



College of East London

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

March 2012

Key findings about College of East London

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in March 2012, the QAA review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of the Association of Business Practitioners, the Institute of Commercial Management, the Organisation for Tourism and Hospitality Management, the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality, and NCFE.

The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the quality and enhancement of the learning opportunities it offers on behalf of these awarding organisations.

The team considers that **reliance can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the provider is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Recommendations

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

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

- clarify the responsibilities of the College's committees and take a more systematic approach to the approval and monitoring of programmes (paragraph 1.3)
- strengthen procedures for the management of the College's portfolio of programmes (paragraph 1.4)
- revise the quality manual, policies and procedures, to align with the College's practices and ensure that they are kept under formal review by the Board of Studies (paragraph 1.5)
- strengthen existing arrangements for ensuring the accuracy of public information (paragraph 3.10).

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

- consider ways of strengthening the College's oversight of academic-related activities (paragraph 1.7)
- develop programme overview documentation that is easily accessible to students (paragraph 1.11)
- further develop the process for the review of lesson planning (paragraph 2.1)
- consider the formal use of assessor observation results in quality enhancement activities such as incorporation in programme annual reports (paragraph 2.6).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at the College of East London (the provider; the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of the Association of Business Practitioners, the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality, the Institute of Commercial Management, NCFE, and the Organisation for Tourism and Hospitality Management. The review was carried out by Dr Sally Bentley, Mr Paul McGrath and Mr Brian Sullivan (reviewers) and Mr Ian Fleming (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 documentation supplied by the provider and awarding organisations, and meetings with staff and students.

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

- the awarding organisations' requirements
- the Qualifications and Credit Framework
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic standards and quality in higher education*.

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 of East London (the College) was established in September 2005. Initially located in Stratford, it moved to modern spacious premises alongside Mile End Park in February 2010. At the time of the review, the College had 65 students on a range of business and tourism programmes at levels 4-7.

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

Association of Business Practitioners

- Level 7 Postgraduate Diploma in Business Management

Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality

- Level 6 Diploma

Institute of Commercial Management

- Level 7 Postgraduate Diploma in Business Management
- Level 6 Diploma

NCFE

- Level 4 Diploma
- Level 4 Health and Social Care Diploma

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4.

² www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx.

Organisation for Tourism and Hospitality Management

- Level 6 Professional Diploma
- Level 5 Diploma

The provider's stated responsibilities

The College currently works with five awarding organisations, although the Association of Business Practitioners will cease to be an awarding partner when its remaining programme runs out. The awarding organisations determine the intended learning outcomes, indicative content and assessment guidelines for each programme and the College designs learning materials and manages the delivery of the programmes.

Recent developments

The College has recently signed an agreement which will enable it to offer provision for an undergraduate business degree validated by the University of the West of England, Bristol. The first intake of students is expected to commence in summer 2012 and the programme will be marketed locally. Short courses are also being developed for the local business and corporate market and a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Lifelong Learning Sector), approved by NCFE, will be delivered later in 2012. The one remaining programme with the Association of Business Practitioners is being phased out.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the review team and a written submission and video evidence was prepared by the Students' Union President. This provided useful evidence for the team. In addition, students met the coordinator during the preparatory meeting and 19 students attended a meeting with the team during the review visit.

Detailed findings about College of East London

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The College delivers business-related programmes at levels 4 to 7 approved by the Association of Business Practitioners (ABP), the Institute of Commercial Management (ICM), the Organisation for Tourism and Hospitality Management (OTHM), the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality (CTH) and NCFE. The roles and responsibilities of the College and the awarding organisations are clearly understood by staff. In all cases, except ABP, the awarding organisation has responsibility for curriculum design, development and approval, as well as assessment. For the ABP Postgraduate Diploma in Management, the assessment process is the responsibility of the College, subject to annual external verification. The College has responsibility for programme delivery with learning resources being provided by both the College and the awarding organisations. The Board of Studies receives information on changes and developments, though the systems would be strengthened if agreements were routinely monitored and reviewed by the Board rather than changes being introduced in an ad hoc manner. The Director of Studies, with the support of internal verifiers, is responsible for ensuring the maintenance and development of academic standards and carries out this role effectively.

1.2 Programme leaders are responsible for ensuring that staff and students understand the requirements of the awarding organisations and they liaise as needed with designated contacts in the awarding organisations. Programme leaders report matters relating to academic standards to the Director of Studies, who raises academic issues at the Board of Studies or at operational staff meetings. The College expects the role of programme leader to evolve further as the College grows and develops short courses.

1.3 The management of higher education is overseen by the Director of Studies and is described in the quality assurance manual. There is an effective central administration office, where all records relating to the College's higher education provision are kept. The College has a proportionate and potentially effective committee structure for the management of higher education, including an emergent governance structure, a formal Board of Studies and operational staff meetings. However, there are no terms of reference for any of these committees and there is a lack of clarity about each meeting's remit and responsibilities. All these meetings tend to be reactive rather than systematic in their monitoring and management of the College's higher education provision with the majority of discussion about quality assurance taking place within the more informal, operational staff meetings. There are plans to establish a quality committee and examination board as the College grows in size and its responsibilities for in-house courses grow, though these have not yet been formulated in any detail. The team considers it advisable that the responsibilities of the College's committees are clarified and that a more systematic approach is taken to the approval and monitoring of programmes as part of the quality assurance process.

1.4 The quality assurance manual describes some of the College's policies and procedures. The business plan currently includes a section on the College's approach to the management of quality and standards. In some areas, such as the design and approval of new programmes, validation and periodic review, the policies have not yet been implemented due to the small size and scope of the College and its relatively recent foundation. The College is moving towards the fuller implementation of these systems as it diversifies and grows in size and scope. Decisions on programme development and closure are made by the College's management. It would be helpful if decisions were systematically

reported and discussed at the Board of Studies, so that, for new programmes, resourcing issues could be discussed fully and, for closing programmes, plans to secure the learning opportunities of continuing students could be approved. It is considered advisable that the College strengthens its procedures for the management of its portfolio of programmes, notably in the area of course development, review and closure.

1.5 Policies and procedures describe systems in key areas such as complaints and grievance, equal opportunities, admissions and internal verification. Like the quality assurance manual, these documents contain references to the structures and systems of other bodies, such as schools, school boards and faculties, education and credentials committee and examination committee, quality committees and examination boards. Staff acknowledge that further work is needed to refine documentation related to the management of quality and standards in order to align practice and emergent policy. The College may wish to embed the stand-alone policies and procedures in the quality assurance manual to provide a single point of reference. It is advisable that the quality manual, policies and procedures are adjusted to align with the College's practices and that they are formally kept under review by the Board of Studies.

1.6 There is a clear process for academic malpractice and appropriate guidance on plagiarism, as well as the opportunity to use specialist plagiarism software, where permitted by the awarding organisations. Staff and students are clear about the process for complaining or bringing a grievance and the informal and formal procedures work effectively. The admissions policy is clear and the College manages the process effectively through its online system, which is integrated with the student record system, allowing appropriate monitoring of students and the taking of action if necessary.

1.7 There are annual reports for all awards, including an overview of delivery, progression and achievement, feedback from students, any changes to the programme and the appropriateness of the learning resources. Modules are reviewed as part of this process and there is an overall action plan for the programme. Routinely discussing and approving these reports at the Board of Studies would ensure a more effective oversight of quality and standards. There is currently no College overview report and it is recommended as desirable that an annual overview of the College's academic activities would allow trends and issues to be more easily identified and acted upon.

1.8 Assessment and feedback sheets show that marking and feedback is linked to module intended learning outcomes. Assignment briefs, approved by internal verifiers where appropriate, are issued to students. There is a clear system for the submission, marking and return of work, and the College makes effective use of its virtual learning environment to support this process. Staff and students are familiar with the College's late submission and personal mitigation policy, which applies where the awarding organisation does not expect its own policy to be used. Students provide positive feedback on the assessment process through the anonymous student satisfaction survey and module feedback questionnaires, and the results of these evaluations the College plans to feed into the programme annual reports.

1.9 Assessment data are gathered and held centrally in a secure and reliable manner. Recruitment, retention, progression and achievement information is collected centrally and included in programme annual reports. It is sometimes discussed at staff meetings, with occasional specific issues being brought to the Board of Studies. The management of information could usefully be strengthened through the regular monitoring of data at the Board of Studies, so that trends can be identified and acted upon. While the current management of academic standards is secure, the College should address the issues discussed in this section in order to prevent standards being put at risk in the future.

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

1.10 The College works with the awarding organisations whose qualifications are Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)-accredited. In addition, staff show some familiarity with the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*), *Section 6: Assessment of students*. The College has drawn on professional body guidance in the development of its teacher-training course.

1.11 The College makes effective use of the awarding organisations' modular documentation, including intended learning outcomes, in its delivery. Although the website contains some useful descriptions and a new programme under development has a helpful draft programme handbook, summary information about the programmes or awards is not consistently made available to students. It is desirable that the College develops programme overview documentation that is easily accessible to students, drawing on the principles of the QAA guidance on programme specifications.

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

1.12 External verification is carried out by one of the College's awarding organisations, ABP, and reports are received and acted upon by the College. Significant issues related to internal verification were raised by ABP and resulted in the temporary suspension of self-certification. The College responded by discussing the issues at the Board of Studies and significantly strengthening its internal verification procedures, as well as recording and monitoring its own processes more fully. Internal verification was found to be appropriate in the most recent ABP external verification report and self-certification was restored. As it reviews its formal quality documentation, the College plans to adjust the descriptions of the relevant roles and responsibilities to reflect the new strengthened system.

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 Teaching staff translate module intended learning outcomes into indicative content. This is documented using intended learning outcome control sheets, course schema and lesson plans. The College has an established set of documents for the ABP programme and similar sets are being produced for its other qualifications. These documents will be revised through each delivery cycle. Lesson plans are developed by the teacher delivering the content and are signed off by another member of staff, which acts as a quality assurance check although, as yet, no amendments have been required as a result of these reviews. A formal review of lesson plans could have positive impact upon delivery quality and it is desirable that the College develops this approach further.

2.2 The small size of the academic team allows for regular formal and informal discussion about teaching and learning. These meetings provide a useful opportunity for staff to discuss and action issues related to learning opportunities. The Board of Studies meetings take place on a bimonthly basis and are chaired by the Director of Studies.

Minutes highlight issues in relation to course delivery and assessment, and action points are identified and followed up.

2.3 Programme annual reports provide a basic quality review for each programme. They make reference to staffing and teaching resources, and highlight some rudimentary action points and improvement objectives to be taken forward over the coming year. These reports are the College's main formal vehicle for reviewing and documenting quality enhancement. The reports reviewed are limited in their evaluation and do not currently utilise all of the performance data that the College has available.

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

2.4 As the College delivers QCF-accredited programmes through Ofqual-regulated awarding organisations, the main external reference points relate to the awarding organisations' requirements and the arrangements described in paragraph 1.11 are also relevant here. The College has determined Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTTLS) to be the minimum requirement for teaching staff and this sets a teaching and learning standard, which the College has adopted as an external reference point for programme delivery.

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

2.5 Teaching staff hold a range of higher level qualifications, including master's degrees and doctorates in relevant subject areas. All full-time staff hold recognised teaching qualifications such as PTTLS or Postgraduate Certificate in Education and the College is currently working with its visiting, part-time lecturers to enable their qualification to this level. The College benefits from being a PTTLS centre and has been approved to deliver a Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Lifelong Learning Sector). Both of these qualifications are approved by NCFE. The College intends, during 2012, that all teaching staff will hold or be working towards a teaching qualification, with PTTLS as the minimum standard. All staff will ultimately be expected to progress to a level 7 postgraduate diploma. This is a two-year programme, and the College intends that the first cohort of students undertaking it will include members of its own staff.

2.6 The College has implemented a peer observation process, known as assessor observation. This is overseen by the programme leaders and requires each member of teaching staff to be observed at least once per module delivered. A range of performance criteria is used. The observer provides written and informal oral feedback, highlighting suggestions for future development. The staff state that this feedback is useful in developing practice. The Director of Studies reviews all assessor observations and professional development is initiated as a result. Outcomes of assessor observations are not currently used in programme annual reports and the team considers it desirable that the College should consider doing so.

2.7 Student views about teaching and learning are sought through a student satisfaction survey and through module feedback. At the time of the review, these surveys had not been analysed formally and reported upon but raw data were available. Students are enthusiastic about the teaching they receive and the quality of teaching staff. They enjoy lessons, state that a range of methods is used, and confirm that teaching staff are responsive to their feedback.

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

2.8 Staff work closely with students throughout their programmes. Students undergo a detailed one-day induction, which introduces them to policies and procedures and provides an outline of their programme. Students then undergo a useful one-week study skills programme, which includes guidance on assignment writing, referencing and avoiding plagiarism. In addition, those students identified as having weaker English language skills through assignments undertake a business-focused English language course which the College is approved to deliver. Students state that the induction arrangements are a helpful way of orientating them to the College and their studies.

2.9 The relatively small class sizes allow for close relationships to be developed between staff and students, a feature which is highly valued by students. A student lecturer meeting form is utilised to provide feedback to students following assessment. This is a useful tool for documenting feedback and students confirm that such feedback aids their learning and understanding.

2.10 The College has a dedicated Student Liaison Officer who works closely with the Student Union. Students comment favourably on this provision and cite examples of how they have been helped. The role is primarily pastoral, but the post holder also assists with student attendance administration. The College also has access on a part-time basis to a student welfare officer, who, as well as being a trained social worker, has experience of the higher education sector. Satisfaction and module feedback surveys seek student views on support. However, no evaluative reports were available during the review.

2.11 A Student Representative Committee operates as part of the Student Union. Representatives are elected for each programme. Complaints and issues raised through this forum are taken to College managers by the Student Union President. Examples of action taken were provided. These included changes to teaching methods by individual members of teaching staff and improvements to College catering facilities. Students state that the College is responsive to their requests.

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

2.12 The College's self-evaluation highlights significant staffing turnover during the last two years. There were four permanent teaching staff at the time of the review, together with a small number of visiting part-time staff. A formal staff development plan is not yet in operation. However, a range of activities such as programme annual review, assessor observation and staff appraisal identify individual development needs. Much development over the past year has related to teaching qualifications but staff have also attended external conferences run by awarding organisations. Staff disseminate information from such conference events to colleagues through staff meetings. Revisions to assessment practice have resulted from such dissemination.

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

2.13 The College has well appointed and spacious teaching and learning accommodation with a small dedicated library and a computer room. The library is available to students during weekdays. Students are encouraged to join local libraries and some have registered as British Library readers. Some awarding organisations provide additional resources through their websites. The College has sought student views on resources

through module feedback and student satisfaction surveys. At time of the review, these had not been formally evaluated by the College.

2.14 The College virtual learning environment is still in the early stages of development, with limited resources, but lecture notes, slides and assignments are now being uploaded. The virtual learning environment has the potential to become a valuable learning resource.

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 principal communication media are the College website, prospectus, student handbook, procedures and policies, as well as social media. In addition, there are a number of other documents and mechanisms which inform recruitment agents, prospective applicants, students and staff. These are effective in informing the College's students and external stakeholders about its higher education provision.

3.2 Agreements with awarding organisations place an onus on the College to seek approval for information about them which it publishes and these obligations are met. Agreements with agents require them to ensure that locally produced material is approved by the College. Agent activity is monitored effectively by the College.

3.3 The website is under development, with parts yet to be completed. While it has the potential to be a useful source of information, some difficulties exist; links to College policies and procedures do not currently function. Some outline that programme-related information is to be found in the online prospectus. Further details are located on web pages for academic departments. Within these are links to each awarding organisation's website, which provide access to progression routes for award holders. However, there are no links to the complete programme information located on the awarding organisation's website and deriving full programme level descriptions is not straightforward. Despite this, students find the information provided is adequate to support their choice of college and programme. Senior managers acknowledge that as a priority they have further work to do in enhancing the College's web presence, including the promotion of the College from a marketing perspective.

3.4 During induction, students receive a student handbook and programme-level information. The handbook contains much useful College-focused information, including policies of direct relevance to students. Programme-oriented information includes extracts from the appropriate awarding organisation website, specifying the programme objectives and the constituent modules. This is explained by the programme leader and students report that they emerge from this process with full knowledge of what they must do to gain the award.

3.5 Students are provided with further module-oriented information through the web-accessible virtual learning environment. Teachers can upload specific information about the module and its delivery. Students can also access materials located on the relevant awarding organisation's website and they find both of these sources of information useful in supporting their learning.

3.6 Staff are provided with a staff handbook upon joining the College. This is suitably focused on contractual and operational matters. In addition, staff use the awarding organisations' module outlines appropriately to ensure curriculum delivery meets appropriate expectations.

3.7 Social media have been used by the Director of Operations to make college-level announcements, which are appreciated by the students as an appropriate mechanism for receiving such notifications. This activity is effectively controlled by the College's social media policy.

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

3.8 The Director of Operations takes oversight of published information. This activity is supported by the Student Liaison Officer, whose role includes the proofreading of this material. There is a publication policy and a social media policy which effectively inform staff about what information will be published and how this will be done.

3.9 Recruitment agent activity is monitored against the formal contracts which have been issued. This includes oversight of the material that agents develop locally to publicise the College and advise prospective applicants. The College takes special care in reviewing this material and terminated an agent's contract when he was found to have been transgressing agreed requirements.

3.10 The College recognises that published material needs continual renewal in the light of its evolving portfolio of awards. This activity is focused upon accuracy and completeness and generally works effectively. While it is clear that typographical errors will be resolved through due process, there is no explicitly identified procedure for detecting errors in content such as aspects of admissions requirements and unresolved references. It is advisable that the College establishes a systematic process which further strengthens its arrangements for ensuring the accuracy of its publications.

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 plan³

College of East London action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight March 2012						
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:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clarify the responsibilities of the College's committees and take a more systematic approach to the approval and monitoring of programmes (paragraph 1.3) 	Draw up responsibility checklist Appoint named representatives for each committee Set rolling annual monthly timetable and minute actions Create action report for each agenda of each subsequent meeting	30 June 2012	Director of Studies	Checklist of actions in place by 30 June 2012	Director of Operations	Evaluation using independent external quality consultant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strengthen procedures for the management of the College's portfolio of programmes (paragraph 1.4) 	New programme detail, term by term review, annual review with resource requirements and course closure for all courses to be reviewed by Board of Studies	30 June 2012	Director of Studies	Checklist of actions in place by 30 June 2012	Director of Operations	Evaluation using independent external quality consultant

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.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> revise the quality manual, policies and procedures, to align with the College's practices and ensure that they are kept under formal review by the Board of Studies (paragraph 1.5) 	Total review of procedures and policies - streamlining of policies not being used - Board of Studies focus on polices being used	30 September 2012	Quality Manager	Each policy to be signed off by Director of Studies and Director of Operations	Director of Studies and Director of Operations	Evaluation using independent external quality consultant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> strengthen existing arrangements for ensuring the accuracy of public information (paragraph 3.10). 	Continuous review of the website and complete review of all other material	Ongoing	Quality Manager	Signed off by the Director of Operations	Director of Operations	Evaluation using independent external quality consultant
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:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider ways of strengthening the College's oversight of academic-related activities (paragraph 1.7) 	Produce a complete annual review of all academic activities with a focus on quality, growth and strategic direction	Initial report on August 2011 to June 2012 in September 2012	Director of Studies	Production, delivery and review of the report with actions for direction and improvement	Director of Operations	Evaluation using independent external quality consultant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop programme overview documentation that is easily accessible to students (paragraph 1.11) 	Provide detailed programme review, including programme content, assessment criteria, pass criteria and progression, and	31 August 2012	Director of Studies and Quality Manager	Checklist of requirements completed against each programme to be run in the year	Director of Operations	Evaluation using independent external quality consultant

	development routes on both website and other media			September 2012 to June 2013		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> further develop the process for the review of lesson planning (paragraph 2.1) 	Complete review of lessons plans, breaking these down into content, actions, resources, interaction in the classroom, and so on	31 August 2012	Programme managers	Signed off by Director of Studies	Director of Studies	Evaluation using independent external quality consultant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider the formal use of assessor observation results in quality enhancement activities such as incorporation in programme annual reports (paragraph 2.6). 	Implement assessor observation reports into programme annual reviews and include these as part of the Board of Studies evaluation of the course	Include in the end of year review for 2011 to 2012	Programme managers	Signed off by Director of Studies	Board of Studies	Evaluation using independent external quality consultant

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: Handbook⁴](#)

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.

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