Global Banking School

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

December 2012

Key findings about Global Banking School

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in December 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 Chartered Financial Analyst Institute.

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 supportive learning environment underpinned by systematic personalised attention to student needs (paragraph 2.8)
- the provision of career development advice from experts (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:

- fully develop the Quality Assurance Report to include an evaluative commentary (paragraph 1.3)
- implement a process for the regular systematic review of policies and procedures, and web-based programme information (paragraph 3.6).

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

- increase staff awareness and use of the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 1.5)
- develop the teaching observation process to include peer review and opportunities to share good practice (paragraph 2.6)
- implement a process of continuous professional evaluation and development to build on existing skills and knowledge (paragraph 2.11)
- develop the virtual learning environment (paragraph 2.13)
- devise mechanisms to support students' full understanding of policies and regulations (paragraph 3.3).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/)[1] (REO) conducted by [QAA](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/) at Global Banking School (the provider; the School). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute. The review was carried out by Dr Richard Samuels, Mr Lawrie Walker (reviewers) and Dr Judith Foreman (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [*Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook*](https://www.qaa.ac.uk/).[2] Evidence in support of the review included a self-evaluation document and supporting evidence supplied by the School, and meetings with staff and students.

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

- the awarding organisation's published syllabuses, programme specifications, assessment regulations and provider guidelines
- the Academic Infrastructure.

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

The Global Banking School (the School) was originally established as the Green Business College in 2010 to provide global applied knowledge of the banking and finance industry. In 2012, it was approved to offer the investment banking examination preparation programmes of the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute. The School was also approved in 2012 to deliver the programmes of the Institute of Administrative Management.

Originally located in Whitechapel, London, the School relocated its premises to the City of London in June 2012 to be closer to the centre of the banking and finance industry. There is one campus. Currently, there are 12 students enrolled on the Level I Chartered Financial Analyst Institute Examination Preparation Programme. No students have yet completed any programmes at the School.

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

Chartered Financial Analyst Institute
- Level I Exam Preparation Programme (12)
- Level II Exam Preparation Programme (0)
- Level III Exam Preparation Programme (0)

Institute of Administrative Management
- Level 4 Diploma in Business and Administrative Management (0)
- Level 5 Diploma in Business and Administrative Management (0)
- Level 6 Diploma in Business and Administrative Management (0)

---

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

The provider's stated responsibilities

The School's responsibilities include the identification of curriculum needs and related curriculum development, as well as student recruitment, admission and guidance. The School also oversees staff development, teaching and learning, preparation for summative assessment, learning resources, student feedback and the accuracy of public information. The awarding organisation is responsible for programme content and all summative assessment. There is shared responsibility with the awarding organisation for providing programme and module information.

Recent developments

The School changed its name from the Green Business College in 2012 to better describe its mission and educational focus. Enrolment to the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute programmes started in July 2012, with students participating at the level I stage. Although the School is approved to deliver programmes of the Institute of Administrative Management, it has not yet enrolled any students on these.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team, but were unable to do so due to difficulties in coordinating the production of a submission in the time available. During the visit, the team held a meeting with students. The meeting provided the team with a range of useful insights into the provision and the students' experiences at the School.

Detailed findings about Global Banking School

1   Academic standards

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

1.1   The arrangements for the management of academic standards are effective. The Director of Studies has overall responsibility for standards, with the Managing Director assuming responsibility for liaison with the awarding organisation and day-to-day management of programme level matters. The Director of Studies and the Managing Director form the Senior Management Team, and are supported by the Registrar and the Marketing Director. The Director of Studies and the Managing Director draw upon a range of mechanisms for assuring the oversight of standards, including teaching observations, the scrutiny of evaluative feedback, student surveys, and student retention and performance data.

1.2   The School has recently implemented a meetings structure to formalise and strengthen the oversight of higher education. The structure includes the Management Meeting, the Teaching Strategy meeting, the Quality Management meeting, and the Marketing Strategy meeting. The meetings structure is still at an early stage of maturity, but provides a basis for the future development of more focused deliberation and reporting on academic issues across the School.

1.3   The Annual Quality Assurance Report has been introduced as an instrument to analyse and review information. This leads to the production of a quality improvement plan for the long-term improvement of standards and the students' learning experience. At the time of the review, an action plan had been produced, which had contributed to the successful accreditation of the programme by the awarding organisation. However, the School has yet to produce a fully analytical and evaluative report, drawing on a range of evidence, to support further action planning. It is advisable that the School fully develops the Quality Assurance Report to include an evaluative commentary.

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

1.4   The School is making effective use of relevant external reference points, principally the programme specifications, syllabus outlines and guidelines provided directly by the awarding organisation. The School also follows the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute's Code of Ethics and Standards of Professional Conduct as a means of ensuring that examination preparation programmes and assessment meet the required standards.

1.5   The School has recently developed a range of policies and procedures to support good practice in the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. Policies cover quality assurance, assessment, student complaints, and equal opportunities. In its self-evaluation, the School states that it uses the Academic Infrastructure and the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code), and that appropriate sections of the Quality Code are discussed at staff meetings. However, the School has not yet undertaken any mapping of current policies and practices against the Academic Infrastructure. Staff awareness of the expectations and indicators of sound practice contained in the Academic Infrastructure is not well developed. In order to further secure academic standards and enhance the quality of learning opportunities across the provision, it is desirable that the College continues to increase staff awareness and use of the Academic Infrastructure.

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

1.6   Programme design, the intended learning outcomes, programme specifications, summative assessment and moderation are all the responsibility of the awarding organisation. Students are helped to prepare for the assessments by the use of regular tests and mock examinations administered by teaching staff at the School. These allow students to become familiar with assessment criteria and they receive formative feedback. The scrutiny of a sample set of such tests confirms their formative value. Test papers are annotated with corrections and an indicative grade.

1.7   As part of its agreement with the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute, the School will receive a candidate pass rate analysis report designed to help the provider assess the effectiveness of the programme by highlighting strengths and weaknesses in examination performance. At the time of the review, the external examination of students had not been completed and, consequently, reports from the awarding organisation have not yet been received.

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 School has a substantial range of delegated responsibilities in relation to the quality of learning opportunities. These include student recruitment, admission, induction and guidance, teaching and learning, the development of staff teaching skills, learning resources, and the quality review of the provision, including the collection and use of student feedback. The School develops its own teaching materials to support students' learning and submits these to the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute for their approval. The internal management responsibilities for the quality of learning opportunities are overseen by the Director of Studies and the Managing Director, and are broadly as described for academic standards in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2. Overall, the arrangements for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities operate effectively. Quality assurance checks are regularly carried out through the use of student feedback, the scrutiny of attendance records and the observation of teaching. Evidence from discussion with current students provides a strong endorsement of the high quality of the learning environment.

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

2.2   The use of external reference points is broadly as described for academic standards in paragraphs 1.4 and 1.5.

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

2.3   The School is committed to providing a high-quality and supportive environment for learning. The capping of teaching group sizes at 15 and the provision of one-to-one tuition is effectively contributing to teaching quality, and students value the close support that they

receive. In addition, the School recognises the importance of effective staff recruitment to the quality of teaching in a specialist market. It actively seeks staff who have a combination of banking experience and teaching skills, as well as good knowledge of the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute examination process.

2.4   At the programme level, module intended learning outcomes and assessment methods are well understood and regularly communicated to staff and students through a variety of means. For staff, these include team meetings and the provision of handbooks containing teaching materials. Students receive handbooks, as well as class briefings, course notes and assessment details. Teaching materials developed by the School are subject to Chartered Financial Analyst Institute approval.

2.5   The School has effective mechanisms that report on the quality of teaching and learning. It places great importance on collecting student feedback to enhance quality and promote continuous improvement. Students' views of teaching and learning are sought through module questionnaires and more informal means of feedback, such as contact with staff in the classroom and meetings with the School's Registrar and members of the Senior Management Team. Students confirmed that the College is responsive to their feedback on teaching and learning and provided examples of changes that had been made. For example, this includes the replacement of a member of teaching staff and changes to the allocation of staff to better meet the needs of student groups.

2.6   The School has implemented a system of teaching observation. Lesson observations are undertaken by senior managers to monitor classroom practice. The form used to record the outcomes of observation contains graded evaluations of lesson planning, use of resources and the quality of teaching, but does not include identification of areas for improvement. The School acknowledges that its approach to teaching observation and providing opportunities for the development and sharing of good practice among peers is at an early stage of development. It is desirable that the School continues to develop the teaching observation process to include peer review and opportunities to share good practice.

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

2.7   Student support arrangements, including pre-entry guidance, are effective. The School places importance on the recruitment process as a key contributor to student success on the programme and interviews all applicants through face-to-face contact or video-conferencing. All students receive an induction, which includes information about the programme and the School, and are provided with student handbooks. Students confirmed that they found the pre-entry guidance and induction helpful and comprehensive.

2.8   The programme is clearly structured and each student receives comprehensive Chartered Financial Analyst Institute approved learning materials. Programme delivery is flexibly designed to allow students to attend sessions which fit in with their work schedules. The teaching and learning approaches used in the School provide extensive opportunities for students to receive continuous feedback on their development. A notable feature of student learning opportunities is the level of access to staff. This includes not only high levels of scheduled face-to-face contact and small group sizes, but also one-to-one tutoring, email and phone contact. In their meeting with the team, students praised the easy access to tutors and the additional time spent by staff explaining the requirements of assessment and providing examination advice. The supportive learning environment underpinned by systematic personalised attention to student needs is good practice.

2.9   In addition to exam preparation, the College provides career development support with a senior investment banker, which is designed to enhance students' employment opportunities. The careers advice, with additional personalised counselling from the Director of Studies, is highly valued by students. The provision of career development advice from experts is good practice.

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

2.10   Staff teaching on the programme are well qualified and combine substantial professional experience with relevant academic qualifications. The School states that it actively encourages staff development and has published the Employees Training Policy, providing guidance to staff on training and development opportunities. Members of staff are entitled to request financial support and time off for study and training. Non-teaching staff are also encouraged to attend programmes delivered by the School, including the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute programme, to raise their professional knowledge and their understanding of the student learning experience. Staff development records are systematically maintained by the Registrar.

2.11   The professional performance and suitability of staff are regularly reviewed by the Director of Studies, drawing on student feedback, observation of teaching and student retention and performance data. However, there is no formal process linking employee performance review, the identification of individual staff development needs and active planning of staff development activities. It is desirable for the School to implement a process of continuous professional evaluation and development to build on existing skills and knowledge.

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   The School provides sufficient resources for the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute programme. Student feedback is used to monitor the suitability and effectiveness of resources. Teaching materials, developed by the School and approved by the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute, are enhanced through the use of resources provided directly by the awarding organisation, including practice tests and mock examinations.

2.13   The School is committed to enhancing learning and teaching resources and has commenced a programme of improvement. This includes the development of a virtual learning environment. In their meeting with the team, some students expressed the view that the availability of online learning materials should be extended. It is desirable that the School continues to develop the virtual learning environment.

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.

---

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 public information published by the School is generally accessible, accurate and sufficient. The School's website is clearly laid out and accessible. There is appropriate identification of the School's partnership arrangements with the awarding organisations, a facility for online application and useful links to the UK Border Agency and other websites relevant to potential students. In addition to information about the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute programme content and learning outcomes, the website also holds information on other programmes for which the School is approved but not yet delivering. Students who met the reviewers confirmed that they found the website to be informative and useful in assisting them with their choice of provider.

3.2   The School publishes a comprehensive range of policies and procedures to guide staff and student conduct and the delivery of programmes. The School uses its own template for programme handbooks. All students receive a student handbook containing helpful generic information on School policies and assessment guidance. A customised handbook for students preparing for Chartered Financial Analyst Institute examinations is being developed.

3.3   Students are introduced to the School's framework of policies and regulations at induction and via the student handbook. In their meeting with the review team, students confirmed their awareness of this framework, but had little specific understanding of, for example, the complaints and academic appeals procedures. Students value their contact with the Registrar, who acts as a focus for information and advice in response to students' enquiries and concerns. However, it is desirable that the School continues to develop mechanisms to support students' full understanding of policies and regulations.

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

3.4   There are processes to assure the accuracy and completeness of public information. The School's responsibilities for upholding the awarding organisation's standards in relation to publicity and other materials are clearly stated in the provider guidelines issued by the Chartered Financial Analyst Institute. The School has developed its own helpful Publishing Policy and Procedures to oversee the production of information it has responsibility for publishing.

3.5   The approval and production of publicity and marketing information is coordinated centrally by the Senior Management Team and the Marketing Director. Information must be approved by the Marketing Director and then submitted for the approval of the Managing Director. The minutes of monthly marketing meetings indicate appropriate attention to the management of public information. The awarding organisation contributes to the approval and review of publicity and teaching materials used on the programme through scrutiny of information on the website and in the context of the provider approval process.

3.6   The Senior Management Team is collectively responsible for developing, approving and monitoring the implementation of the School's policies and procedures. The policies are generally clearly expressed, with appropriate content, though the reviewers found references to outdated legislation and government organisations in the Human Resources Policies document and the Equal Opportunities Policy. In addition, the information relating to the Institute of Administrative Management provision on the website contains a misattribution of postgraduate status to a level 6 award. It is advisable that the School implements a process

for the regular, systematic review of its policies and procedures, and web-based programme information.

3.7   Students are not directly engaged in assuring the accuracy of public information, but are asked to comment on the quality of information through programme and module evaluation questionnaires. Students who met the review team spoke positively about the accuracy and sufficiency of programme-based information and the swift notification of any changes in scheduling.

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]

Global Banking School action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight December 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 supportive learning environment underpinned by systematic personalised attention to student needs (paragraph 2.8)	The supportive learning environment is facilitated by personal attention to students of all members of staff The importance of this is emphasised on the quality management meetings	Quarterly (first Wednesday of each quarter starting March 2013)	Managing Director	All students' requests are processed within 48 hours; maintain student satisfaction, retention and success rates	Director of Studies	Student feedback forms, quality management meetings minutes, session tests and attendance records
• the provision of career development advice from experts (paragraph 2.9).	Every student of the School is invited to a one-to-one career development programme with a senior investment banker	Every last month of each batch starting May 2013	Director of Studies	Every student who is interested in participating, has attended the programme; evidence of appropriate further study and employment	Academic Committee	Career development programme schedule; scrutiny of destinations data

---

[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
				destinations of students		
The team considers that it is **advisable** for the provider to:						
• fully develop the Quality Assurance Report to include an evaluative commentary (paragraph 1.3)	Produce an annual Quality Assurance Report including an evaluative commentary	Annually, starting in June 2013	Managing Director	A fully analytical and evaluative Quality Assurance Report enables the School to produce a comprehensive annual action plan Enhancement of teaching and learning, academic standards and services to students	Director of Studies	Annual Quality Assurance Report; action plan Student and staff feedback; session tests and attendance records; responses from awarding organisation; QAA annual monitoring will review activities
• implement a process for the regular systematic review of policies and procedures, and web-based programme information (paragraph 3.6).	Develop a new system of review of policies and procedures and web-based programme information	August 2013	Managing Director	All policies and procedures are reviewed annually, web-based programme information is reviewed monthly Accurate and	Director of Studies	Guide for review of policies and procedures Minutes of review meetings Student feedback

11

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
				complete information provided for students and stakeholders		
The team considers that it is **desirable** for the provider to:						
• increase staff awareness and use of the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 1.5)	Organise a workshop the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code), for all members of staff Benchmark current practices against appropriate sections of the Quality Code	July 2013	Director of Studies	All members of staff have received training on the items of the Quality Code All staff is aware of how the School policies are aligned to the relevant sections of the Quality Code Policies and practices aligned to expectations and indicators of good practice	Academic Committee	Workshop minutes Sign-off sheet signed by each member of staff Policies and procedures are referenced to relevant sections of the Quality Code and distributed to all members of staff Student feedback; retention and success data (session tests and attendance records); awarding organisation feedback

• develop the teaching observation process to include peer review and opportunities to share good practice (paragraph 2.6)	Develop teaching and learning policy to include peer review and opportunities to share good practice	August 2013	Managing Director	Teaching and learning policy is approved and implemented	Director of Studies	Teaching and Learning policy, Teaching observation forms
	Annually evaluate the effectiveness of teaching observation process and modify teaching and learning policy and procedures accordingly	December each year from 2013	Managing Director	Each successive observation of the teacher shows maintenance of quality and improvement, where necessary	Director of Studies	Management meetings minutes Student feedback; retention and success data
				Where a development requirement is identified during teaching meetings, additional support and monitoring is provided and reviewed on further meetings		Teaching meetings minutes
				At least one observation per course takes place		
• implement a process of continuous professional evaluation and development to build	Develop a system of annual staff appraisal review, based on assessment of staff qualifications and	August 2013	Managing Director	A policy of staff professional evaluation and development is implemented	Director of Studies	Staff professional evaluation and development policy

on existing skills and knowledge (paragraph 2.11)	performance and current needs of the study process					
	Annually evaluate the staff professional level to identify need for professional development	September each year 2013	Director of Studies	Quality Assurance Report measures the impact of staff professional development on an annual basis Where a development requirement is identified, necessary support is provided	Academic Committee	Minutes of annual staff performance review
• develop the virtual learning environment (paragraph 2.13)	Upload all Chartered Financial Analyst Institute teaching materials on GoToTraining Portal	September 2013	Managing Director	Students are able to download teaching materials and print out	Director of Studies	All 18 Chartered Financial Analyst Institute study sessions are available on the online portal
	Prepare a virtual learning environment development plan for 2013-14 to support continuous development	September 2013	Managing Director	The development plan is executed by relevant deadlines	Director of Studies	Virtual learning environment development plan
	A question for virtual	September	Managing	The feedback	Director of	Student feedback

	learning environment evaluation is incorporated in the student feedback	2013	Director	enables to identify areas of improvement, which are discussed in quality management meetings, implemented and reviewed in further meetings	Studies	Minutes of quality management meetings
• devise mechanisms to support students' full understanding of policies and regulations (paragraph 3.3).	Prepare individual student handbooks for each study programme to contain relevant policies and procedures to support students' full understanding of the school regulations and use the student feedback to evaluate the handbooks	July 2013	Managing Director	The Student Handbook has been distributed to students Student feedback is collected and any areas for improvement are discussed in quality management meetings, implemented and reviewed on further meetings	Director of Studies	All students are provided with handbooks
	Make an overview of the School policies and procedures a mandatory part of the induction	July 2013	Managing Director	Induction is conducted before the students start the programme	Director of Studies	Induction slides are incorporated into the course materials

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:

---

[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.