook</p> <p>Tutor delivery handbooks</p> <p>External Quality Assurance report</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the constitution and operation of the Montessori Examination Board and to ensure its alignment with <i>Chapter B7: External examining</i> of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 1.11) 	<p>External examining will be reviewed and new procedures outlined in programme specification for Montessori Early Years Educator qualification in line with <i>Chapter B7: External examining</i> of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education</p>	<p>Work on draft template of programme specification to include external quality assurance and role of external quality assurer in line with <i>Chapter B7: External examining</i> of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education</p> <p>Submit to Ofqual</p> <p>Approved by Ofqual</p>	<p>January 2014</p> <p>February 2014</p> <p>March 2014</p>	<p>Qualifications team leader Crossfields Institute</p>	<p>Director of Studies and Academic Director</p>	<p>Programme specification including details of external quality assurance for Montessori Early Years Educator qualification signed off by Ofqual</p>

Desirable	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date/s	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The team considers that it is desirable for the Centre to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extend annual monitoring to the International Diploma in Montessori Pedagogy, Early Childhood 2.5-6 years (paragraph 1.5) 	Rigorous annual monitoring processes and procedures will be adopted and implemented in the quality assurance systems of the Montessori Early Years Educator qualification to maintain approval for delivery of the qualification	<p>Status report to be submitted to Crossfields Institute which includes information on changes, improvements and an implementation plan for recommendations</p> <p>Member of Crossfields Institute Quality Assurance team will conduct annual monitoring visit(s) to review learner support, resources and environment, quality management systems, administrative arrangements, assessment and verification</p>	<p>July 2015</p> <p>On two occasions during first year of delivery</p>	<p>Course Leader Montessori Early Years Educator and Director of Studies</p> <p>Course Leader Montessori Early Years Educator and Director of Studies</p>	<p>External Quality Assurer Crossfields Institute</p> <p>External Quality Assurer Crossfields Institute</p>	<p>Status report</p> <p>Annual monitoring reports - Quality Review Report and Quality Improvement Plan</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produce a strategic plan to guide the development of a virtual learning environment (paragraph 2.9) 	The College will have a plan in place for a fully functioning virtual learning environment to be used by all students	Project timeline and budget created	April 2014	Distance Learning Academic Leader and Director of Studies	Academic Director and Trustees	Virtual learning environment plan including timeline and budget is in place and being actioned

	Staff are aware of the virtual learning environment and how it is to be used	Virtual learning environment policy and 'terms of use' written	June 2014	Distance Learning Academic Leader	Director of Studies and Academic Director	Policy and Terms of Use in place
		Staff undertake continuing professional development on web-based teaching and learning at London Met	February - July 2014	Distance Learning Academic Leader and Director of Studies	Academic Director	Staff who have completed module are actively developing virtual learning environment
		Additional in-house training in the use of virtual learning environment delivered to staff at appropriate levels	April - July 2014	Distance Learning Academic Leader and Director of Studies	Academic Director	Staff are able to use the virtual learning environment to fulfil their roles, course materials uploaded and updated by all tutors
	Virtual learning environment provides for the student's needs	Virtual learning environment developer employed (0.4 contact)	April 2014	Distance Learning Academic Leader and Director of Studies	Academic Director and Trustees	Virtual learning environment is under construction, designed to meet student needs in a robust manner
		Virtual learning environment is hosted on server with remote backup	September 2014	Distance Learning Academic Leader and	Director of Studies and Academic Director	Virtual learning environment server has backup in case of

		Student virtual learning environment support role will be created	April 2014	ICT Director Distance Learning Academic Leader and Director of Studies	Academic Director and Chief Executive Officer	failure, students retain access Student support role is in place to provide technical support to students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> engage distance learning students in making a fuller contribution to the quality assurance of their education (paragraph 2.11). 	Distance learning students engage more fully with the quality assurance of their education	Distance learning students will complete assignment evaluations	From January 2014 evaluations are sent every four assignments	Distance Learning Academic Leader	Director of Studies	Assignment evaluations are completed and collated
		Feedback is given to students on evaluations received and proposed actions to be taken; this is shared with distance learning tutors and staff and reported on at International Professional Development Conference	From February 2014	Distance Learning Academic Leader	Director of Studies	Feedback to students, written feedback to distance learning staff, minutes of International Professional Development Conference
		Student evaluation format to be comparable to that offered to college-based students	April 2014 By January 2014	Distance Learning Academic Leader	Director of Studies	Student evaluation forms

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 of Courses Specifically Designated for Student Support can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx.

Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

quality See **academic quality**.

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

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

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

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

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

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