London St Andrew's College

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

November 2012

Key findings about London St Andrew's College

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in November 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 Chartered Certified Accountants; BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT; Edexcel; The Institute of Commercial Management; 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**:

- the teaching qualification programmes available for College staff (paragraph 2.13).

Recommendations

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

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

- evaluate the effectiveness of the management and committee structure (paragraphs 1.2 and 2.2)
- include the review of overall College performance in quality processes (paragraphs 1.4 and 2.2).

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

- record systematically minutes and actions of all committee and management meetings (paragraphs 1.3 and 2.2)
- consider methods of increasing student involvement in College committees (paragraph 2.6)
- incorporate channels for the identifying and dissemination of good practice into the quality processes (paragraph 2.8)
- introduce a system to identify any additional learning needs of students (paragraph 2.10).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)[1] (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at London St Andrew's 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 Chartered Certified Accountants; BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT; Edexcel; The Institute of Commercial Management; NCFE and The Organisation for Tourism and Hospitality Management. The review was carried out by Seth Crofts, Kausar Malik, Paul McGrath (reviewers) and 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 College policy documents, staff and student handbooks, management organisation charts, websites, reports of the awarding organisations, and meetings with staff, students and representatives of The Organisation for Tourism and Hospitality Management.

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

- the Academic Infrastructure
- Accreditation Services for International Colleges report
- programme information of the awarding organisations
- Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

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

London St Andrew's College (the College) is a private college founded in April 2009. In August 2011, it moved from Whitechapel, London, to well-equipped premises in Ilford, Essex. It delivers higher education programmes in accounting, business management, information technology, and tourism and hospitality management. There are 147 full-time international students currently studying at the College. There are six management and administrative staff, three of whom also teach, and four full-time lecturers. Part-time teaching staff are employed when there is a need. The College is accredited by the Accreditation Service for International Colleges and has achieved Investors in People standard. It is licensed as a highly trusted sponsor (Tier 4) by the UK Border Agency and is a gold approved provider for the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants qualifications.

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

Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)
- ACCA Qualifications F1-F6 (22)

BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT
- Diploma in Information Technology (8)
- Professional Graduate Diploma in Information Technology (14)

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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.

Edexcel
- Higher National Diploma in Business (HND) (5)

The Institute of Commercial Management (ICM)
- Graduate Diploma in Management Studies (8)
- Graduate Diploma in Business Management (10)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Management (15)

The Organisation for Tourism and Hospitality Management (OTHM)
- QCF level 5 Diploma in Tourism and Hospitality Management (29)
- QCF level 6 Extended Diploma in Tourism and Hospitality Management (15)
- QCF level 6 Diploma in Tourism and Hospitality Management (15)
- QCF level 7 Diploma in Tourism and Hospitality Management (6)

The provider's stated responsibilities

The College is responsible for public information relating to the College, resource provision, staff development, student recruitment and admission, student support, and teaching and learning. The awarding organisations are responsible for programme design and content, progression arrangements and summative assessment. The College is responsible for assessment, marking and feedback to students for the Edexcel programme. Oversight is provided by an external examiner appointed by the awarding organisation.

Recent developments

The College has recently been approved to deliver Edexcel programmes. It has been accredited for Edexcel HND in Business. The College has also been approved by NCFE to deliver the award of Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) and the Certificate to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (CTLLS). The first PTLLS students were enrolled in May 2012. The College expects all teaching staff to become qualified under this scheme.

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 completed and analysed the results of a questionnaire designed by the College and participated in a focus group. These results were presented as the students' written submission; they also supplied a video recording. Six students met the coordinator at the preparatory meeting in advance of the visit and 15 participated in a meeting during the review. The students' contribution was constructive and helpful.

Detailed findings about London St Andrew's College

1   Academic standards

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

1.1   The arrangements for managing academic standards are effective for the current size of the College. The Principal takes a lead role and liaises with the awarding organisations. The College's responsibilities for academic standards focus on teaching and learning. The awarding organisations are responsible for course design and content, progression agreements and summative assessment for the majority of the programmes. The College has assessment responsibilities for the new Edexcel HND programme.

1.2   The committees and management organisation of the College have recently been restructured. This results in some overlap. For example, the terms of reference of the Academic Committee and the Course Review Board are similar as is their membership. The staff's responses when they met the team show that the new structures are still being embedded into College processes. It is advisable that the College evaluates the effectiveness of the new committee and management structure to continue to develop the management of academic standards.

1.3   The minutes of the new committee are very brief. Improving the quality of the minutes of the meetings would demonstrate the role of these committees in the management of academic standards. It is desirable for the College to record systematically minutes and actions of all committee and management meetings to track progress and to monitor the outcomes of actions.

1.4   The College carries out detailed individual annual programme reviews, as does the ACCA. There is, however, no formal review of the overall learning experience at the College. Policies and procedures concentrate on student and staff performance, with the detailed discussion of student feedback taking place in the College Quality Assurance Committee. The Quality Assurance Policy, for example, has sections for the rigorous management of student performance, teaching observation and appraisal, staff development, student views and representation. It does not refer to programme or institutional monitoring, evaluation and review. In order to inform the management of academic standards, it is advisable that the College includes a review of its overall performance in quality processes.

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

1.5   The College engages effectively with external reference points. It successfully fulfils its obligations to the awarding organisations' requirements and their relationships to the QCF. This is shown by the positive feedback from some of the awarding organisations and in their reports. The College staff demonstrate a thorough understanding of how *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) descriptors and subject benchmark statements inform teaching. *The Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 5: Academic appeals and student complaints on academic matters* and *Section 10: Admissions to higher education* are used respectively to develop policies for academic appeals and student complaints and for student admission to the College.

1.6   The College has full accreditation status from the Accreditation Service for International Colleges. Its inspection visit and report conferred this status in 2009 and again in 2011 after the College moved to its new premises. The report identified mainly administrative areas for improvement, as well as recommending that the College includes students in the programme review processes. The College has responded to these issues effectively.

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

1.7   External moderation, verification or external examining has not yet taken place at the College. It does not receive feedback from external examiners. They report directly to the awarding organisations, which are fully responsible for summative assessments. The College is preparing for the assessment of students on the newly introduced Edexcel HND programme and has developed thorough internal verification procedures.

> 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.

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 fulfils its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities effectively. These responsibilities include managing learning resources, staff development, student recruitment, student support and teaching.

2.2   The arrangements for managing the quality of learning opportunities are the same as those for academic standards outlined in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.4. The quality of learning opportunities would be enhanced if the College recorded systematically minutes and actions of all committee and management meetings and monitored their outcomes. If the College evaluates the effectiveness of the management and committee structure together with reviewing its overall performance, this would enable a coordinated oversight of the quality of the learning opportunities, as well as those of academic standards.

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

2.3   The College engages effectively with external reference points in the management and enhancement of learning opportunities, as it does for the management of academic standards described in paragraphs 1.5 and 1.6. The awarding partners produce programme and unit details that are used by the College, but there is no guidance on processes related to quality enhancement.

2.4   The College has recently begun to embed the *Code of practice* in its activities and to share understanding among all staff. For example, *Section 3: Disabled students* has been used to develop a College Accessibility and Disability Policy.

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

2.5   There is rigorous oversight of teaching by the College senior management. Teaching performance is emphasised in the quality process for managing learning opportunities, as it is with the management of academic standards. There is a thorough staff selection process with regular lesson observations and performance appraisal.

2.6   The College has comprehensive methods for collecting student feedback on teaching and learning. Student representatives are identified for all programmes and regular meetings are held between them and the College management team. Students' views are surveyed by a questionnaire twice a year and the results analysed in detail. The Principal and senior managers in the Quality Assurance Committee consider these results and take action in response to students' concerns and complaints. The College committees do not have student representation, apart from the Health and Safety Committee. It is desirable that the College considers methods of increasing student involvement in College committees to extend their contribution to the enhancement of their learning opportunities.

2.7   The students confirm that the staff use a variety of teaching methods, such as lectures, presentations, seminars and group case studies in order to achieve the learning outcomes of the programmes. They say that they appreciate study tours to companies, universities and the cultural excursions, which widen their understanding of the programmes.

2.8   The opportunities for sharing good practice in teaching and learning are limited and mainly informal. The terms of reference for the Quality Assurance Committee include an agenda item related to the enhancement of practice, but no structured activity had taken place at the time of the review. The College's individual programme reviews do not identify good practice. It is desirable that the College incorporates channels for the identifying and dissemination of good practice into the quality processes for cross-programme quality assurance and enhancement.

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

2.9   The College's monitoring arrangements of student support are relatively informal. Some data is available from the orientation day student survey. This student orientation day at the beginning of each semester provides students with information about College facilities and programme and awarding organisations' requirements. The students reported that they found this day useful. The College responds quickly and effectively to enquiries and applications. Admission procedures are effective and operate efficiently. The College has a scholarship and fee waiver scheme based on student achievement. There are currently six students in receipt of scholarships.

2.10   Pastoral support for students is strong. The student welfare officer is available for advice on finances, accommodation, programme requirements, awarding organisations, local libraries, transport and living in the UK. The students reported in their written submission and at the meeting with the team that they value this together with the accessibility of the tutors. The method for identifying disabilities is through a student's self-declaration statement on the application form. This may not always identify non-visible disabilities or additional learning needs. It is desirable that the College introduces a system to identify any additional needs of students so they can be supported in an effective and timely way.

2.11   There is wide-ranging academic support for students. All lecture notes are available electronically and remotely. The tutors review individual students' results regularly and after

internal practice examinations. The Principal meets with each student to review their performance, following the publication of external examination results.

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

2.12   The College is committed to continuing professional development for its staff as demonstrated by the achievement of the Investors in People standard. The identification of staff development needs are regularly monitored as part of the individual performance appraisal process and all staff complete a professional development plan.

2.13   The teaching staff are all well qualified in their academic disciplines, but not all staff have teaching qualifications. The College has recently been approved to deliver the awards of PTLLS and CTLLS. Seven members of teaching staff are currently undertaking the PTLLS programme. All staff teaching at the College will be expected to become qualified under this scheme. The team has identified that the teaching qualification programmes available for College staff is good practice.

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

2.14   Learning resources are sufficient and accessible to students. This is ensured by the Committee for the Establishment and Maintenance of Physical Resources, which plans and allocates physical resources for the College. It also decides on the upgrading of resources and expansion to meet future needs.

2.15   The College is located in new well-equipped premises with air-conditioned teaching, administration rooms and computer laboratories. The students have wireless access to the College Information Management System (CIMS), which also functions as a virtual learning environment. This virtual learning environment is at an early stage of development. It currently provides only a document-sharing service. Students can access lecture notes and handouts, and communicate with the academic staff. The College is investigating how students can submit assignments through this medium.

2.16   The library is adequately stocked. The College endeavours to meet the awarding organisations' core text requirements within a library budget. Students on the postgraduate level programmes told the review team that they are not completely satisfied with the library. They have limited access to wider reading and research material. The College is seeking ways to improve this by subscribing to online library facilities.

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 effectively communicates public information to meet the needs of all stakeholders. The principal communication medium is the College website. This is

supplemented with a paper-based prospectus, leaflets, College videos and the College virtual learning environment along with a social media presence. The website contains comprehensive information on web pages, downloadable documents and links to other websites, as well as to its own virtual learning environment. This information is intended for prospective students and their parents, current students and staff. The students say the detailed recruitment and admissions information they receive is helpful.

3.2   The College uses social media effectively to communicate with students. The content records College events and social activities. Students appreciate this contact as shown by their many postings. The use of social media is informed by an extensive social networking policy, which covers information technology use both within and outside the College.

3.3   A comprehensive student handbook covers all aspects of the College. Programme specifications have not yet been published, but students and staff have access to detailed programme descriptions from the awarding organisations' websites. The College is preparing a programme specification for the new HND programme.

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

3.4   The College's arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information are effective. Agreements with the awarding partners require the College to gain their approval for information published about them. College processes overseen by the Principal ensure that these arrangements are met. The Principal has overall responsibility for website content, as well as other published material. Material for publication is initiated by a member of staff and checked by senior managers before being signed off by the Principal. This is informed by a web publishing policy. These processes are effective overall, but the team found some errors in content and format. The College Principal is reviewing public information policies and processes, as well as all publications to ensure the processes identify and eliminate these errors.

3.5   The College recently surveyed students about the accuracy and completeness of the website and the virtual learning environment. The majority of students surveyed report that the information they received was complete and accurate. The student written submission and the review team's meeting with students confirmed that the information they receive from the website and other publications provide an accurate picture of what they expected and have experienced at the College.

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]

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London St Andrew's College action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight November 2012						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The review team identified the following area of **good practice** that is worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
• the teaching qualification programmes available for College staff (paragraph 2.13).	The College will offer the Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector to those who have completed the Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector In addition, approval will be sought from NCFE to deliver the Diploma to Teach in Lifelong Learning Sector	September 2013 for first Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector offer; February 2014 for Diploma to Teach in Lifelong Learning Sector approval	Registrar	Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector cohort to complete Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector successfully Full range of Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector/ Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector/Diploma to Teach in Lifelong Learning Sector provision available in College	Academic Committee	Academic Review Committee Regular review of Action Plan progress by Assistant Registrar

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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 organisations.

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:						
• evaluate the effectiveness of the management and committee structure (paragraphs 1.2 and 2.2)	A full review of the College committee structure will be undertaken, with a view to simplification, reduction in size and increased clarity of roles and responsibilities	The review will be completed by end August 2013, with implementation to follow in September 2013	Principal, Registrar and Director of Studies	Formal report on proposal for new structures	Board of Governors	Part of overall end of year report Regular review of Action Plan progress by Assistant Registrar
• include the review of overall College performance in quality processes (1.4 and 2.2).	Steps will be taken to consolidate performance data, including latest external examination results	End March 2013	Principal, Registrar and Director of Studies	A formal cross-college review report will be published	Board of Governors	Regular review of Action Plan progress by Assistant Registrar
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:						
• record systematically minutes and actions of all committee and management meetings (paragraphs 1.3 and 2.2)	Ensure that all College minutes adhere to the standard template for minutes and that individual identified actions are clearly highlighted, meetings are appropriately chaired and meeting duration is controlled	End March 2013	Assistant Registrar	Standardised minutes and action undertaken as agreed	Principal	Regular review of Action Plan progress by Assistant Registrar

• consider methods of increasing student involvement in College committees (paragraph 2.6)	Student involvement in the College committees will be considered in revised committee structure and included in terms of reference	August 2013	Assistant Registrar	Student response will be recorded and considered as part of management decision making to secure overall student interest	Principal	Academic Review Committee Regular review of Action Plan by Assistant Registrar
• incorporate channels for the identifying and dissemination of good practice into the quality processes (paragraph 2.8)	Outcomes of teaching observations will be discussed with teaching staff by the Director of Studies at a monthly meeting, highlighting examples of good practice	Starting February 2013, with an overall interim review in June 2013	Director of Studies	Good practice in teaching and learning better recognised Highlighted examples on virtual learning environment and website	Principal	Academic Review Committee Regular review of Action Plan by Assistant Registrar
• introduce a system to identify any additional learning needs of students (paragraph 2.10).	An additional diagnostic instrument will be developed for all new students, considering maths, English proficiency and general knowledge, at a range of levels	August 2013	Principal	Better identification of individual learning needs at an early stage	Admissions Committee	Regular review of Action Plan by Assistant Registrar

About QAA

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

QAA's aims are to:

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

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

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

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

Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

quality See **academic quality**.

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

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

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