HY Education Ltd t/a Apex College

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

April 2013

Key findings about HY Education Ltd t/a Apex College

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in April 2013, 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 programmes it offers on behalf of the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants.

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 information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Good practice

The team has identified the following **good practice**:

- the provision of extensive useful information for the part-time teachers (paragraph 2.1)
- the Student Charter and its development in consultation with students (paragraph 2.6).

Recommendations

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

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

- implement a more formal system for recording the discussions and decisions of key committees and groups and for identifying action points arising from these (paragraphs 1.1, 1.6 and 2.4)
- clarify further the roles and responsibilities of senior management posts (paragraphs 1.1, 1.2 and 2.3)
- rationalise and implement formally stated policies and procedures relating to academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities (paragraphs 1.4 and 1.5)
- implement formally the annual programme reporting and monitoring processes (paragraph 1.7)
- address shortcomings in learning resources (paragraph 2.14 and 3.3)
- develop and implement policies to strengthen further the management, systematic review and evaluation of the information it publishes about its higher education provision (paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5).

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

- implement fully the student progress review report (paragraph 2.7)
- continue to develop the teaching observation procedures (paragraph 2.10)
- implement further the policies for identifying and providing for staff development needs, including introduction of the staff appraisal system (paragraph 2.11).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)[1] (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at HY Education Ltd t/a Apex College (the provider; the College), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. 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 Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA) and the Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA). The review was carried out by Miss Maxina Butler-Holmes, Professor Donald Pennington (reviewers) and Mr Peter Clarke (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [*Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook*](#).[2] Evidence in support of the review included, the College's self-evaluation document, samples of formatively assessed work, staff and student handbooks, minutes and notes of meetings, a student written submission, the College website and meetings with staff and students.

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

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- requirements of the awarding organisations.

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

The College was founded in 2009 to provide business and professional accountancy training. It is based in former office accommodation in central Croydon. It has 163 students, almost all of whom are international students. It has seven full-time administrative and management staff and four part-time lecturers.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath their awarding organisations:

The Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
- Foundation Level - QCF level 5

The Chartered Institute of Management Accountants
- Operational Level - QCF level 5

The provider's stated responsibilities

The College is responsible for the admission, induction and academic support of students and for teaching and learning. It is also responsible for ensuring an appropriate provision of staff and physical resources and for the development of staff. The College undertakes formative student assessment and provides feedback. The awarding organisations are responsible for all aspects of summative assessment and for the design of the curriculum.

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[1] www.qaa.ac.uk/educational-oversight
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

Recent developments

The College has provided programmes for both ACCA and CIMA. However, because of changes to external rules, it is no longer recruiting overseas students to its ACCA provision. It is looking at the possibility of introducing technician level programmes to provide a route into professional programmes. The College previously ran programmes leading to awards of the Institute of Commercial Management (ICM), but no longer offers these, although staff stated that the College is still accredited by the Institute.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team, and this was provided at the start of the visit. It was produced by a group of students following a series of meetings. The team also met a representative group of students during the visit. Both the written submission and the meeting made useful contributions to the visit, with the meeting confirming the positive views expressed in the written submission.

Detailed findings about HY Education t/a Apex College

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The College management structure is appropriate for the current provision. The Senior Management Team consists of the Principal, the Director of Administration and the Head of Studies. The Principal is responsible for strategic development and managing physical resources and the Director of Administration has responsibility for marketing and all administrative issues, including the work of the Registrar who is responsible for admissions. The Head of Studies is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the College, liaising with third parties, and enhancing and developing teaching and learning. Senior Management Team meetings, along with the terms of reference and related minutes are informal and infrequent. As a result, the locus of responsibility for academic and management issues is not always clear. The College is **advised** to clarify further the roles and responsibilities of senior management posts.

1.2 The Head of Studies was appointed in October 2012, in appropriate recognition of the need for a senior manager responsible for academic leadership and the operational management of academic standards. The role has not yet been fully developed and embedded. Since appointment, the post-holder has developed several new procedures which have yet to be formally adopted. The review team was unable to meet the newly designated external Head of Quality Assurance. It is unclear how these two roles will interrelate.

1.3 The College's strategic plan includes an objective to improve levels of student performance, through, for example, the appointment of the Head of Studies. Pass rates in public examinations at first sitting have been 43 per cent, but overall success rates have been higher than this. For example, of the 111 students enrolling in 2010, 68 per cent successfully completed their programmes. More explicit targets for examination success would help the College in assessing its achievements in this area. The quality assurance policy identifies 'key measurables' and quantifiable results in relation to key performance indicators, but the College is yet to develop an action plan to develop these further.

1.4 The College has made some positive progress in introducing quality assurance policies, which now need further development and rationalisation to provide an effective and consistent mechanism that reflects the current provision. There are several instances of policies not reflecting practices, although the Academic Quality Handbook, which refers to roles, responsibilities and procedures, has the potential to provide a clear focus and guidance. In addition to this Handbook, there is a quality assurance policy and quality assurance delivery chart. Many policies and procedures have been introduced recently and are either still emerging or requiring implementation.

1.5 Processes for periodically reviewing standards and quality are outlined in the quality assurance policy. The College has still to introduce a quality assurance cycle, with identifiable points within the academic year, to assist the planning, monitoring and reviewing of the provision. Much of the terminology in the quality assurance policy does not reflect the College context. For example, there are references to an internal verification procedure and external verifier visits and reports, even though the College has no responsibilities for summative assessment. Documentation provided by the College refers to an Academic Audit Policy, but contains no clear explanation of how this process will work.

The College is **advised** to rationalise and implement formally its stated policies and procedures relating to academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities.

1.6   Several committees and groups play key roles in monitoring the academic provision, and informing management decision-making. Programme team meetings have been introduced by the Head of Studies and a schedule of meetings has recently been agreed. The Academic Standards Board is the primary committee; this has met once since its formation and is scheduled to meet three times per year. The terms of reference, timing and recording of the Academic Standards Board meetings are in the process of being agreed and implemented. The minutes of the various committees have tended to be informal and discursive with no monitoring of actions. This can make it difficult to identify agreed actions and responsibilities for the maintenance of academic standards, however, a procedure has recently been developed to formalise academic meetings. The College is **advised** to implement a more formal system for recording the discussions and decisions of key committees and groups and for identifying action points arising from these.

1.7   The College has made some progress in reviewing and evaluating programmes, using a report that captures basic quantitative data. Use of this data and subsequent action planning have been rather limited and inconsistent, which limits the system's ability to provide an annual focus for academic development and holistic quality review. The College is **advised** to implement formally its annual programme reporting and monitoring processes.

How effectively does the College make use of external reference points to manage academic standards?

1.8   The College has made an encouraging attempt to map its practices against applicable chapters of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). The Academic Quality Handbook cross-references policies, procedures and documentation to chapters of the Quality Code. This requires further development to demonstrate critical evaluation and an appropriate work plan for review and revision.

1.9   There is some understanding among staff of the Quality Code as a key reference point. The College is heavily reliant, for programmes accredited to the Qualifications and Credit Framework, on the awarding organisations that provide the specifications. Staff use these effectively to develop schemes of work and interpret assessment guidance based on documents from the awarding organisations and publishers of tuition materials.

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

1.10   The College prepares students for external examinations, with summative assessments set and marked by the awarding organisations. Tutors at the College play no part in marking this work or setting the assessments. The review team examined a range of student work, including class tests and mock examinations. Feedback comments tend to be brief and provide limited indication of how the work may be enhanced. The College has recently introduced assessment and internal moderation policies for use in formative assessment; the assessment policy being at a draft stage. These policies have yet to be consistently applied and reflected in practice, for example, in areas such as provision of assessment criteria and cross-checking of assessments. Examination of some completed assessment sheets and internal moderation feedback demonstrates that mechanisms for ensuring that moderator comments are followed up need to be further embedded.
The introduction of one hour in the evening for tutors to complete assessment duties is a noteworthy commitment by the College. If the College expands its provision and adds programmes where tutors have responsibility for summative assessment, a more rigorous approach will be necessary.

> The review team has **confidence** in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of its awarding organisations.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

How effectively does the College fulfil its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities?

2.1 The College's management of its responsibilities for enhancing the quality of learning opportunities mirrors that for academic standards outlined in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.6. The recently appointed Head of Studies has responsibility for developing and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning and is having a significant impact, for example, through implementing observation of teaching and providing teaching staff with a lecturer folder. This latter is **good practice** as it provides lecturers, who are all part-time, with clear and extensive guidance on key issues, including student profiles, programme details, timetables and College requirements.

How effectively does the College make use of external reference points to manage and enhance learning opportunities?

2.2 The College has produced a Quality Assurance Handbook which maps its policies and procedures against the Quality Code. The College works to the requirements of the two awarding organisations, and while it does not have delegated responsibility for setting and marking summative assessed work it does set and mark formative assessments for students.

2.3 The College has recently appointed an external Head of Quality Assurance, whose engagement with the College, to date, has been limited. The position includes responsibility for overseeing the College's quality assurance processes and producing an annual College Review of Quality Assurance, however, this has yet to be done. It would be beneficial to the College for the post-holder to have responsibility for reviewing the quality assurance policies and procedures against external reference points, especially the Quality Code.

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

2.4 There are appropriate mechanisms for maintaining an oversight of the quality of teaching and learning. Overall responsibility lies with the Principal who is assisted by the recently appointed Head of Studies and Head of Quality Assurance. The Principal places appropriate emphasis on student feedback to help enhance the student learning experience. The Head of Studies has introduced a number of innovations, including observation of teaching, lesson plans, development of a student representatives system and the Head of Studies Forum. The Head of Studies Forum includes student representatives and meets once each semester to discuss student issues and concerns, including those relating to teaching and learning. The College has still to develop fully mechanisms to collate all of this evidence relating to the quality of teaching and learning, to provide senior management with an overview and to identify college-wide areas for enhancement.

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

2.5 The College offers appropriate support to its students, and this is appreciated. Students have both formal and informal opportunities to provide feedback on the quality of

support and other issues. They complete a student survey form about their learning experience. The College uses this to assess satisfaction with the programmes and teaching and to consider possible college-wide enhancements. Students report that issues are quickly resolved at an informal level and that the small size of the College facilitates this approach.

2.6   The admissions policy and procedure provides useful guidance to students about how to apply to the College. Students report that the admissions process is satisfactory and that their entry qualifications are carefully checked. The College website provides an admissions form, information about accommodation, visa requirements and a checklist before departure to the UK. Students reported that this information is helpful as are the College Orientation Programme for new students and the Student Handbook. The latter provides information about the College's policy for general conduct and making complaints. However, it does not provide students with guidance about academic conduct. A Student Charter has been developed in consultation with students. It sets out the expectations that students and the College have of each other. The College regards this as a key document and one that it wishes to monitor for effectiveness. The Student Charter and its development in consultation with students represent **good practice**.

2.7   The College has recently introduced a valuable student progress review report to be completed at the end of each semester. Students are fully aware of this innovation for monitoring their academic progress. The student progress review report has the potential to enhance student learning and support once it is fully implemented. Staff complete the report on a continual basis, for discussion with the student at the end of the semester. It is **desirable** that the College implements fully the student progress review report. Further support is available through the provision of tutorial sessions held on Fridays. These are much appreciated by students.

2.8   The College recently appointed a Student Welfare Officer, but the appointee did not take up the post. The College hopes to make another appointment in the near future. This position is intended to provide valuable support to students for non-academic matters.

How effectively does the College develop its staff in order to improve student learning opportunities?

2.9   The College's Strategic Plan identifies academic staff development, through the gaining of a recognised teaching qualification, as an important part of becoming a centre of educational excellence. This aim is supported by a Staff Development Policy which states that staff are responsible for their own development and will be supported to study for a teaching qualification. The College appoints well-qualified staff to teach on its programmes and provides effective induction and orientation to the College. Two of the teaching staff are working towards the Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector qualification. This has already been gained by two other members of the teaching staff who are now to be registered for further teaching qualifications.

2.10   Observation of teaching is conducted effectively by the Head of Studies according to the Teaching Observation procedure. This provides useful guidelines to lecturers about the process and is included in the lecturer folder. Observations are followed up by individual discussion between the Head of Studies and the lecturer. While the introduction of teaching observations represents a welcome recent innovation, the current recording form is more suited to further education than higher education. It is **desirable** that the College continues to develop the teaching observation procedures to reflect higher education practice.

2.11   The College has developed a staff appraisal system which consists of an annual performance review of all staff who work at the College. The College has not yet fully

implemented this system to enable the information from teaching observations and student feedback to inform the annual appraisal, where appropriate. It is **desirable** that the College implements further the policies for identifying and providing for staff development needs, including introduction of the staff appraisal system.

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

2.12   The Strategic Plan refers to a Learning and Teaching Operation Plan and the development of a student portal and virtual learning environment to support student learning, however, these developments are at an early stage. The Head of Studies Forum provides an effective means for students to discuss learning resources. The College is consulting with students over the development of the portal and a virtual learning environment but does not expect either of these to be available until the end of 2013.

2.13   Most learning resources for the CIMA and ACCA programmes are available online from commercial publishers and the CIMA and ACCA websites. Students make extensive use of online handbooks, past examination papers and other learning support material. Students and teaching staff report satisfaction with these resources. The College Library is small and students do not expect this to provide full programme texts. The local public library is very close to the College and students make use of this facility.

2.14   There are limited computer facilities available at the College, with one computer dedicated to computer based examinations. Students would like to see better computing facilities provided. Classroom facilities are adequate, however, consideration needs to be given to enhancing these facilities to include tables rather than chair tablets to work on and better whiteboard facilities. The College is looking to move to a new building and identifies better classroom facilities as a priority. The College is **advised** to address shortcomings in learning resources, including improving classroom facilities and developing a student e-portal and/or 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 outcomes it provides for students.

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3   Information about learning opportunities

How effectively does the College communicate information about learning opportunities to students and other stakeholders?

3.1   The College adequately fulfils its responsibility for public information. The College is responsible for the promotion of all courses. The website is usually the first source of reference for prospective students where there is a limited range of course leaflets and information for the pre-entry stage. There are links to the professional awarding organisations that provide additional contextual information. There is essential information about visa, enrolment and financial arrangements, along with an insight into life in the area. The self-evaluation documentation stated that the prospectus had been approved; however, it became apparent during the visit that there is currently no prospectus. Students confirmed that the College had responded promptly to their initial enquiries. They stated that the most effective way of receiving information had been through direct contact with staff.

3.2   The website contains details of some key policies, including those relating to admissions, attendance and equal opportunities. The Student Handbook is available to download. The College Strategic Plan is also available for public reference; there remains, however, reference to ICM programmes, which were confirmed by the College to be no longer offered. It is unclear how the College ensures that students are made aware of the assessment criteria being applied to formative assessment. The Student Handbook, although providing very useful general information, does not cover assessment processes and the relationship to learning outcomes within all modules. There is a heavy reliance on the study guides produced by the awarding organisations.

3.3   The College is planning to develop a virtual learning environment. Outline plans for a student portal were presented to the review team and students confirmed that they had been consulted. The provision of online access for students to appropriate learning materials, session plans and schemes of work would enhance their learning experience.

How effective are the College's arrangements for assuring that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy?

3.4   The public information approvals policy and Document Control Register have been developed recently and are not yet fully implemented. Implementation should lead to the systematic review of all published information to ensure its accuracy, currency and appropriateness. The review team encountered spelling, punctuation, grammatical and other errors within College documents, including the use of two different names for the same awarding organisation. The Public Information policy refers to a 'series of sequential checks' and 'ongoing update of the website'. The most recent item of website news prior to the visit was in 2009. The pro forma for checking documents has yet to be implemented. The College is **advised** to develop and implement its policies to strengthen further the management, systematic review and evaluation of the information it publishes about its higher education provision.

3.5   The Document Control Register, along with the update in the Academic Quality Handbook, is a positive move towards ensuring the accuracy and completeness of published information. It requires effective and sustained implementation with clearly auditable actions. The College needs to ensure it has a working version control mechanism, as there was confusion among staff about which was the most recent version of any given document. The Principal holds ultimate editorial responsibility for both paper and web-based information. In practice, he is assisted by the Director of Administration and Marketing. The College is making a good start in managing this aspect of its management of public information.

3.6   The College has entered into a new relationship with a web developer for the updating and enhancing of information on the website and its subsequent maintenance. Prior to the visit, the website included courses which are no longer part of the portfolio. During the visit, a new 'live' website was presented which still referred to these courses. Corrections were made immediately. It would be helpful if the College's policy and approvals procedure document required the formal recording of updating actions.

The team concludes that reliance **can** be placed on the information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Action plan[3]

HY Education Ltd t/a Apex College action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight April 2013						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**[4]	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**[5]
The review team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
• the provision of extensive information for the part-time teachers (paragraph 2.1)	Outline and distribute contents of the teacher folder to senior managers, administrators and review annually	April 2014	Head of Studies	Senior manager involvement, positive feedback and evaluations from lecturers; regular meetings between Head of Studies and teachers	Principal	Annual reviews; annual self assessment report; direct feedback from principal, teachers and student: feedback evaluated by Head of Studies and Principal
• the Student Charter developed in consultation with students (paragraph 2.6).	Devise a form to consult students and then monitor its effectiveness	February 2014	Head of Studies	Draft form to students and staff; produce final draft and check accurate information	Principal and Director of Administration	Feedback and evaluated by students and staff

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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.
[4] State a role, not a named individual.
[5] Indicate how the actions will be evaluated once completed.

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:						
• implement a more formal system for recording the discussions and decisions of key committees and groups and for identifying action points arising from these (paragraphs 1.1, 1.6 and 2.4)	Distribute the schedule of forthcoming meetings Each meeting to be minuted and minutes distributed	End June 2013	Director of Administration	Minuted meetings with concurrence evidenced by signed minutes	Principal	Minuted meetings provide self evident evaluation
• clarify further the roles and responsibilities of senior management posts (paragraphs 1.1, 1.2 and 2.3)	Produce more detailed job descriptions to clarify roles and responsibilities of senior managers	November 2013	Director of Administration	All job descriptions contains accurate information	Principal	Annual review; direct feedback from employees at staff appraisals
• rationalise and implement formally stated policies and procedures relating to academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 1.4 and 1.5)	Re-review existing policies and procedures to ensure they clearly reflect the size and structure of the College	November 2014	Head of Studies	Annual review to ensure that policies are linked to academic success criteria	Director of Administration	Next QAA review visit

• implement formally the annual programme reporting and monitoring processes (paragraph 1.7)	Implement a formal annual review of the courses which have been run during the previous year	End July 2013	Head of Studies	Review of courses, students taking and passing exams and so on: to consider course improvements before start of next academic year	Director of Administration	Continuous improvement within college courses
• address shortcomings in learning resources (paragraph 2.14 and 3.3)	Ensure virtual learning facility has been implemented and communicated to all students	December 2013	Head of Studies	Review and monitor all resources using a checklist	Director of Administration	Staff and student feedback; annual review at staff and student meeting
• develop and implement policies to strengthen further the management, systematic review and evaluation of the information it publishes about its higher education provision (paragraphs 3.4 and 3.5).	Principal to re-review all documents and the website to ensure accuracy and consistency annually New policies can only be added annually and must be included in review	August 2013	Principal	Review all documents and website	Other management	Continuous improvement
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:						
• implement fully the student progress review report	Ensure student learning and support is effective and that	July 2013	Teachers	Improved engagement with students; detailed	Head of Studies	Annual self assessment report; direct

(paragraph 2.7)	the student progress report is fully implemented			student feedback from teachers; regular communications between Head of Studies and teachers		feedback from Head of Studies and Principal
• continue to develop the teaching observation procedures (paragraph 2.10)	Review and develop procedures further to reflect higher education; produce a recording form suited to higher education	December 2013	Head of Studies	Improved procedures linked to higher education; well developed recording form of higher education practice	Principal	Annual self assessment report; direct feedback from Principal and teachers
• implement further the policies for identifying and providing for staff development needs, including introduction of the staff appraisal system (paragraph 2.11)	All staff appraisal will be carried out this academic year We are considering introducing a 360 degree appraisal system	December 2013	Head of studies, Director of administration, Principal	All staff have clear appraisal of their own performance and the opportunity to discuss development needs	Principal	Continuous improvement

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/educational-oversight.

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.[6]

Academic Infrastructure The core guidance developed and maintained by QAA in
partnership with the UK higher education community and used by QAA and higher education
providers until 2011-12 for quality assurance of UK higher education. It has since been
replaced by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (**Quality Code**).

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

academic standards The standards set and maintained by higher education providers for
their courses and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standards**.

awarding body A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the authority to
award academic qualifications located on the **framework for higher education
qualifications**, such as diplomas or degrees.

awarding organisation An organisation authorised to award a particular qualification; an
organisation recognised by Ofqual to award Ofqual-regulated qualifications.

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 which formed the core element of the **Academic Infrastructure**
(now superseded by the **Quality Code**).

designated body An organisation that has been formally appointed or recognised to
perform a particular function. QAA has been recognised by UKBA as a designated body for
the purpose of providing educational oversight.

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

enhancement The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the
quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. 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 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*.

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[6] www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

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 study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, resources, and specialist facilities (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

learning outcomes 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 reviews and reports.

programme An approved course of study that 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 A UK degree-awarding body or any other organisation that offers courses of higher education 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').

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.

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 standards The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national qualifications frameworks and **subject benchmark statements**. See also **academic standards**.

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