QAA

Keele University

Institutional Review
by the Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education

March 2013

Contents

About this review

This is a report of an Institutional Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Keele University. The review took place from 11 to 15 March 2013 and was conducted by a team of five reviewers, as follows:

- Professor John Feather
- Dr David Houlston
- Dr Claire Ozanne
- Miss Caroline Dangerfield (student reviewer)
- Ms Caroline Carpenter (review secretary).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Keele University and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. In this report the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - threshold academic standards[1]
  - the quality of learning opportunities
  - the quality of the information produced by the institution about its learning opportunities
  - the enhancement of learning opportunities
- identifies features of good practice
- makes recommendations
- affirms action that the institution is taking or plans to take
- provides commentaries on public information and the theme topic.

A summary of the key findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

In reviewing Keele University, the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The theme for this review is 'the first year student experience'.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission.[2] A dedicated page of the website explains the method for Institutional Review of higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland[3] and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents.

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[1] For an explanation of terms, see the glossary at the end of this report.
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus
[3] www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/IRENI/Pages/default.aspx

Key findings

This section summarises the QAA review team's key findings about Keele University (the University).

QAA's judgements about Keele University

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Keele University.

- Academic standards at the University **meet UK expectations** for threshold standards.
- The quality of student learning opportunities at the University **meets UK expectations**.
- The quality of information produced by the University about its learning opportunities **meets UK expectations**.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities at the University **meets UK expectations**.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following **features of good practice** at Keele University.

- The inclusion in the University's governance structure of the Education Student Liaison Committee and Research Student Liaison Committee, providing a formal deliberative mechanism for the student voice (paragraph 2.9).
- The use on arrival of diagnostic language testing for international students in order to tailor English language support to individual needs (paragraph 2.23).
- The comprehensive and innovative information provided through the Keele International website (paragraph 2.24).
- The extensive formal representation systems for postgraduate research students (paragraph 2.32).
- The opportunities provided for work experience, knowledge exchange and community engagement in the partnership between the Law School and the Community Legal Outreach Collaboration, Keele (paragraph 2.40).

Recommendations

The QAA review team **recommends** Keele University, by the start of the 2013-14 academic year (unless otherwise specified), to:

- provide more systematic training, guidance and monitoring to assure the quality of teaching and demonstrating undertaken by postgraduate research students and graduate teaching assistants (paragraph 2.2)
- implement a system at institutional level for ensuring that each programme has the expected number of elected and trained student representatives in place (paragraph 2.11)
- take deliberate steps to engage student representatives with external examiners' reports (paragraph 2.12)
- introduce an institutional-level approach for measuring and monitoring the timely implementation of policies and practices and for evaluating their impact, by the start of the 2014-15 academic year (paragraph 2.14)

- clarify the expectations for the support of individual postgraduate research students within research institutes, particularly where students have only one supervisor (paragraph 2.30)
- review and revise the support for collaborative link tutors in their quality assurance role, including the training that link tutors provide for staff in partner institutions (paragraph 2.36)
- ensure that issues arising in the management of collaborative provision can be dealt with at an appropriate level and resolved in a timely manner (paragraph 2.37)
- systematically provide prospective and current students with accurate information about all costs associated with their programmes (paragraph 3.3)
- implement systematic, effective processes to capture and disseminate good practice across the institution, by the start of the 2014-15 academic year (paragraph 4.2).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms the following actions** that Keele University is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- The compulsory training and mentor support that is being implemented for supervisors of postgraduate research students (paragraph 2.3).
- The action taken to ensure that the information about contract end dates in the register of collaborative provision is complete (paragraph 2.33).
- The more consistent and coordinated approach by the University Library and schools to ensure annual updating of programme and module reading lists (paragraph 2.8).
- The review of the student academic representatives (STARs) system and implementation of the STARs operational plan (paragraph 2.10).

First year student experience

Keele University has broadly effective arrangements in place for managing the first year student experience.

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the operational description and handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining [Institutional Review for England and Northern Ireland](#).[4]

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[4] www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/IRENI/Pages/default.aspx

About Keele University

Established with degree-awarding powers in 1949, the institution became Keele University in 1962. The University has three faculties (Health, Natural Sciences, and Humanities and Social Sciences) which offer a broad range of disciplines spread over 14 schools. All research and related activity, including the supervision of research students, is organised and managed by five research institutes.

In 2011-12 there were 9,300 full-time equivalent students, of whom 82 per cent were undergraduates, 13 per cent were postgraduate taught and 5 per cent were research students, supported by 813 academic staff and 821 support staff. Most students are full- time, and 82 per cent of undergraduate students were aged 18-21.

Most of the University's provision is located on a 617-acre campus in Staffordshire close to Newcastle-under-Lyme. It also has a hospital campus at the University Hospital of North Staffordshire in Stoke-on-Trent.

The University sets out the following vision and mission.

Vision: 'Keele will continue to be one of the UK's leading campus-based University communities.'

Mission: 'Keele will provide a high-quality educational experience for students shaped by outstanding research, contributing positively to social, environmental and economic agendas locally, nationally and internationally.'

Since its last review by QAA in 2008, a number of major changes have taken place, including:

- the appointment of a new Vice-Chancellor from August 2010 and other changes to the senior management team and its responsibilities
- the reorganisation of the University's academic structures and administrative functions
- investment in services to support students
- the launch of a new degree structure for undergraduate students.

Among its key challenges for the future, the University identified the following:

- ensuring that its academic programmes continue to meet the highest quality standards, provide excellent learning opportunities and prepare students appropriately for their future careers
- managing the risks associated with the growth of collaborative provision.

Explanation of the findings about Keele University

This section explains the key findings of the review in more detail.[5]

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a [brief glossary](#) at the end of this report. A fuller [glossary of terms](#)[6] is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the [review method](#), also on the QAA website.[7]

1   Academic standards

Outcome

The academic standards at Keele University **meet UK expectations** for threshold standards. The team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

Meeting external qualifications benchmarks

1.1   The University systematically ensures its qualifications are allocated to the appropriate levels in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ).

Use of external examiners

1.2   The University makes scrupulous use of external examiners to ensure that academic standards are maintained. The University has implemented the post of Chief External Examiner to strengthen its system further.

Assessment and standards

1.3   The University's design, approval, monitoring and review of assessment is effective in ensuring that students have the opportunity to demonstrate the learning outcomes of their awards. The University has an assessment strategy designed to ensure comparability of assessment across its faculties, schools and programmes, especially in the context of its dual honours degrees.

1.4   The University has an academic misconduct policy and is actively monitoring and implementing it. Students the review team met during the review had been well informed about the policy.

Setting and maintaining programme standards

1.5   The University's policies and procedures for the design, approval, monitoring and review of programmes are effective in enabling standards to be set and maintained and allowing students to demonstrate the intended learning outcomes of their programmes of study.

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[5] The full body of evidence used to compile the report is not published. However, it is available on request for inspection. Please contact QAA Reviews Group.
[6] www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary/pages/default.aspx
[7] See note 4.

Subject benchmarks

1.6   The University makes effective use of external criteria, including subject benchmark statements and the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies in designing, monitoring and reviewing the academic standards of its awards.

2   Quality of learning opportunities

Outcome

The quality of learning opportunities at Keele University **meets UK expectations**. The review team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

Professional standards for teaching and learning

2.1   The University maintains professional standards for teaching and the support of learning. Teaching is informed by research. A wide range of learning and teaching development opportunities are available.

2.2   The University could assure more systematically its preparation, development and monitoring of postgraduate research students and graduate teaching assistants involved in teaching and support of learning. The University is therefore **recommended** to provide more systematic training, guidance and monitoring to assure the quality of teaching and demonstrating undertaken by postgraduate research students and graduate teaching assistants.

2.3   Training and mentoring for postgraduate research supervisors has recently been enhanced. The review team **affirms** the compulsory training and mentor support that is being implemented for supervisors of postgraduate research students.

2.4   The review team identified examples of creative learning and teaching practices being shared across the University, but concluded that mechanisms for collating and disseminating good practice in learning and teaching were not fully integrated (see recommendation made in paragraph 4.12).

Learning resources

2.5   The University's learning resources are appropriate and allow students to achieve the learning outcomes of their programmes. An integrated strategic planning process is used to coordinate the allocation of resources to support learning.

2.6   A wide range of learning and teaching development opportunities is available, but it was less evident that information gathered through the Staff Performance Review and Enhancement process systematically guides the provision of professional development opportunities.

2.7   The review team noted there is variability in the provision of and access to personal tutorial support, but students reported general satisfaction with the quality of teaching and academic guidance.

2.8   The University's virtual learning environment provides an effective mechanism to support learning. There is general student satisfaction with library and IT provision, and improvements in the coordination between schools and the Library are apparent. The review

team **affirms** the more consistent and coordinated approach by the University Library and schools to ensure timely annual updating of programme and module reading lists.

Student voice

2.9   Students are enabled to make an effective contribution to the University's quality assurance processes. There are close links between University senior managers and the Keele Students' Union and Keele Postgraduate Association. Students are represented on central and local decision-making bodies and are supported in making their voice heard by induction and training opportunities. The inclusion in the University's governance structure of the Education Student Liaison Committee and Research Student Liaison Committee, providing a formal deliberative mechanism for the student voice, is a **feature of good practice**.

2.10   One of the arrangements for gathering student feedback is the student academic representatives (STARs) system and students' attendance at the relevant staff-student liaison committees. The system is run in partnership with the Students' Union, which recently assessed the effectiveness of the STARs system. A working group of the University's Learning Committee considered these recommendations and developed an operational plan to improve the effectiveness of and engagement with the STARs system. The review team **affirms** the review of the STARs system and implementation of the STARs operational plan.

2.11   The responsibility for ensuring there are an appropriate number of elected and trained student representatives on each programme is delegated to schools, but it was unclear how the University is able to maintain central oversight of the local implementation of these responsibilities. The University is **recommended** to implement a system at institutional level for ensuring that each programme has the expected number of elected and trained student representatives in place.

2.12   The University makes external examiners' reports available on the central quality assurance web pages, but the review team found little awareness of external examiners' reports among students and their representatives. The University is **recommended** to take deliberate steps to engage student representatives with external examiners' reports.

Management information is used to improve quality and standards

2.13   The University makes use of management information to safeguard academic quality and standards and to promote the enhancement of student learning opportunities. For example, recently generated management information has indicated a decline in postgraduate research degree completions, so the University has introduced closer and more regular monitoring to promote an improvement in the timeliness of submissions. Schools and services make use of management information and comprehensive data sets are available to guide review and evaluation.

2.14   The review team found, however, a lack of evidence to demonstrate that information was being utilised systematically to monitor and evaluate the implementation, impact and effectiveness of quality assurance and enhancement initiatives. For example, the team was unable to conclude with certainty that the University's marking criteria was used systematically, whether programme-level actions from the annual evaluation process had impacted on the student experience, or how external examiner reports were routinely and consistently considered at staff-student liaison committees. Other similar examples are noted elsewhere in this report (see paragraphs 2.6, 2.12, 2.25, 2.30, 2.42 and 5.6). The University is **recommended** to introduce an institutional-level approach for measuring and

monitoring the timely implementation of policies and practices, and for evaluating their impact, by the start of the 2014-15 academic year.

Admission to the University

2.15   The University's policies and procedures for the admission of students are effective. There is a general and centrally administered admissions policy and procedure augmented by consideration of specific queries at school/local levels. The University's website provides a comprehensive range of information for all applicants. International applications are overseen effectively and there is a good system for assessing, monitoring and developing English language competence for international students.

Complaints and appeals

2.16   The University has effective and accessible complaints and appeals procedures and there are effective arrangements in place to monitor complaints and appeals.

2.17   There is widespread use of anti-plagiarism software and a campaign to raise student awareness of academic misconduct, specifically with regards to good academic conduct in examinations, was recently run in conjunction with the Students' Union. The University continues to monitor and evaluate the impact of its efforts to reduce academic misconduct.

Career advice and guidance

2.18   The University's approach to career education, information, advice and guidance is quality assured through periodic external verification and through internal monitoring. The Careers Service provides a range of helpful activities, opportunities and guidance. The level of uptake of these services by students is reasonable.

2.19   The Distinctive Keele Curriculum Development Strand promotes the development of personal qualities and transferable skills through the Keele Graduate Attributes strategy. Some of these qualities and skills are developed within the academic curriculum and others are provided through additional activities provided by the University. The strategy aims to provide all Keele graduates with interpersonal and transferable skills that will complement their academic studies.

Supporting disabled students

2.20   The University actively manages and enhances the quality of learning opportunities to enable the entitlements of disabled students to be met. There are clear strategic and operational approaches to managing learning opportunities for disabled students.

2.21   A range of institutional and local initiatives, including staff training and support, are in place to promote equality and diversity. The University audits and monitors admissions, enrolment, induction, curriculum and physical space to ensure its actions have a positive impact.

Supporting international students

2.22   The University offers an appropriate quality of learning opportunities to international students. The University is in the process of developing an internationalisation strategy.

2.23   Language support for international students is well planned and tailored to need. The use on arrival of diagnostic language testing for international students in order to tailor English language support to individual needs is a **feature of good practice**.

2.24   International students are provided with face-to-face support by Keele International and the other student support services. Additionally, the comprehensive and innovative information provided through the Keele International website, particularly that for study abroad students, is a **feature of good practice**.

2.25   Although additional induction sessions are made available, information about this provision for late-arriving students could be better disseminated.

2.26   Regulations about academic misconduct are clear and very well disseminated and there is support in place to assist international students with study skills; however, there is scope for further coordinated action to reduce the number of breaches of regulations, particularly among international students.

Supporting postgraduate research students

2.27   Appropriate support and guidance is provided to enable postgraduate research students to complete their programmes of study and to enable staff involved in research programmes to fulfil their responsibilities.

2.28   There is a clear and comprehensive Code of Practice for Postgraduate Research Degrees. Regulations are accessible and the less comprehensive Professional Doctorate regulations are supplemented by programme handbooks.

2.29   The generic University induction for postgraduate research students is supplemented by specific induction from research institutes. An appropriate range of training is provided for postgraduate research students.

2.30   There is a clear appointment process and mandatory training for supervisors of postgraduate research students. Workload for supervisors is managed, but further clarification of the expectations for the support of individual postgraduate research students is needed. The University is **recommended** to clarify the expectations for the support of individual postgraduate research students within research institutes, particularly where students have only one supervisor.

2.31   There are appropriate mechanisms for the monitoring of postgraduate research student admissions, progression and achievement data, and for evaluating the research environment. There are clear complaints procedures.

2.32   There is a very good level of engagement between the University and its postgraduate research student body, including representation on the Graduate School Board, the Research Student Liaison Committee, representation within schools and research institutes, and via the Keele Postgraduate Association. While each of these elements is not in itself unusual or innovative, collectively the extensive formal representation systems for postgraduate research students are a **feature of good practice**.

Learning delivered through collaborative arrangements

2.33   The University has developed a comprehensive Collaborative Provision Code of Practice. There is a fully inclusive Collaborative Provision Register that is monitored on a quarterly basis. Information about contract end dates was incomplete at the time of the

review visit, but since then the register has been updated to include these details. The review team **affirms** the action taken to ensure that the information about contract end dates in the register of collaborative provision is complete.

2.34   Written agreements are in place with collaborative partners and a clear monitoring and approval process is in place.

2.35   Information on admissions procedures and programme outlines are provided on partner websites, with links to the University's website provided. Further information about English language requirements and course costs could be included.

2.36   The University assigns a collaborative link tutor to each partnership and the tutor is expected to perform a key quality assurance role. The review team found that support for the role was in need of further development. The University is **recommended** to review and revise the support for collaborative link tutors in their quality assurance role, including the capacity of link tutors to provide appropriate training/professional development support for academic staff in collaborative institutions.

2.37   Through the review process, the review team identified an apparently persistent issue with respect to one particular partnership where students were not receiving written feedback on their assignments. The University had made a number of efforts to resolve the issue, but these actions had not achieved the desired impact. The University is therefore **recommended** to ensure that issues arising in the management of collaborative provision can be dealt with at an appropriate level and resolved in a timely manner.

Flexible, distributed and e-learning

2.38   The University maintains appropriate oversight of quality and standards of flexible and distributed learning through approval, annual monitoring and periodic review processes.

Work-based and placement learning

2.39   The University has a clear and comprehensive Code of Practice for Placement Learning which sets out the responsibilities of partners and the responsibilities and entitlements of students

2.40   The opportunities provided for work experience, knowledge exchange and community engagement in the partnership between the Law School and the Community Legal Outreach Collaboration, Keele are a **feature of good practice**.

2.41   Students commented on a lack of transparency about costs related to placements and work experience (see paragraph 3.3).

Student charter

2.42   The University has recently developed a Student charter using a consultative process. Student awareness of the Student charter was not yet widespread, although steps have been agreed to improve the dissemination and understanding of the charter. It was not clear whether there was a planned process for monitoring the impact or further enhancing the Student charter.

3 Information about learning opportunities

Outcome

The information about learning opportunities produced by Keele University **meets UK expectations.** The intended audience finds that the information about the learning opportunities offered is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The team's reasons for this conclusion are given below.

Findings

3.1 An Information Strategy is in place and the Library and Information Strategy Committee monitors and reviews it. The Marketing and Communications Directorate has overall responsibility for the public information about the standards and quality of the University's awards.

3.2 Generally appropriate and accurate information is provided to prospective and current students and the information as part of the Key Information Set and Wider Information Set is accessible. The information on the Keele International web pages is comprehensive (see paragraph 2.24).

3.3 A number of students who met the review team expressed concerns about the lack of transparency around additional course costs for such things as field trips, required equipment and costs associated with travelling to placements. The team notes the action the University plans to address this issue, such as including an estimate of additional costs on the new online programme template. The University is **recommended** to systematically provide prospective and current students with accurate information about all costs associated with their programmes.

4 Enhancement of learning opportunities

Outcome

The enhancement of learning opportunities at Keele University **meets UK expectations**. The team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

Findings

4.1 In the 2008 Institutional Audit, QAA recommended that the University should 'review its approach to enhancement and, in doing so, pay particular attention to the development of systematic processes designed to capture, and effectively disseminate, good practice'.

4.2 The review team identified that progress has been made towards addressing the 2008 recommendation, but found there was a lack of evidence of systematic processes to capture and effectively disseminate good practice. The University is **recommended** to implement systematic, effective processes to capture and disseminate good practice across the institution, by the start of the 2014-15 academic year.

5 Theme: First year student experience

Each academic year, specific themes relating to higher education provision in England and Northern Ireland are chosen for especial attention by QAA's Institutional Review teams. In the review of Keele University in 2012-13, the theme is the first year student experience.

Supporting students' transition

5.1 The University develops a close relationship between staff and students, helping to create a sense of belonging to a community. An Induction Management Group manages the first-year induction programme. In partnership with the Students' Union, the University offers a peer-mentoring scheme that assists students in their transition to University life.

5.2 A number of different events to suit a diverse student population are organised as part of International Orientation and Welcome Week. These include specific events for students with disabilities and their parents, mature students and those living off-campus.

5.3 Letters are sent to students who miss induction and repeat sessions are available for late starters, who are often international students. It appeared that information about repeat induction sessions was not widely disseminated, so students starting late did not always attend the sessions offered.

Information for first-year students

5.4 The University's website includes central Welcome web pages. Two comprehensive Welcome Guides are published: one is generic and one is specifically for international, EU and visiting students. These guides provide a wealth of information on induction and life at University, and include a timetable of all the events happening during Welcome Week. With the exception of information about the costs associated with their programmes (see paragraph 3.3), students report that they receive sufficient information prior to their arrival at the University.

Assessment and feedback

5.5 Some faculties are particularly strong in providing students with formative assessment opportunities early in their programmes, allowing students to receive feedback early on. Some schools also make use of student peer assessment to support new students' transition to higher education.

Monitoring retention and progression

5.6 The University monitors student retention and progression, performing above the sector average. The undergraduate personal tutoring scheme is used to monitor progression and to review students' development. The review team heard mixed views from students about the effectiveness of the personal tutoring system and the utility of the Keele University Student Portfolio as a mechanism for recording and reviewing academic and professional development with their personal tutor.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to key terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Most terms also have formal 'operational' definitions. For example, pages 18-19 of the handbook for this review method give formal definitions of: threshold academic standards; learning opportunities; enhancement; and public information.

The handbook can be found on the QAA website at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/ireni-handbook.aspx.

If you require formal definitions of other terms, please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality:
www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/pages/default.aspx.

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **Glossary** on the QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary/pages/default.aspx.

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

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.

credit(s) A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education programmes of study, expressed as 'numbers of credits' at a specific level.

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

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.

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

Quality Code Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is being developed from 2011 to replace the **Academic Infrastructure** and will incorporate all its key elements, along with additional topics and overarching themes.

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.