Central College London

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

September 2012

Key findings about Central College London

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in September 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 University of West London, ATHE and NCFE.

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 and 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**:

- providing weekly timetabled supervised study sessions (paragraph 2.6).

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:

- clarify quality reporting structures and procedures (paragraph 1.1)
- employ effective student data analysis and target setting (paragraph 1.3)
- apply assessment practices consistently (paragraph 1.9)
- undertake a comprehensive review of the alignment between documented policy and procedure (paragraph 2.1).

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

- progress the implementation of structured recording of meetings (paragraph 1.2)
- formalise procedures for reporting and responding to external examiners (paragraph 1.7)
- develop criteria for lesson observations (paragraph 2.4)
- consider the provision of appropriate library resources on the premises (paragraph 2.13).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](1) (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Central College London (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 University of West London, ATHE and NCFE. The review was carried out by Dr Glenn Barr, Dr Victoria Lindsay, Dr Clive Marsland (reviewers), and Ms Brenda Hodgkinson (coordinator).

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

- policy documents
- meetings with staff and students
- monitoring reports from the provider's awarding body and organisations
- progression agreement with the University of West London for its health programme
- course documentation
- publications for staff and students
- samples of assessed work.

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

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)
- the Academic Infrastructure
- information supplied to the provider by its awarding body and organisations.

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

Central College London (the College) is a small private college established in 2009. It is situated in West London and the vast majority of its students are from China. It moved to its current premises on the site of the old Ealing film studios in 2010. According to its mission statement, the College aims to help students in a supportive environment using a blend of traditional and innovative educational environments. The focus of its courses is in the areas of business and health, with English language support available to all students.

There are 347 students studying at the College. Due to changes in UK Border Agency regulations, the 36 students on the level 6 BSc programme were registered and studying with the College's awarding body but are being taught collaboratively with College staff.

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

University of West London
- Level 6 BSc (Hons) in Nursing and Healthcare - top-up award (36)

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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.

ATHE
- Level 4 Extended Diploma in Management of Health and Social Care (0)
- Level 5 Extended Diploma in Management of Health and Social Care (0)
- Level 6 Diploma in Healthcare Management (0)
- Level 4 Extended Diploma in Management (0)
- Level 5 Extended Diploma in Management (0)
- Level 6 Diploma in Management (0)
- Level 7 Diploma in Strategic Management (5)

NCFE
- Diploma in Health and Social Care (8)
- Advanced Diploma in Health and Social Care (89)
- Diploma in Business Management (51)
- Advanced Diploma in Business Management (194)

The provider's stated responsibilities

The BSc (Hons) in Nursing and Healthcare is a University of West London top-up award. It is a university programme delivered collaboratively by the College and the University. They work closely in the admissions process and delivery, with the University setting and second marking assignments.

The College is responsible for the recruitment and admission of students to the NCFE and ATHE awards. For the NCFE programmes, the College has responsibility for setting and marking assessments, teaching, student support and learning resources. For those awarded by ATHE, the curriculum and setting of assessments is undertaken by the awarding organisation, with responsibility for delivery and student support lying with the College.

Recent developments

The College has recently developed a course in media studies and, although not currently available, it is one of the future developments planned to expand the range of courses delivered.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. They prepared a short video containing summaries of their personal experiences at the College. They were given technical help by College staff. Their talks covered all aspects of the provision from their admission, through arrival, to studying at the College and the support they are given. The coordinator met students at the preparatory meeting. On the first day of the review, the team was able to meet six students studying a range of the programmes offered.

Detailed findings about Central College London

1   Academic standards

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

1.1   Responsibility for academic standards within the College, in practice, rests with individual programme assessment boards chaired by the Academic Principal, who is also a member of the Senior Management Team. The Academic Principal takes the lead across programme committees, assessment boards and programme assessment boards.
The College's Managing Director currently holds the position of Academic Principal on an interim basis. It is anticipated that a new appointment to this pivotal role will be made in the near future, which will uphold separate academic representation at a senior level.
The reporting structure requires that each assessment board considers module reports. However, College documentation does not effectively illustrate the hierarchical standing of each committee responsible for management processes within the College. For example, although it is referred to as having a key role, the Advisory Panel appears not to have responsibility for academic standards and has purely a consultative role. The team considers it advisable that the College clarifies its quality reporting structures and procedures.

1.2   Recording processes in the College lack consistency and so difficulties arise in ensuring that issues have reached a satisfactory resolution or whether meetings have been held in accordance with the Staff Handbook and committee terms of reference. The team noted that the College's meeting schedule was disrupted by the departure of the Academic Principal and that this had an impact on the formal meeting cycle. Therefore, the team considers it desirable that the College progresses with the implementation of structured recording of meetings.

1.3   The College makes limited use of management information as part of its reporting process. Programme-level achievement rates are not featured in annual monitoring reports, or considered by assessment boards or the Senior Management Team. The team identified low levels of student achievement in samples of student work and in module reports.
The Senior Management Team and assessment boards monitor student performance at module level, but were unable to consider student data that might enable proactive management of issues affecting progression and retention. The team concludes that it is advisable for the College to employ effective student data analysis and target setting.

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

1.4   College policies and procedures relevant to academic standards are aligned with the Academic Infrastructure. Senior staff have begun to engage with mapping of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*), for example in relation to the appointment of external examiners. The College also refers to awarding body and organisations documents and regulations that have been mapped against the Academic Infrastructure. Teaching staff confirmed a rudimentary understanding of the sections of the *Code of practice* relevant to academic standards and to FHEQ.

1.5   The College has effectively engaged with employers and professional bodies in developing new programmes in media studies.

1.6   The College is currently seeking to move its curriculum offer from NCFE provision to ATHE. This is allowing the College to more directly engage with the Qualifications and Credit Framework as an external reference point.

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

1.7   Assessment boards consider module reports and these provide thorough monitoring of student performance at individual and module level. For diploma programmes, ATHE sets assessments and NCFE delegates this to the College. The College has enhanced the externality of the assessment process by appointing external examiners for these programmes. When appointing to these posts, the College reported that it had considered the precepts of the *Code of practice*, *Section 4: External examining.* However, the role of an external examiner at the College is not yet fully developed and the College acknowledged, in particular, the need to formalise its procedures in responding to external examiners' reports. Reporting external examiners' conclusions to students has not yet been implemented. However, this has been discussed and will be effected in the next academic year. The team considers that it is desirable for the College to formalise its procedures in reporting and responding to its external examiners.

1.8   Effective cross moderation is in place to assure the maintenance of academic standards for the University of West London programme, with the University setting and second marking all assessments and appointing external examiners.

1.9   The College has been working with its awarding body and organisations to develop assessment and verification procedures to ensure there is effective management of the process. Students reported that they received verbal feedback on their work, which they found valuable. However, consideration of student work shows some variability in assessment practice. Some assignment briefs are detailed and allow students to demonstrate their knowledge, while others lack clarity. There is some constructive written feedback to students explicitly linked to the learning outcomes, while other examples contain few annotations and little guidance on how to improve. Recording of second marking is basic, lacking evidence of academic discussion and review. The team regards it advisable for the College to apply their assessment practices consistently.

The review team has **confidence** in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of its awarding body and 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 responsibilities for the management of the quality of learning opportunities and reporting arrangements reflect those in paragraph 1.1 in relation to standards. The College has developed a broad set of policy documents listed in the Staff Handbook and reproduced as appropriate in the Student Handbook. However, the policies are inconsistently documented and some are unclear. The Student Handbook contains a policy that encompasses both complaints and appeals. The academic misconduct policy includes a limited section on plagiarism and, in their review of student work, the team found some inconsistent application of the plagiarism procedures and retake and mitigation policies. The College reported that the Staff Handbook, together with all the policies contained in it,

is being revised. The team considers that, in order to ensure the information provided to staff and students is consistent and accurately reflects current practice, it is advisable that the College undertakes a comprehensive review of the alignment of documented policy with procedure.

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

2.2   As noted at paragraph 1.4, the College is in the early stages of mapping its processes to the *Code of practice*.

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

2.3   There is a teaching and learning policy in place that supports staff use of a variety of teaching methods in the classroom. Activities are tailored to student needs and there is a focus on interactive learning, including case studies, group and individual work. Class size allows individuals to interact with the tutors and students are complimentary about their classroom experience.

2.4   The teaching team is small and staff share best practice across programmes and disciplines. There is informal peer observation by staff teaching on individual modules to exchange ideas. An institutional lesson observation policy is in place. Staff are observed by the College Principal and, on appointment, new staff observe more experienced staff. Although a pro forma is used, there are no criteria for formulating judgements in observations and there is no mapping against the teaching and learning policy. In order to enhance these existing processes the team considers it desirable that the College develops criteria for its lesson observations.

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

2.5   The College has a robust admissions and induction process in place. Students must complete an application form, undertake an interview, sometimes by telephone, and provide the College with evidence of their qualifications. When agents are used, the final admissions decision rests with the College. Students are provided with a range of pre-arrival information. There is also a pre-course reading week which helps orientate students to their chosen programme. On arrival, a Welfare Officer is available to help students with accommodation and other personal issues. There are multiple entry points to each programme and there is an induction session on each occasion. Students who commence their studies outside the normal start points are provided with a personalised induction.

2.6   Students are provided with academic and pastoral support. In addition to subject-specific classes, students attend an Academic Skills Module. This has been developed to provide students with additional study skills, including the use of IT and academic writing. There is a set of virtual resources hosted on the virtual learning environment to support class lessons. Students are able to approach staff informally for additional support. Language support is provided to students every Friday afternoon. In addition to their subject-specific class contact hours, students are required to attend four hours of timetabled supervised study each week. Staff are present in the classroom during this time to provide study support for students on their current work and to give additional feedback on completed pieces of assessment. Students report that they find these sessions useful. The reviewers considered that the timetabled supervised study sessions are good practice.

2.7   The College is effective in responding to the student voice, but has identified student engagement as a feature for further development. Student representatives have been in place since September 2011, but their role has no formal status and they do not appear in the committee structure. Over the last year a student representative policy has been developed and it will be introduced in the forthcoming academic year.

2.8   The College undertakes a number of surveys, including admissions, student services, module evaluations, programme evaluations and a graduate survey. Analysis focuses on quantitative findings and the qualitative data does not appear in the feedback summaries. Survey data is reviewed by the relevant department and considered by the Senior Management Team. Feedback is provided to students through the student representative. Staff and students were able to provide examples of changes that had been made in response to student feedback.

2.9   The College provides a supportive environment for the students. Pastoral support is initially provided through the administration office team. Academic staff are available for further support. A formal tutorial system will be implemented during the next academic year. Students were complimentary about the support received from all College staff, which they reported as a real strength.

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

2.10   An appropriate staff development policy is in place and this recognises the value of having well qualified and committed staff. Staff are appointed with appropriate levels of discipline qualifications. All new staff are separately inducted into their roles and are allocated a mentor. All members of the academic staff receive appropriate staff development in learning and teaching, teaching practice and management issues. There is a College annual staff development day, which covers a wide range of current issues, including those associated with learning and teaching development. Lesson observation reports are used in annual reviews and to identify continuing professional development needs. More detailed records of staff development activities, both for evidencing staff development and for enhancement purposes, would be beneficial.

2.11   The College expects staff to have or be working towards a teaching qualification and staff confirmed that they would be supported in realising these goals. Staff also confirmed that they are supported to attend conferences relevant to their teaching and research as appropriate. The College has an aspiration that all its staff should hold a Fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. Excellence in teaching is rewarded by salary increases, and is determined by examination results and student feedback.

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   Physical resources for students include well equipped and well appointed lecture theatres, which regularly operate with numbers below maximum capacity. There is also a large computer teaching room containing up-to-date computing facilities. There is a modern, welcoming and professionally equipped reception area, which has a well maintained noticeboard containing key student information, including the College's timetable and awarding body and organisations' examination schedules.

2.13   A range of educational information is made available to students through the College's virtual learning environment. All are of good quality and are also made available in paper copy at the start of each module. Students report that the virtual learning environment

is straightforward, easy to use, and has improved in its scope and efficacy during their time at the College. There is an e-learning library resource available to students through the virtual learning environment. However, there is no library on the premises. In the light of student comments and reasonable expectations for such a provision, as acknowledged by the interim Academic Principal, the team considers it desirable that the College considers the provision of appropriate library resources on the premises.

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 all relevant information about its higher education provision and facilities in electronic format on its website. The content, primarily directed at potential students, is clear and easy to navigate. Although the team found that the status of programmes advertised was not always clear, students confirmed that the information they received before and during enrolment was appropriate, accurate, and allowed them to make informed choices about their applications to the College. The College also provides hard copies of its Prospectus to all students and other stakeholders on request and at student registration.

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

3.2   A Public Information Policy has recently been developed, which sets out clear lines of responsibility and accountability for ensuring that information is accurate and complete. Publishing and ensuring the accuracy of public information are principally the responsibility of the College. However, it does work with its awarding body and organisations to ensure the currency and accuracy of information relevant to accredited programmes and other awards. The Academic Principal has overall responsibility for ensuring that public information is accurate and fit for purpose. This post holder delegates to the Marketing Officer the day-to-day and operational responsibilities for public information. The Senior Management Team meets the Marketing Officer periodically to provide collective oversight of processes, and academic staff are consulted in relation to curriculum content.

3.3   There is an updating and checking schedule undertaken either by the relevant academic tutor or member of the administrative team. For major documents such as the College's Prospectus, a number of key stakeholders, including the Head of Centre Operations, academic staff, the Marketing Officer and the marketing team are consulted. All information is then passed to the Marketing Officer who controls uploading and publication.

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]

Central College London action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight September 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:						
• providing weekly timetabled supervised study sessions (paragraph 2.6).	Monitor at the end of each module for all sessions the effectiveness of supervised study sessions Identify further areas of improvement for session delivery and scheduling at the end of every six months	3 December 2012	Office Manager, programme leaders and all module leaders	Improvement of module assessments results Positive feedback from staff and students	Academic Principal	Statistical results of module assessment Student survey Feedback from students, student representatives, academic tutors and administration staff
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:						
• clarify quality reporting structures and procedures	Create terms of reference for individual committees,	30 November 2012	Academic Principal	Lists of responsibilities of programme committees,	Senior Management Team	Minutes of committees and assessment boards with

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

(paragraph 1.1)	identifying clear designation of responsibilities Review flow chart to clarify the quality reporting hierarchy and structure Review policies related to the programme committees, assessment board and programme assessment board Update staff and student handbooks and communicate all changes to staff and students Review the effectiveness of quality reporting procedure	 January 2013	Operations Manager and Academic Principal Public Information Officer Office Manager, Academic Principal and Operations Manager	assessment board and programme assessment board Reviewed flow chart of quality reporting structure with evaluation schedule Accurate information updated in the staff and student handbook and all other public information documents		reporting responsibilities identified against the reviewed flow chart Review report to Academic Principal and Operations Manager
• employ effective student data analysis and target setting (paragraph 1.3)	Review and update the current system for the collection, recording and analysis of student data	30 June 2013	Academic Principal, Office Manager, programme leaders and Operations Manager	The use of a functional data recording and analysis system, providing comparable and sufficient	Operations Manager and Academic Principal	Use of data at assessment boards - assessment board minutes

	Identify areas of modification of current student data collection, recording and analysis system in the programme committees and Senior Management Team meetings			information for assessment of student performance across academic years		Use of data by staff in student review and feedback - programme meetings

Student feedback |
	Complete modifications		Office Manager and programme leaders			
	Review and confirm the updated student data recording and analysis system		Academic Principal, Office Manager and programme leaders			
	Communicate to all staff the new system		Academic Principal and Public Information Officer			
	Review the effectiveness of new system with users		Academic Principal, programme leaders and Officer Manager			Review report to Academic Principal, programme leaders and Office Manager
• apply assessment practices consistently	Revise and standardise assessment marking	17 December 2012	Academic Principal and programme	Satisfactory feedback from external	Academic Principal and Operations	Comments from internal verifiers and external

(paragraph 1.9)	through the use of a new template and communicate to all teaching staff		leaders	examiners on this particular issue	Manager	examiners on the details of feedback provided on written assignments
	Attendance at the assessment standardisation event organised by the awarding body and organisations		Programme leaders	Evidenced application of new assessment feedback practices across all subject areas		Student feedback
						Evidence of detailed and written feedback provided on the marking sheet and within the assessment material for written assessments
	Review student feedback practices		Office Manager			
• undertake a comprehensive review of the alignment between documented policy and procedure (paragraph 2.1).	Set up a task force to initiate a review of the internal communication process	28 February 2013	Public Information Officer	Implementation of recommendations from task force review	Operations Manager, Academic Principal and Senior Management Team	Task force report and recommendations implemented and evaluated through committee meeting minutes
	Clarify the responsibility of final confirmation for public information provided within College policies		Operations Manager	Evidence of sign-off of accuracy of public information at senior management level		Senior Management Team and Public Information Officer meeting minutes
	Implement bimonthly Quality Team meetings to review and evaluate College policies and		Office Manager and programme leaders			Minutes of Quality Team meetings and action points/ implementation of

	procedures against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education to ensure alignment					procedures of measurements against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education
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:						
• progress the implementation of structured recording of meetings (paragraph 1.2)	Formulate clear guidelines for the formatting of meeting records and structuring action points to be carried out and followed up Clarify responsibility for the production of minutes and for checking the accuracy of meeting records	30 November 2012	Office Manager	Meeting records written in the required standardised format and items of information Meeting records stored in relevant folders on shared drive	Operations Manager and Academic Principal	Review samples of meeting minutes in the next three months by Senior Management Team
• formalise procedures for reporting and responding to external examiners (paragraph 1.7)	Review policies related to the use of external examiners Clarify the reporting structure and procedures to external examiners in the programme committees	30 November 2012	Academic Principal and programme leaders	Academic Principal's response to external examiners according to the policy Satisfactory feedback from external	Senior Management Team	Evidenced response to external examiners External examiners' feedback

	Update the assessment policy in all College public information		Public Information Officer	examiners		
	Communicate to all academic staff the changes of assessment policy		Academic Principal			
	Evaluate the impact of updated reporting structure and procedures on the enhancement of College academic standards in the January 2013 cohort	January 2013	Academic Principal and Operations Manager			
• develop criteria for lesson observations (paragraph 2.4)	Research other higher education institutes' lesson observation criteria Invite external examiners and advisers' views of the lesson observation criteria Develop pro forma for use by staff	30 January 2013	Academic Principal	Completed observation criteria sheet Implementation of new pro forma and use by staff	Senior Management Team	Staff feedback Student feedback Staff appraisal
• consider the provision of appropriate library resources on the	Review the effectiveness and sufficiency of current academic resources	28 February 2013	Academic Principal, programme leaders, Office	Sufficient academic resources supporting	Senior Management Team	Student feedback Student assessment

premises (paragraph 2.13).	available to College students Investigate the resources required to set up a mini library		Manager and Operations Manager	student learning at the College		performance Module delivery and programme delivery survey

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.