Architectural Association School of Architecture

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

May 2012

Key findings about Architectural Association School of Architecture

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in May 2012, the QAA review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of the Architectural Association School of Architecture and the Open University.

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

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

Good practice

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

- the effective involvement of the wider professional community in assessment processes (paragraph 1.10)
- the enhancement-led approach to ensuring improvements in learning opportunities (paragraph 2.3)
- the high-quality and innovative teaching and learning approaches (paragraphs 2.6, 2.11 and 2.18)
- the accessible, high-quality and comprehensive information (paragraph 3.2).

Recommendations

The team has also identified a number of **recommendations** for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

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

- continue to develop the committee structure to establish more systematic collegiate oversight and management of academic standards and quality (paragraph 1.3)
- consider a more integrated approach to the use of the Academic Infrastructure across its provision (paragraph 1.5)
- implement a formal induction programme for new tutors (paragraph 2.16).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](1) (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at the Architectural Association School of Architecture (the provider; the School). 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 School delivers on behalf of the Architectural Association School of Architecture and the Open University. The review was carried out by Dr Simon Jones, Dr Martin Lockett and Ms Trudy Stiles (reviewers), and Dr Judith Foreman (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the *Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook*.[2] Evidence in support of the review included: a self-evaluation document and supporting evidence supplied by the School, a student submission, meetings with staff and students, and review and validation reports from the Architects Registration Board, the Royal Institute of British Architects, and the Open University.

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

- Royal Institute of British Architects - General Criteria at Part 1 and Part 2; Professional Criteria at Part 3
- Architects Registration Board - Criteria for the Prescription of Qualifications
- Academic Infrastructure.

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

The Architectural Association was founded in 1847 to provide an independent and self-directed education for aspiring architects. The Architectural Association School of Architecture (the School) opened in 1901. Since its foundation, the School has worked closely with the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and, since its establishment in 1997, the Architects Registration Board (ARB) to maintain its recognition as a provider of the qualifications and training required for entry onto the UK Register of Architects. The higher education provision offered by the School includes an ARB-prescribed and RIBA-validated five-year programme, which leads to UK professional qualification as an architect. The School also offers postgraduate programmes at master's level and a PhD programme validated by the Open University. There are 367 full-time students on the five-year undergraduate programme and 223 full-time students on postgraduate programmes.

The School has two campuses. Most of its provision is delivered from its Bedford Square premises in central London. There is also a campus in Dorset at Hooke Park, which is being developed as a site for exploring rural architecture, the crafts of construction and sustainable timber technologies.

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

Architectural Association School of Architecture
- AA Diploma

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[1] www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4.
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx.

- AA Diploma (Hons)
- AA Intermediate Examination (ARB/RIBA Part 1)
- AA Final Examination (ARB/RIBA Part 2)
- AA Professional Practice and Practical Experience Examination (ARB/RIBA Part 3)

Open University
- MArch Architecture and Urbanism (DRL)
- MArch/MSc Sustainable Environmental Design
- MA History and Critical Thinking in Architecture
- MArch Design and Make
- MArch/MA Housing and Urbanism
- MA Landscape Urbanism
- MArch/MSc Emergent Technologies and Design
- Master of Philosophy in Architecture (Projective Cities)
- Post Graduate Diploma in Spatial Performance and Design (AAIS)
- Phd Programme

The provider's stated responsibilities

The School is responsible for all aspects of the programme design and academic delivery of the awards it makes in its own name, including the appointment of external examiners. The School works closely with ARB and RIBA to ensure that programme content and delivery are mapped against the relevant professional standards to maintain full prescription of the five-year full-time undergraduate architecture programme. The delegated responsibilities for master's level programmes validated by the Open University are extensive and include programme design and all aspects of programme delivery, subject to annual monitoring and periodic review by the University. The School is an Affiliated Research Centre of the Open University for the delivery of postgraduate research degrees and follows the University procedures for student progress and assessment.

Recent developments

Building refurbishment undertaken over recent years has enabled all London-based students to be located at the Bedford Square campus. As part of its ongoing plan to significantly increase and improve facilities for staff and students, more recent changes have also ensured that all students on a design-based programme have their own studio space. A new plan of development at Hooke Park began in 2010. A project to create an enclosure designed by students to accommodate fabrication, assembly and prototyping activities at Hooke Park was completed in 2012.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. A written submission was presented and drew on the outcomes of a survey designed by students and meetings with year groups conducted by student representatives. The School provided resources to facilitate the administration of the survey and the organisation of the year group meetings, but the submission was written by students. The submission, which was well devised and presented, addressed all the significant aspects of the students' experience and helped the reviewers to develop their agendas for the visit. The review team also held valuable meetings with students at the preparatory meeting and during the visit.

Detailed findings about the Architectural Association School of Architecture

1   Academic standards

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

1.1   The School has sole responsibility for the management of academic standards of the School's awards. The responsibilities delegated to the School for awards of the Open University are identified in a partnership agreement. The School has responsibility for the design of programmes and all aspects of academic delivery, including student admissions and assessment, for both its own awards and the awards of the Open University.

1.2   The School has appropriate managerial responsibilities and reporting arrangements that provide a proper basis for the management of academic standards. The Director has responsibility for the day-to-day running of the School within oversight provided by the Architectural Association's Council and its subcommittee, the General Purposes Committee. All academic and administrative departments report to the Director. The School has recently created an Academic Board, chaired by the Director, with representatives of the student body and including the Academic Registrar, Head of Undergraduate Group, Undergraduate Coordinator, Graduate School Coordinator and heads of department. The aim of the Academic Board is to facilitate focused deliberation and reporting on academic issues across the School. The Board reports through the Director to the Council's General Purposes Committee.

1.3   Academic delivery is structured through the operations of the Graduate School and the Undergraduate School. The Academic Board delegates operational responsibility for the management of standards and quality on programmes in the Graduate School to the long-established Graduate Management Committee. A more recent development is the formalisation of the Undergraduate Group with responsibility for the management of standards and quality on the undergraduate programme. The Academic Board and the Undergraduate Group are still at an early stage of maturity but provide a basis for future development of a more systematic approach to academic management that depends less on the Director as an individual. It is desirable that the School continues to develop the committee structure to establish more systematic collegiate oversight and management of academic standards and quality.

1.4   The School produces detailed annual quality monitoring reports for the Open University and for ARB. The reports are evaluative, effectively reflect on external examiners' comments, student feedback and student achievement data, and incorporate planned actions and updates on progress on previous action points. The University, ARB and RIBA undertake periodic reviews of the School and its programmes for revalidation and professional recognition. The annual public exhibition of student work also contributes to the School's self-evaluation processes through exposure to the wider professional community.

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

1.5   The School makes extensive use of external reference points in the management of academic standards. Historically, the Undergraduate School has paid greatest attention to the requirements of the UK professional bodies in the architecture field, in particular RIBA and ARB. It pays effective attention to these requirements as they are critical to the professional status of their graduates, as recognised in recent RIBA and ARB reviews.

Further work is underway on more specific mapping of units to professional bodies' requirements. In the Graduate School, higher education awards are based on collaborative provision arrangements with the Open University. While the School has largely been dependent on the Open University for information and use of the Academic Infrastructure, internal awareness has grown significantly and is effective in taught postgraduate programmes. In meetings with the team, staff teaching on the University awards demonstrated their understanding of the components of the Academic Infrastructure and gave examples of how they applied it in the development and delivery of higher education programmes. Programme design is undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the University and reflects the principles and precepts of *the Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of* practice), *Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review*. Templates prepared for validation incorporate programme specifications, while consideration of the subject benchmark statements relevant to architecture and The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) ensures appropriate levels for the awards. It is desirable for the School to consider a more integrated approach to the use of the Academic Infrastructure across its provision, in particular in relation to the Undergraduate School.

1.6   Strong relationships with the professional community at national and international level provide additional points of reference in developing the content of the School's programmes. The School's staff who are engaged, or were recently engaged, in professional practice as architects and designers also provide valuable input and their experience provides additional useful points of reference.

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

1.7   The School has responsibility for setting all assessments and for the marking of students' work. Assessments are clearly designed, appropriate to the academic level, and enable students to achieve the programme learning outcomes. Clear marking criteria enable internal markers and external examiners to distinguish between different categories of achievement. The marking processes are transparent and secure. Students' assessed work is presented to a very high professional standard.

1.8   The provision makes effective use of external examiners to assure academic standards. Examiners are appointed by the School in the case of undergraduate provision and by the University for postgraduate programmes. The School involves its external examiners in ensuring that its assessment processes and outcomes are consistent. External examiners attend the examination boards in the Graduate School and review a sample of students' work. In the Undergraduate School, a panel of external examiners is appointed annually and takes part in the assessment of student portfolios with regard to the criteria for the professional requirements of ARB/RIBA. External examiners' reports are positive and confirm that the academic standards of the awards are appropriate and that the quality of students' work is comparable to that in other institutions.

1.9   Programme teams engage in open and frank dialogue with their external examiners. All external examiners' reports are analysed and responded to in the annual monitoring reports provided to the University and ARB, and contribute to the School's quality monitoring processes. External examiners in the Graduate School submit their reports to the University. The School does not currently share external examiners' reports with students, although it is their declared intention to do so. This will be facilitated by student representation on the Academic Board and the Graduate Management Committee and Undergraduate Group.

1.10   A notable feature of the learning and assessment processes used in the School is the involvement of tutors from across the School and external architects and designers in providing feedback to students. For example, in the Undergraduate School 'juries' are held during the year, which involve members of School staff, external practicing architects and architectural teachers, in providing valuable feedback on students' progress, as well as engaging students and staff with the profession and wider educational community.
In addition, students are required to present their work for feedback and assessment on 'tables' to review panels comprising their own tutors as well as tutors from other programmes across the School. The effective involvement of the wider professional community in assessment processes is good practice.

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

2   Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1   The processes used for managing learning opportunities are the same as those for academic standards, as described in paragraphs 1.1-1.4. The School has responsibility for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities across all its programmes.
This responsibility is monitored by RIBA and ARB for the Undergraduate School and the Open University for the Graduate School, covering both taught and research degrees.

2.2   The School provides a high-quality and well resourced environment for learning. Of note are small class sizes, with approximately one teacher to 10 students, an events programme, a wide range of opportunities for feedback to students that involve staff and students outside their programmes, and the close relationship between students and academic staff.

2.3   During the review, there was substantial evidence of effective management of enhancement initiatives at institutional level, based on the Strategic Plan 2008-13. Examples include: the recent development of physical facilities in London to provide individual studio spaces for students, new teaching accommodation at Hooke Park to house fabrication, assembly and prototyping activities, the rapid growth of the Visiting School programme, the expansion of digital prototyping, and moves towards greater consistency in student documentation. In addition, the general culture of the School encourages enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities. The School's constant consideration of improvements to the quality of learning opportunities is noted in the RIBA validation report of 2011. The enhancement-led approach to ensuring improvements in learning opportunities is good practice.

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

2.4   The School's use of external reference points in the management of learning opportunities is the same as those for academic standards, as described in paragraphs 1.5-1.6. Arrangements for research students are closely linked to those of the Open University. Support meets the expectations of the *Code of practice*, *Section 1*: *Postgraduate*

research programmes, and includes PhD research seminars, access to multiple supervisors, regular formal monitoring of progress and defined stages of study with transition criteria.

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

2.5   The Director has general oversight of the quality of teaching and learning and is advised by the Academic Board, which is supported through the Graduate Management Committee and the Undergraduate Group. Scrutiny of the minutes of these committees indicates that this oversight is relatively unsystematic without a clear annual cycle of business other than annual reporting to external accrediting bodies. However, there is evidence of the effectiveness of less formal processes, including the response to feedback from external examiners. Teaching staff performance is reviewed annually by the Director. The quality of teaching is also monitored through wider collegiate and public scrutiny of staff and student work presented through 'juries', review panels and exhibitions.

2.6   A distinctive approach to teaching and learning is the unit system in years 2-5 of the five-year Undergraduate School provision. Each student chooses between alternative groups, led by a tutor or staff team, and pursues a year-long design project. The groups, or units, each have a distinctive identity and approach to architectural design and technique. This enhances student choice and enables staff to build on their strengths. Many units are innovative with demanding objectives. Team teaching, communication across units and the relatively public assessment processes in the School complement study within a unit. Students confirmed that, in general, the mechanisms for choice of units and the way they were run were very positive, while staff value the substantial peer feedback which accompany these processes. Students also benefit from access to a wider events programme of public lectures and exhibitions and good access to tutors to support their learning - see paragraphs 2.11 and 2.18. The high-quality and innovative teaching and learning approaches, including the unit system, events programme and the accessibility of tutors to students, are good practice.

2.7   Student feedback on teaching and learning is obtained through a variety of mechanisms. These include internal surveys of student opinion in the first and third term on the undergraduate programme. In the Graduate School students meet with all members of the programme staff twice a year and submit a written assessment of their experience at the end of the academic year. Other mechanisms include annual meetings of the School Director with students in specific years. No less significant are the informal mechanisms based on face-to-face contact with academic staff who operate an open-door policy. In their meeting with the team, students confirmed that their views are listened to and acted upon. The Open University's institutional review of the postgraduate provision in 2012 confirms that actions are taken in response to student feedback.

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

2.8   Student support arrangements, including pre-entry guidance, are effective. Prior to entry, all undergraduate students are interviewed. On entry, students are provided with the School's Academic Regulations, Student Handbook and other programme guides to assist students in understanding their chosen programme of study within the wider context of the School.

2.9   The School provides personal and learning support for English language development, essay writing, software instruction, counselling and careers advice. In addition, each unit and programme provides specific learning support to enable students to meet learning aims, including, for example, the use of software and materials. Students are positive about the general arrangements for student support, which are handled by the Unit

Masters and Programme Directors in the first instance, with central support from the Registrar's office. There was relatively low awareness of the role of the University among students on taught master's programmes, including student appeal procedures.

2.10   All students receive an induction to the School and their programme. The School operates a flexible entry system, which enables students with prior learning to be admitted to later stages in the undergraduate programme. The students that the team met pointed to difficulties with regard to the choice of unit experienced by some students who entered the School at later stages because of their relative lack of knowledge of the units on which to base their choice. While arrangements for the admission of students with prior learning appear robust, the review team feels that further consideration should be given to the induction of students who enter at later stages, for example, in relation to the selection of units on the undergraduate programme.

2.11   A notable feature of student learning opportunities is the level of access to tutors and the academic staff. This includes not only high levels of scheduled face-to-face contact and small group sizes, but also email and phone contact. Students are able and encouraged to seek tutorials with any staff, including the Director. In their meeting with the team, students confirmed that staff are accessible. Students appreciate the role of the Professional Practice modules in undergraduate years 3 and 5, as well as the role of the Professional Studies Advisor in developing presentation skills. The role of the large network of alumni in recruiting students and in finding jobs is also seen as a positive feature.

2.12   The teaching, learning and assessment approaches used in the School provide extensive opportunities for students to receive continuous feedback on their development through 'juries', 'tables' and review panels, as well as written comments. Written feedback on summative assessment is relevant and constructive, but could be improved through the development of feedback sheets, which include more direct reference to assessment and grading criteria.

2.13   The School places importance on student representation to ensure that students are supported effectively. There is a Student Forum, developing into a representative body. Students are engaged through membership of School committees, for example there are two elected student members of Architectural Association's Council and four on Academic Board, as well as representation on the Undergraduate Group, Graduate Management Committee and PhD Committees. Students also have an individual vote in the appointment of the School's Director.

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

2.14   Academic staff come from a variety of backgrounds, with many having substantial professional experience in addition to relevant qualifications. The School uses a relatively large number of part-time academic staff and visiting consultants, who are concurrently engaged with professional practice as well as teaching, learning and assessment. There is also a public programme of lectures, which attracts speakers from the profession. This approach fits well with the School's mission and has substantial advantages for the education of students in a professional discipline.

2.15   The School provides a variety of mechanisms for ongoing staff development. These include: the School's events programme, opportunities to publish work and ideas, curate exhibitions, attend conferences, and the Visiting School, which provides short courses and related opportunities for academic staff. Staff are also encouraged to lead or participate in Research Clusters, which are year-long special projects, activities and events that bring

together the School's staff, students and outside specialists and researchers in order to achieve a body of focused research.

2.16   The School does not currently offer staff the opportunity to gain a teaching qualification, but is considering ways in which staff may be supported to undertake such training in the future. Staff induction has become more formalised recently and new members of teaching staff are paired with an experienced member of teaching staff for at least one academic year. It is desirable that the School continues to develop a formal induction programme to ensure that all new tutors are aware of the requirements and expectations of teaching, learning and assessment in higher education.

2.17   Academic staff, other than the Director, are employed on renewable one-year contracts. The professional performance and suitability of staff are reviewed annually by the Director before contract renewal. However, there is no formal appraisal process.

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

2.18   Students are able to participate in a wide range of activities that form part of the wider role of the School as a centre for intellectual activity on architecture. These opportunities, such as public lectures, are available freely at the main London site. Students are informed of these opportunities through weekly emails, social networking, printed and online events lists and blogs. Many students take advantage of this readily accessible events programme, sometimes through recordings of events made available on the internet when study commitments do not enable them to participate in person. The School's website, which includes highly developed micro sites to support individual units, provides a wide range of resources.

2.19   The School pays particular attention in its internal strategy and planning to the learning environment of students. Its master plans for physical development of the London and Hooke Park sites have enhanced the student learning experience, for example by making available individual studio spaces to all students in London and the ability to undertake full-size construction at Hooke Park.

2.20   The School's plans to enhance the learning environment include a commitment to make its London facilities more accessible to students with limited mobility. The nature of the School's historic buildings in central London make improvements in access conditional on planning permissions from the local authority. The School is actively seeking to obtain these permissions based upon the guideline masterplan filed with the authority in 2011.

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

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3   Public information

How effectively does the provider's public information communicate to students and other stakeholders about the higher education it provides?

3.1   The School has responsibility for all information relating to its higher education provision. The combined graduate and undergraduate prospectus is a comprehensive, well illustrated publication that explains the entry requirements, content and teaching and

learning approaches of programmes. In addition, the annual Projects Review is an imaginatively produced overview, showcasing student work from across the School. Other regular publications that clearly demonstrate the history and methods of the School are the AA Files, AA agendas and the newsletter AArchitecture. The prospectus and other documents are clear and well presented, available in print and for download from the School's website.

3.2 The website introduces the opportunities and activities for all areas of study: the awards and honours students have achieved, exhibitions and public lectures, publications, school news and notices, application forms and details of financial aid and fees. Micro sites developed by the unit masters and programme staff teams contain material from a range of external sources, as well as speculative materials designed to stimulate experimentation and discussion. The availability of high-quality and comprehensive information that reflects the achievements of the School, as well as its distinct approach to architectural education, is good practice.

3.3 All students receive a comprehensive Student Handbook with general information to support their studies, as well as a dedicated Programme Handbook. Programme handbooks are currently being revised to a standard format, following research into best practice, and will include programme specifications and module descriptors. The School is developing programme specifications using a common template for programmes in the Undergraduate School. All graduate programmes have programme specifications that were developed from the University template.

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

3.4 The School does not have a formal information management policy, but it does have effective and embedded procedures to assure the accuracy and completeness of information. For the prospectus, the text is drafted and verified by the relevant department, collated and edited by the School's own print studio, and then passed to the Registrar and Director for final approval. Similar procedures apply to the other publications which the School has responsibility for publishing.

3.5 The School is required to send copies of published documents relating to its collaboration to the University for approval prior to publication. The University and the School have recently clarified the procedures for approval, following the recent University Administrative Audit undertaken with the School.

3.6 Methods for evaluating the effectiveness of information relating to programmes of study are informal and derive from the School's close relationships with its students and other stakeholders. Students confirmed that the information they received prior to starting their programmes and during their studies is sufficient and helpful, enabling them to make appropriate choices, as well as supporting their studies.

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

Action plan[3]

Architectural Association School of Architecture action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight May 2012						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The review team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
• the effective involvement of the wider professional community in assessment processes (paragraph 1.10)	Annually review the involvement of the internal and external professional community in both the Undergraduate and Graduate Schools Continue to monitor its effectiveness, as well as identifying opportunities for enhancement	July 2013	Undergraduate Group/ Graduate School programme directors/ Graduate Management Committee/ Academic Board	Increased graduate employability; continued attraction of high profile practitioners; and even more well informed academic portfolios demonstrating improved learning opportunities	Director of the School	Annual programme monitoring to the Architects Registration Board and the Open University/ regular undergraduate programme validation by the Royal Institute of British Architects/ student feedback/ feedback from external practitioners/ external academics/

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

						school, academic staff to Director of the School
• the enhancement-led approach to ensuring improvements in learning opportunities (paragraph 2.3)	Continue to realise the AA Masterplan; developments at Hooke Park, and other key improvements and initiatives included in the Strategic Plan 2008-13	September 2013	Director of the School/heads of department/ Hooke Park Director/Hooke Park Advisory Group/Building Committee/ Finance Committee	Improvements to the building fabric, facilities and resources across the School's two campuses	Director of the School	Director of the School's annual report to the Council
• the high-quality and innovative teaching and learning approaches (paragraphs 2.6, 2.11 and 2.18)	Continue to monitor and enhance the range of undergraduate units, the staff/student relationship, and the quality and diversity of the events programme	July 2013	Director of the School/ Undergraduate Unit staff/ graduate programme directors/Head of Exhibitions	Stability in student numbers; maintaining high quality academic staff; promoting the School to a wider audience	Director of the School	Annual self-assessment/ direct feedback from academic staff/student feedback/ external feedback from Architectural Association membership and interested parties
• the accessible, high-quality and comprehensive information (paragraph 3.2).	Continually review the School's digital platforms and dissemination, both internally and externally	July 2013	Head of Digital Platforms/Print Studio/ Undergraduate Unit staff/ graduate programme directors	To enhance applicants and students' knowledge of the School/courses/programmes Increased number of users to the website	Director of the School	Annual self-assessment by: Student Forum/ individual student feedback/ academic staff/ administrative

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
						staff
The team considers that it is **desirable** for the provider to:						
• continue to develop the committee structure to establish more systematic collegiate oversight and management of academic standards and quality (paragraph 1.3)	Continue to develop and refine the roles and responsibilities of the three key committees: Academic Board, Graduate Management Committee and Undergraduate Group; and regularly monitor their effectiveness and inter-relationships	July 2013	Chair of Academic Board, Graduate Management Committee and Undergraduate Group in consultation with the Director of the School	Increased intra-school communication and stronger lines of communication between the School community, the Director of the School and Council	Director of the School/ General Purposes Committee/ Council	Graduate Management Committee/ Undergraduate Group/ Academic Board on a regular basis throughout the 2012-13 academic year
• consider a more integrated approach to the use of the Academic Infrastructure across its provision (paragraph 1.5)	Identify key areas for short, middle and long term engagement with the Academic Infrastructure, especially in the Undergraduate School, and particularly through developments in programme design	September 2013	Graduate Management Committee/ graduate school programme directors Undergraduate Group/ Academic Board	Reviews and actions undertaken by the Academic Board, Graduate Management Committee and Undergraduate Group to foster discussion and implementation of areas of the Academic Infrastructure appropriate to the School	Director of the School	Regular assessment reports through the Academic Board/Graduate Management Committtee/ Undergraduate Group feedback evaluated by the Director of the

						School
• implement a formal induction programme for new tutors (paragraph 2.16).	Implement a formal induction programme for new tutors	September 2013	Registrar in consultation with Head of Human Resources	Improved engagement with annual academic programme and staff development Opportunities for academic staff to undertake teacher training	Director of the School	Feedback from students and staff to the Director of the School/Human Resources/ Registrar

About QAA

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

QAA's aims are to:

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

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

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

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

Glossary

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

Academic Infrastructure Guidance developed and agreed by the higher education community and published by QAA, which is used by institutions to ensure that their courses meet national expectations for academic standards and that students have access to a suitable environment for learning (academic quality). It consists of four groups of reference points: the **frameworks for higher education qualifications**, the **subject benchmark statements**, the **programme specifications** and the **Code of practice**. Work is underway (2011-12) to revise the Academic Infrastructure as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

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

academic standards The standards set and maintained by institutions for their courses and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

awarding body A body with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the **framework for higher education qualifications**, such as diplomas or degrees.

awarding organisation An organisation with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the Qualifications and Credit Framework for England and Northern Ireland (these qualifications are at levels 1 to 8, with levels 4 and above being classed as 'higher education').

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

quality See **academic quality**.

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

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

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