QAA

London School of Business & Accountancy

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

September 2012

Key findings about the London School of Business & Accountancy

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 as an approved teaching and examining centre of the Institute of Commercial 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 this awarding organisation.

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 high level of student engagement in quality assurance processes (paragraph 2.7)
- student induction activities (paragraph 2.9).

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:

- regularly consider course monitoring and review through the new committee structure (paragraph 1.3)
- include external scrutiny in the School's quality processes (paragraph 1.6)
- align all quality assurance documents with relevant external reference points (paragraph 2.4)
- identify staff development and deliver within a strategic framework (paragraph 2.12)
- review and monitor regularly the learning resources accessible to students (paragraph 2.13)
- implement fully and monitor the effectiveness of the new procedure for checking public information (paragraph 3.3).

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

- describe formally the roles of all School staff (paragraph 1.2)
- incorporate channels for the dissemination and recording of good practice into the new quality processes (paragraph 1.7)
- develop a teaching and learning strategy (paragraph 2.6)
- make available on the School's website all relevant documents for current and prospective students (paragraph 3.1)
- incorporate all quality and policy documents in a single Quality Manual (paragraph 3.2).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)[1] (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at the London School of Business & Accountancy (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 that the provider delivers on behalf of the Institute of Commercial Management. The review was carried out by Dr Laila Halani, Mr John Holloway (reviewers), and Mrs Catherine Fairhurst (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 the Prospectus, the Quality Manual, the staff and student handbooks, student feedback analysis and the terms of reference of the Academic Board and its committees supplied by the School, the accreditation report of the Accreditation Services for International Colleges, the website of the Institute of Commercial Management, and meetings with staff and students.

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

- the Academic Infrastructure
- Accreditation Services for International Colleges
- Memorandum of Understanding and programme specifications of the Institute of Commercial Management
- Qualifications and Credit Framework.

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

The London School of Business & Accountancy (the School) is a private college operating from first and second floor premises in North Finchley, London. Its mission is to provide economic and quality learning opportunities to international students coming to the UK for higher education. The School is owned and managed by the Principal. It employs a full-time Registrar and three part-time lecturers, one of whom supervises the quality and delivery of the courses.

The School commenced operation in September 2010, enrolling its first students in January 2011. It offers vocational higher education courses in business and management studies, leading to qualifications awarded by the Institute of Commercial Management. There are currently 63 full-time international students who hope to progress to UK university programmes. The School was accredited by the Accreditation Service for International Colleges and obtained approved centre status from the Institute of Commercial Management in August 2011. It was licensed as a Highly Trusted Sponsor (Tier 4) by the UK Border Agency in September 2012.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath their awarding organisation, with full-time student numbers in brackets:

Institute of Commercial Management
- Diploma in Business Studies (21)

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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.

- Advanced Diploma in Business Studies (17)
- Graduate Diploma in Management Studies (19)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Management (3)

The provider's stated responsibilities

The School is responsible for administering examinations on behalf of the Institute of Commercial Management (ICM), public information relating to the School, resource provision, staff development, student recruitment, student support, and teaching and learning. The ICM is responsible for course design and content, progression arrangements and all summative assessment.

Recent developments

The School is in the process of embedding formal processes for the review and enhancement of its provision as it intends to increase its student numbers. A formal committee structure has been introduced and the role of Course Supervisor has been developed to oversee the courses. The School will keep these new arrangements under review, as it expands its provision and when further data is available, to confirm their effectiveness and fitness for purpose.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. The student representatives chose the methodology, gathered the information and analysed the feedback. This was confirmed by the students. The School provided guidance, information, resources and support. The reviewers found the student submission focused and helpful. Four students, including the lead student representative, met the review coordinator at the preparatory meeting and eight different students met the whole team. The students' contribution to meetings was informative and useful.

Detailed findings about the London School of Business & Accountancy

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The School's responsibilities for academic standards focus on providing tuition to students and administrating the examination procedures. The Institute of Commercial Management (ICM) is responsible for course design and content, progression agreements and all summative assessment. The relationship between the School and the ICM is outlined in a Memorandum of Understanding.

1.2 The arrangements for managing academic standards are effective for the current size of the School. The Principal is responsible for academic standards and, with the Registrar, manages the provision. The recently developed role of Course Supervisor oversees course delivery and standards. The role descriptions for the Course Supervisor and the Registrar are very general. The post holders and the other staff understand their duties and responsibilities only through informal channels of communication. In the meetings between the team and the staff, it was clear that the staff did not always demonstrate a clear understanding of their roles. It is desirable that the roles of all staff are formally described to communicate clear roles and responsibilities.

1.3 The School recently revised its organisation and management structure to facilitate growth, confirm quality processes and enhance management effectiveness. The Academic Board, a Quality & Standards Committee and a Students-Staff Liaison Committee have been created as a result. A committee schedule is in preparation and there has been an initial meeting of the staff. However, the new structure is not yet fully embedded. It is advisable that the School regularly considers course monitoring and review through the new committee structure, enabling the new quality processes to become established.

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

1.4 The School engages appropriately with external reference points relating to academic standards, within the context of its responsibilities. The School adheres to the requirements of the ICM and relies heavily upon it to ensure engagement with these external reference points, including the Qualifications and Credit Framework. Teaching staff direct the students to the programme specifications on the ICM.

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

1.5 No external moderation, verification or external examining takes place at the School, as the ICM is fully responsible for summative assessments. Appropriate internal verification compares the schemes of work and lesson plans with unit syllabuses, learning outcomes and teaching methods published on the awarding organisation's website.

1.6 The School does not receive feedback from external examiners or details of examination performance from the ICM, so the teaching staff have difficulty in referencing student achievement. The School's courses' review demonstrates that the quality processes lack external scrutiny and access to sector benchmarks. This was confirmed by the staff. It is

advisable that the School includes external scrutiny in its quality processes to assist the maintenance of academic standards.

1.7 The opportunities for sharing good practice about academic standards are limited and mainly informal. Although the terms of reference for both the Academic Board and the Quality & Standards Committee include agenda items related to good practice, no structured activity had taken place at the time of the review. The School's annual courses' monitoring process does not identify good practice. It is desirable that the College incorporates communication channels for the dissemination and recording of good practice into the new quality processes for cross-course quality assurance and enhancement.

> 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 organisation.

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 School fulfils its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities effectively but informally. The key responsibilities include managing learning resources, staff development, student recruitment, student support and teaching.

2.2 The current arrangements for managing the quality of learning opportunities mirror those for academic standards outlined in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.3 and provide sufficient oversight for the current size of School.

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

2.3 The School relied in the past on the Accreditation Services for International College's report to ensure engagement with external reference points used in the management and enhancement of learning opportunities. The ICM produces course and unit outlines that are used by the School, but no guidance on processes related to quality and enhancement.

2.4 The School has recently begun to embed the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* in its activities and to share understanding among all staff. In discussions with the review team, it was clear that the Principal is familiarising himself with the Academic Infrastructure. However, not all staff are able to demonstrate a full understanding of how these external reference points relate to their work. It is advisable that the School aligns all quality assurance documents with relevant external reference points to enable the staff to have a full understanding and enhance the quality of learning opportunities.

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

2.5 Currently, there is effective oversight of teaching because of the School's small size, the committed, well qualified staff and the strong leadership of the Principal. This is managed by peer review and staff appraisal.

2.6 The School does not have a formal teaching and learning strategy. The ICM recommends learning and teaching strategies for each taught unit, but does not provide any detail. The students confirmed that, generally, they are satisfied with the level of teaching, but not always with the style. It is not clear how the School staff are formally made aware of different teaching styles or the differentiation between teaching levels. It is desirable that the School develops a formal teaching and learning strategy to enhance the student learning experience.

2.7 The School has been successful in collecting and using student views on the quality of teaching and learning. For example, a formative assessment feedback template has been designed to standardise and give more detailed feedback to students in response to their requests. Students have a representative body and a lead student representative. Students representing all courses are members of the Students-Staff Liaison Committee and, although it has not yet met, students confirm they have regular informal meetings. In the student written submission, students stated they were encouraged to express their opinions and provide feedback to the staff. A summary of the feedback is fed into the courses' review at the end of each course. Students are notified by email or meetings if any action is taken as a result of this. The high level of student engagement in quality assurance processes is good practice.

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

2.8 Academic and pastoral support for students is strong and the students reported that they greatly value the range of support and access to staff provided by the School. There are revision tutorials that go beyond regular class hours, comprehensive handouts for each unit, a Student Handbook and individualised support where required. Many processes are informal, although there are written policies for admissions, disability and equal opportunities.

2.9 The thorough student induction programme provides students with key information about School facilities, course requirements, the ICM, local libraries, transport and living in the UK. The students commended this, together with the detailed personal recruitment information they receive. The team agrees with the report of the Accreditation Services for International Colleges and recognises the student induction activities as good practice. British university application systems are explained to students before they complete their courses at the School.

2.10 The School assures itself of the effectiveness of its support through student feedback. Students complete a questionnaire at the end of each unit and, if they have any individual concerns, they meet the Principal in a formal or informal meeting.

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

2.11 The Quality Manual emphasises the importance of well trained staff, although the School relies on recruiting qualified and experienced teachers and does not have a formal staff development policy. The Principal conducts induction with all new staff. They receive the Staff Handbook which provides clear guidance on employment regulations and other related policies and procedures. This identifies staff development opportunities. If any staff member does not have a teaching qualification, the School is committed to contributing to the cost.

2.12 The current staff, on part-time contracts, are well qualified. Any development needs are identified through peer review of teaching, performance appraisal and student feedback. These needs have so far been fulfilled by the Principal. There is a system to record staff

development activities, but there is no evidence of systematic development taking place or being planned. It is advisable that the College identifies staff development needs and delivers these within a strategic framework in order to enhance the teaching and learning of their higher education provision.

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

2.13   The School's learning resources are appropriate for the small number of students currently enrolled. Students have access to computers and wireless internet. The School's library is very small, so students are required to purchase copies of requisite texts and use public libraries. The teaching staff and students rely heavily on the ICM's website, which includes past examination papers, handouts and study aids. In the student written submission and at the meeting with the team, the students indicated the learning resources were just satisfactory. It is desirable that the School regularly reviews and monitors the learning resources to confirm they are sufficient to enable students to achieve the learning outcomes.

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 communication of public information is effective for the current size of the School, but is mainly reliant on informal processes. The School is responsible for producing a website, a prospectus, the staff and student handbooks, the Quality Manual and policy documents. The website contains limited information about the School, but is under reconstruction. Students use the ICM's materials regularly and it would enable easier access if there were electronic links. It is desirable that all relevant documents are available on the School's website for current and prospective students.

3.2   The Quality Manual briefly outlines the School's culture, values, key strategies, approaches to staff appraisal, course review, workload balance and peer observation of teaching. This document is currently under revision to enhance its effectiveness. The School has also produced several other policy documents, such as a Disability Policy and an Admissions Policy. It is desirable that the School continues to review all its quality and policy documents and incorporate these within a single Quality Manual, to ensure that there is a single point of access for staff.

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

3.3   The School's arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information rely heavily on the Principal. He also ensures that the School's international agent provides accurate and complete information to potential applicants. The School's recent management review concluded that the Principal's responsibilities and activities are not sustainable. As a result, the Academic Board is now responsible for assuring the

accuracy and completion of information. It is advisable for the School to implement fully the new procedure for checking public information and monitor its effectiveness.

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]

London School of Business and Accountancy 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:						
• the high level of student engagement in quality assurance processes (paragraph 2.7)	Formalise the student involvement process to ensure better and long-term student involvement This should be done by having a written schedule of student meetings and feedback from students	31 January 2013	Students-Staff Liaison Committee	Improved student satisfaction Record of feedback from students and minutes of the meetings	Quality & Standards Committee	Quality & Standards Committee to review whether such a schedule is available to all students Quality & Standards Committee to review the improvement of student feedback during the course review
• student induction activities (paragraph 2.9).	Annual review of the student induction programme with a view to add further information for new	31 January 2013 and then once every year	Quality & Standards Committee	Improved student satisfaction and motivation	Academic Board	Academic Board to ensure that the annual review is carried out and approve the work

[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 organisation.

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
	students					done during the review
The team considers that it is **advisable** for the provider to:						
• regularly consider course monitoring and review through the new committee structure (paragraph 1.3)	Quality & Standards Committee to carry out the course review for September 2012 exam session and onwards	30 November 2012 (when the results are announced) and onwards	Quality & Standards Committee	Improved analysis of the performance by both students and teachers Sharing of best practices and constructive debate on areas of weaknesses highlighted	Academic Board	The Academic Board to ensure that timely course reviews have taken place The Academic Board to review the effectiveness of the course reviews, approve recommendations made by the Quality & Standards Committee and advise improvements in the process
• include external scrutiny in the School's quality processes (paragraph 1.6)	Search and evaluate different options to put a system of external scrutiny in place in order to choose the best option The external scrutiny	31 January 2013	Quality & Standards Committee	External scrutiny will get in place at in the long run and the School will be able to get neutral feedback on how well it has performed in order to maintain	Academic Board	The Academic Board to review whether suitable arrangement has been made by the set deadline The Academic Board to also

	should take place at least once every year or following major changes in the provision of education at the School			good standards of education		review the report of the external party to ensure that an effective and detailed feedback is available for the Academic Board and Quality & Standards Committee to make improvements
• align all quality assurance documents with relevant external reference points (paragraph 2.4)	Embed all relevant external reference points, including the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, into the Quality Manual and ensure that all the employees are handed the upgraded Quality Manual The staff must also acknowledge that they have studied and understood their duties under the Quality Manual	31 March 2013	Quality & Standards Committee	Improved staff understanding of the expectations from them as higher education teachers Improved pass rates and student satisfaction feedback	Academic Board	The Academic Board to ensure that the task is completed by the set deadline The Academic Board to review the peer observation review process to ensure that the staff adhere to the external reference points
• identify staff development and	Review the staff development policy	31 March 2013	Quality & Standards	Improved staff development and	Academic Board	The Academic Board to ensure

deliver within a strategic framework (paragraph 2.12)	and come up with a systematic approach to ensure continuous staff development		Committee	motivation Positive effects on course delivery, resulting in improved pass rates and student satisfaction		that the task is performed by the set deadline The Academic Board to review the effectiveness of the changes recommended by the Quality & Standards Committee and take appropriate steps accordingly towards future staff development
• review and monitor regularly the learning resources accessible to students (paragraph 2.13)	Annual review of learning resources at the School	31 January 2013 and then every year	Quality & Standards Committee in conjunction with Students-Staff Liaison Committee	Improved learning resources Improved student satisfaction	Academic Board	Student Satisfaction Questionnaire Minutes of meetings of Students-Staff Liaison Committee
• implement fully and monitor the effectiveness of the new procedure for checking public information (paragraph 3.3).	Annual review of public information	31 January 2013	Quality & Standards Committee	Increased reliability on public information Decline in number of complaints or confusion caused as a result of incorrect information	Academic Board	The Academic Board to ensure that the task is carried out every year Feedback from students through Student Satisfaction

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
				provided by the School		Questionnaire Minutes of meetings of Students-Staff Liaison Committee
The team considers that it is **desirable** for the provider to:						
• describe formally the roles of all School staff (paragraph 1.2)	Role descriptions for all posts to be formally established, written and communicated to all current and future staff	31 January 2013 and then every time there is a new recruitment	Quality & Standards Committee	Increased staff understanding of what is expected of them as part of the team Increased staff motivation	Academic Board	Minutes of staff meeting Formal feedback questionnaire
• incorporate channels for the dissemination and recording of good practice into the new quality processes (paragraph 1.7)	Course review, peer review and staff appraisal to highlight good practices Such practices to be shared during staff meetings	30 November 2012 (when the first review needs to take place) and then all occasions where the course review, peer review or staff appraisal	Quality & Standards Committee	Increased staff understanding of what needs to be done to improve the standards of education at the School Improved student satisfaction	Academic Board	Minutes of staff meetings Peer reviews Staff appraisal Course review

		will take place				
• develop a teaching and learning strategy (paragraph 2.6)	Teaching and Learning Strategy to be formed	31 January 2013	Quality & Standards Committee	Improvement in staff performance Standardisation of teaching methods Improvement in student satisfaction	Academic Board	Academic Board to ensure that the policy is made and enforced by the given deadline Staff Satisfaction Questionnaire Minutes of staff meetings Student Satisfaction Questionnaire
• make available on the School's website all relevant documents for current and prospective students (paragraph 3.1)	All relevant information such as Prospectus, Student Handbook and links to ICM website, to be made available on the School's website	31 January 2013	Quality & Standards Committee	Improved student satisfaction	Academic Board	Student Satisfaction Questionnaire Minutes of meetings of Students-Staff Liaison Committee
• incorporate all quality and policy documents in a single Quality Manual (paragraph 3.2).	Once all the above changes have been made and annual reviews of all the policies have been carried out, the School to incorporate all the above policies in the Quality Manual	31 March 2013	Quality & Standards Committee	Improved staff performance Improved staff satisfaction Improved student satisfaction	Academic Board	Academic Board to ensure that the policy is made and enforced by the given deadline Staff Satisfaction Questionnaire Minutes of staff

						meetings
						Student Satisfaction Questionnaire

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.