QAA

Leyton College

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

March 2012

Key findings about Leyton College

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in March 2012, with a second visit to the College 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 Association of Business Practitioners, BCS The Chartered Institute for IT, NCFE, and the Organisation for Tourism and Hospitality Management.

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 organisations.

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**:

- gathering and acting upon feedback from students (paragraphs 2.1, 2.5, 2.8, 2.15 and 3.5).

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:

- ensure that the Academic Board complies fully with its terms of reference to maintain rigorous oversight of academic standards and quality on centre-devised programmes (paragraphs 1.4 to 1.6 and 1.10)
- ensure that both variants of the Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration comply fully with relevant external reference points (paragraph 1.8)
- ensure that staff and students have appropriate access to relevant journals to support teaching and learning (paragraphs 2.11 and 2.13)
- ensure that website and prospectus information on centre-devised programmes is kept fully up to date (paragraph 3.4).

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

- undertake a review of quality assurance processes and map them against relevant higher education reference points (paragraph 2.3)
- extend the system of regular tutorial review to all students (paragraph 2.7).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](1) (REO) conducted by [QAA](...) at Leyton College (the provider; the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of the Association of Business Practitioners, BCS The Chartered Institute for IT, NCFE, and the Organisation for Tourism and Hospitality Management. The review was carried out by Mrs Patricia Millner, Professor Danny Morton (reviewers) and Dr John Hurley (coordinator).

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

- information on the provider's management processes and policies, minutes of meetings and quality assurance procedures
- publications for staff and students
- course documentation supplied by the provider and awarding organisations
- external verifiers' and validation reports
- a sample of assessed work
- student outcomes and destination data
- meetings with staff and students.

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

- the awarding organisations' qualification descriptions
- appropriate qualification frameworks and level indicators, including the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) and *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)
- business and management subject benchmark statements.

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

Leyton College (the College) was established in 2005 and operates from premises in Leytonstone shopping centre, with an entrance in a shopping parade. The premises provide the necessary classrooms and specialist areas to support the current provision, over two floors of an office building. The College specialises in business, tourism and computing provision aimed primarily at international students.

The College currently has an establishment of eight full and part-time staff, including four administrative and four teaching staff, and a current student enrolment of around 40 students, all of whom are full-time.

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

Association of Business Practitioners
- Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration

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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.

NCFE
- Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration

BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT
- Professional Graduate Diploma in Information Technology
- Diploma in Information Technology

Organisation for Tourism and Hospitality Management
- Professional Diploma in Tourism and Hospitality Management
- Professional Higher Diploma in Tourism and Hospitality Management

The provider's stated responsibilities

The Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration is a centre-devised programme where curriculum content and assessment are the responsibility of the College, subject to external validation. The College therefore has full responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities for this programme.

For other programmes, students undertake assessments which are set by the awarding organisations and are externally examined or moderated. The principal College responsibilities for these programmes are the quality of teaching, learning and student support.

Recent developments

The Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration was initially validated by the Association of Business Practitioners which is not registered with Ofqual. This validation included an agreement for articulation to the University of Gloucestershire. The same programme has been additionally validated by NCFE, which is Ofqual registered, but is not currently subject to the articulation agreement with the University. The College stated that the NCFE variant was provided at the time of the visit and that both variants are on offer to new students.

In common with other colleges recruiting mainly international students, there has been a recent substantial reduction in the numbers of students enrolled at the College. This has reduced intake from around 200 to around 40.

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 questionnaire was devised by a student on the Postgraduate Diploma, which was distributed with support from the College. This was supported by focus groups run by student representatives. The outcomes were analysed by a small group of students and the submission was compiled by the student who initiated the questionnaire. During the course of the visit, the team met a group of students including some of those involved in developing the student submission. Students at the meeting largely confirmed the findings of the submission, which relate principally to the quality of their learning experience and are reflected in the report.

Detailed findings about Leyton College

1   Academic standards

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

1.1   The College has a clearly delineated management structure with members of staff having designated responsibilities for admissions, internal quality assurance, course leadership, internal verification and student welfare. In the case of the Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration, the College has full responsibility for curriculum, setting and marking all assessments, admission of students, and all policies and procedures associated with the maintenance of academic standards. The College operates internal verification of assessment subject to external verification by the awarding organisations and annual monitoring and review. In all other cases, the awarding organisations design the curriculum and undertake assessment or moderation externally.

1.2   The College quality assures its management processes through ISO 9001 Certification, which constitutes an adequate starting point for managing academic standards within the College. The management operations are described within a Quality Procedures Manual issued to all staff. The certification is subject to annual external audit and frequent internal audits. The operations are defined in a number of policy documents relating to admissions, assessment, teaching and learning, and other procedures associated with the delivery of education within the College. Not all policies have been implemented however, limiting the impact of assurance mechanisms. The management team meets formally four times per year, and considers matters relating to general management of the College and programme delivery.

1.3   The College has a potentially effective structure for the management of the Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration. A course coordinator is one of the two members of staff who currently deliver this programme. An internal verifier, independent of programme delivery, verifies assessment design and marking. The Academic Board, including the course team, internal verifier and quality manager, meets to receive and consider external verifier's reports. An annual reporting system has been introduced recently and the team encourages its further development.

1.4   Despite its potential effectiveness, the management structure has so far operated with insufficient rigour. The Academic Board minutes from July 2010 to December 2011 simply provide evidence of the College's reaction to issues raised by the external verifier and fall short of encompassing the wider issues defined within the College's document on Academic Board roles and responsibilities. Key decisions are taken informally outside of this structure.

1.5   A concern is associated with the College's handling of the articulation of the Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration with the MBA programme at the University of Gloucestershire. This Diploma, when accredited by the Association of Business Practitioners (ABP), gives articulation with the University of Gloucestershire MBA. The programme accredited by NCFE is, however, currently unapproved for articulation to an MBA programme. This was confusing to a current student at the team's first visit and, initially, to the NCFE verifier. While the certification for the ABP expired in January 2012, they have confirmed that the College is still approved to offer the Postgraduate Diploma. It is on this basis that the College continues to recruit students with the expectation that the Postgraduate Diploma will lead to an MBA by study of a further module and a dissertation.

Staff confirmed at the second visit that the change of awarding organisation was driven by commercial as well as academic decisions.

1.6   The team concludes that this approach carries risk, particularly given past problems of meeting the standards of the first awarding organisation (see paragraph 1.10). This lack of clarity has the potential to confuse students and raise expectations for progression, which may not be fulfilled. It indicates that while management structures appear to be well founded, decision making within them can be too expedient. It is advisable therefore that the College ensures that the Academic Board complies fully with its terms of reference to maintain rigorous oversight of academic standards on centre-devised programmes.

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

1.7   The College is largely dependent on its awarding organisations for ensuring that programmes meet the requirements of external reference points. For externally examined programmes on the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) this adequately ensures the standards which the College meets. The College is responsible for the curriculum development and design of its Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration. The initial programme was developed for the College by an external consultant and benchmarked by the ABP who then put forward the qualification to the University of Gloucestershire for mapping against MBA for articulation. This ensured a sufficient correspondence with the Academic Infrastructure at that time.

1.8   College staff were more actively involved in ensuring QCF level criteria were met while preparing their submission to NCFE. It is advisable that this engagement with external reference points for centre-devised programmes is continued and that the College ensures that both variants of the Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration comply fully with relevant external reference points.

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

1.9   The College relies heavily on feedback from its external verifiers for the maintenance and assurance of its academic standards. For externally assessed awards this is appropriate. For one programme, the College was presented with the joint award of Best Performing College. The College also received an award for best student paper from one of its awarding organisations.

1.10   External verification has helped the College maintain standards for the Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration despite the need to strengthen its academic management noted in paragraph 1.6. From the external verifier's reports produced for the ABP it is clear that there were problems with the delivery of this programme at the appropriate level in its early stages. In consequence, the awarding organisation withdrew certification for a period of time. For students admitted between June 2009 and April 2010 the eventual outcome of this was that 27 learners (32 per cent) were exceptionally awarded a level 6 Diploma instead of the level 7 Postgraduate Diploma for which they were enrolled. A further 58 students eventually secured level 7. Attendance at an ABP training course on assessment helped staff to improve their practice. There is recent evidence of the College responding positively to guidance from the external verifiers, and that continuous improvements are being made with NCFE support. The team was able to see the latest external verifier's reports from NCFE, including a recent centre visit report. Comments are generally supportive with recommendations for improvement largely in the areas of candidate referencing and feedback given to students. The recent centre report is also very

complimentary of the College, confirming minimal risk in continued accreditation. At this level of provision, however, greater self-management of standards remains necessary.

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 organisations.

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2   Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1   The College is responsible for managing and monitoring academic quality for all its programmes. The management structures outlined in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.4 operate effectively to maintain the quality of learning opportunities, although staff and students acknowledge that day-to-day management is informal, based on face-to-face interactions. There is also an effective process to gather student feedback.

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

2.2   The principal reference point for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities is the ISO 9001 standard. The Quality Procedures Manual is the means by which the College 'satisfies the requirements of its customers'. It is designed in accordance with the requirements of BS EN ISO 9001:2008. Successful annual external audits over the past three years on the College's implementation of the standard indicate a positive attitude towards academic quality.

2.3   There has been no explicit use of any external reference points which are familiar in higher education, such as the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*. The team considers that it is desirable for the College to undertake a review of its academic quality processes and map them against the relevant higher education reference points.

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

2.4   The College has effective measures to assure the quality of teaching and learning. The College code of practice for teaching and learning, a lesson observation process and strict overview of teaching files are successful in setting the guidelines and monitoring the quality of teaching. Teaching is monitored by a lesson observation at least once per year, using a comprehensive, standardised grading pro forma. Most records seen indicated good teaching but some were only satisfactory. Good practice is disseminated through staff meetings and less than satisfactory performance addressed through discussion or training. The thorough teaching files, which contain schemes of work, detailed lesson plans and course materials, are regularly checked. The College has also responded to the external verifier's recommendations to improve the quality of feedback to students work through the introduction of a standardised feedback pro forma on the Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration.

2.5   The College has developed good practice in its processes for gathering and acting upon feedback from students. Regular focus groups are held with students to determine their opinions on the teaching they are receiving. These are reported at staff meetings and

actions taken as a result are fed back to students. Students stated that high quality teaching is provided by tutors. They consider that staff are up to date and encourage critical thinking.

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

2.6   The College operates a number of successful strategies and activities to ensure students are appropriately enrolled and inducted. The admissions policy clearly states minimum entry requirements. Unfamiliar qualifications are checked for equivalence and English language competence levels are also adhered to. Students are able to access pre-programme English support sessions. The induction process includes all the information necessary to study at the College and key information on living in London. During induction, students are provided with a student handbook and course syllabus, which describe how the programme is taught, what is expected of students, and how work will be marked. Information on academic writing, Harvard referencing and plagiarism are covered during induction. Students sign a checklist to indicate they have received all this information.

2.7   The College has well organised provisions to support study. There is appropriate help with study skills. A numeracy assessment to assure basic competence is carried out. Students are able to submit drafts of assessments work, and formative comments to improve standards are appropriately undertaken and regulated. On externally examined programmes students do non-mandatory practice assessments to improve achievement. Students said this formative feedback was useful and helped them improve. The College has a progress monitoring policy for students at risk or not making satisfactory progress. An Individual Learning Plan is put in place to enable such students to improve. Other students can book after-hours tutorial sessions for feedback, academic advice and information on their progress. Students are appreciative of this service. The team considers it desirable that the College extends the system of regular tutorial review for all students to discuss their academic progress across their programme.

2.8   Student welfare is effectively addressed through a welfare officer who provides pre-entry advice and information for the duration of a student's programme at the College. Student services are explained fully to students in the student handbook. Again, there are active and well organised processes in place to gain feedback from students. The information from these is collated and relayed to staff meetings so that issues are dealt with promptly. Students stated that the College has responded positively to student suggestions.

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

2.9   The College takes suitable steps to enhance academic quality. Teaching staff are appropriately qualified at postgraduate level. The College staff development and training policy supports the identification of professional development needs. An annual appraisal procedure aims to support staff in their development. Staff are supported to attend external events offered by the awarding organisations.

2.10   The College undertakes to provide adequate guidance and support to all staff to ensure that they are properly equipped to carry out their roles. The College arranged in-house delivery of the Preparation for Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector programme for all staff. Subsequently, the College is supporting staff to undertake the Diploma for Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector.

2.11   Keeping up to date with their subject is seen as a personal staff responsibility and the College support is less well developed. One example of participation in an updating course was given. The College does not provide staff with access to electronic journals.

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

2.12   Within the limitations of financial resources, the College endeavours to provide appropriate learning opportunities. It ensures that all the books on student reading lists are available in the on-site library. There are multiple copies of key texts, but few journal holdings.

2.13   In order to support staff and student currency at this level of provision, the College could improve access to journals. Students are encouraged to register with local libraries and access the British Library and electronic journals, and students confirmed that they make use of these facilities. The College itself does not provide journals in printed or electronic formats. External verifiers note an overdependence on internet resources. It is advisable that the College ensures that staff and students have appropriate access to relevant journals to support teaching and learning.

2.14   There are sufficient computers on site to meet student requirements. Students value the College intranet, which allows them to access College notices, course materials and contact staff even when they are off campus.

2.15   Student questionnaires and focus groups held by the Librarian inform the College of the students' views on the adequacy of the learning resources. This information is collated in the Student Feedback Analysis and outcomes are reported back to staff meetings. A recent Student Feedback Analysis concludes 'adequate learning support is available to students in terms of books, computer labs, class handouts and tutor support.'

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 College publishes a comprehensive and easily understood set of student and staff information. This includes a prospectus, a College student handbook, and a set of policies which define the College's approach to teaching, learning and student support, including the respective responsibilities of staff and students. The policies are implemented through a staff quality and operations manual. In addition, students are given the awarding and examining organisations' information in the form of qualification and unit descriptions, which state learning outcomes and curriculum content.

3.2   Information is readily accessible from a well designed and easily navigable website, which constitutes the main source of pre-entry information. All the College-originated information is downloadable from this site, and basic course information is given in a printable format, with links to the awarding or examining organisations' websites.

No particular adaptations are made to accommodate disabilities, but the simple basic design ensures ease of use. Course information is made available to enrolled students through a College intranet, which provides course and unit descriptions and additional support materials, including lecture notes and handouts.

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

3.3   There is a clear and coherent system for the management of public information. The Centre Coordinator, who is responsible for quality assurance, supervises all information before publication. The course and awarding organisations' information is taken directly from their websites, and appropriate permissions are in place for the use of logos and information. The College information is reviewed and updated through staff meetings and is signed off by the Centre Coordinator. It is then conveyed to the independent web designers who update the website.

3.4   This process has not operated with sufficient rigour in respect of the college-developed Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration. At the start of the review process, the information about the awarding organisations in the prospectus and on the website was not current. Although subsequently updated, the information about the awarding organisations and articulation was still confusing to one student. By the time of the second visit, the team found that the information had been corrected. It is advisable that the College ensures that website and prospectus information on centre-devised programmes is kept fully up to date.

3.5   In other respects, the process has operated satisfactorily. Information on externally examined courses is current and accurate. Supporting information is helpful and refers students to appropriate official sources where necessary. Student views on the contents and design of the website are sought as part of the regular focus groups held to elicit student feedback.

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]

Leyton College action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight March 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:						
• gathering and acting upon feedback from students (paragraphs 2.1, 2.5, 2.8, 2.15 and 3.5).	Continue to conduct student feedback meeting and get students more proactive in the meeting to ensure we are developing and meeting student needs	Ongoing	Administration Team	Development issues in student feedback addressed	Director of Operations	Developments evaluated in management meetings
Advisable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team considers that it is **advisable** for the provider to:						
• ensure that the Academic Board complies fully with its terms of reference to maintain rigorous	Continuing to maintain Academic Board meetings, and record all evidence and topics discussed in a formal way	September 2012	Director of Operations/internal verifier	Improvements in standards recognised in external verifier reports Ensuring the	Centre Coordinator Director of Operations	In annual reports to awarding organisations Management meetings/Academic

[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 organisations.

oversight of academic standards and quality on centre-devised programmes (paragraphs 1.4 to 1.6 and 1.10)				academic board meetings are in accordance with the terms of reference by the agreed date and staff will be more aware of the terms of reference		Board meetings
	Heads of department and course tutors will liaise with the internal verifier to discuss and develop their skills to meet academic standards	October 2012	Internal verifier/ course tutors/heads of department	The internal verifier will prepare a report of the areas covered in the meetings by the agreed date Staff will sign/date deceleration which will be kept on file	Director of Operations/ Academic Board	External verifier reports/staff feedback/staff meetings/staff observations
• ensure that both variants of the Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration comply fully with relevant external reference points (paragraph 1.8)	All staff involved with the delivery of the Postgraduate Diploma in Business Administration course will be given extensive training to enable them to meet and comprehend external reference	November 2012	Internal verifier/ heads of department	Awarding organisations confirm that programmes meet National Qualifications Framework criteria and the UK Quality Code for Higher	Director of Operations/ Academic Board	External verifier reports/ heads of department feedback to management meetings

		Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
points				Education as appropriate		
• ensure that staff and students have appropriate access to relevant journals to support teaching and learning (paragraphs 2.11 and 2.13)	Continue to monitor and make class material available on the online facility Discuss/research with internal verifier/heads of department into e-library facilities and decide upon which sources of information we will use	October 2012 October 2012	Centre Coordinator Centre Coordinator/ heads of department	Students will be able to access all class material at any point of time Student results/ measure student success pass rate in examinations and assessments	Academic Board/heads of department Director of Operations	Feedback from students using the online service Student/staff feedback/ management meetings/monitor and discuss student progress with their tutors
• ensure that website and prospectus information on centre-devised programmes is kept fully up to date (paragraph 3.4).	Review and revise all the information on our website and in our prospectus Annual monitoring to ensure information is current	December 2012	Centre Coordinator/ Director of Operations	Any changes will be discussed in the management meetings and will be amended by the agreed date	Management meetings	Annual monitoring is reported and confirmed at management meeting
Desirable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team considers that it is **desirable** for the provider to:						
• undertake a review of quality assurance	Review quality assurance process in order to meet the	October 2012	Heads of department/internal verifier/Centre	Implementation of relevant policies in	Director of Operations	Review relevant policies and amendments by

processes and map them against relevant higher education reference points (paragraph 2.3)	external reference points mentioned in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education		Coordinator	accordance with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education		agreed date Reviewed by Academic Board meeting
• extend the system of regular tutorial review to all students (paragraph 2.7).	Liaise with course tutors to discuss various methods to use in-class to get students participating	October 2012	Centre Coordinator/ course tutors	New/existing method will be implemented in classes by agreed date	Director of Operations	Student feedback meetings/staff feedback/ tutor observations
	Offer in class tutorial support to all students to determine their strengths and weaknesses	October 2012	Heads of department/course tutors	Tutors will review student examination pass rates and assessments	Centre Coordinator	Staff and student feedback/tutors will prepare a report about tutorial support by end of semester

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.

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