



Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

Institutional Review
by the Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education

March 2012

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About this review

This is a report of an Institutional Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance (the Conservatoire). The review took place on 12-14 March 2012 and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Dr D Edwards
- Professor C Pickles
- Mr M Kitching (student reviewer)
- Mr D Stannard (review secretary).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by the Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance and to make judgements as to whether its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. In this report the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
 - threshold academic standards¹
 - the quality of 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 4.

In reviewing Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance the review team has also considered a theme selected for particular focus across higher education in England and Northern Ireland. The [theme](#) for the academic year 2011-12 is 'the first year student experience'.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.² Background information about Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance is given at the end of this report. A dedicated page of the website explains the method for [Institutional Review](#) of higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland³ and has links to the review handbook and other informative documents.

¹ For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

² www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/pages/default.aspx

³ www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/pages/ireni.aspx

Key findings

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance.

QAA's judgements about Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance.

- Academic standards at the Conservatoire **meet UK expectations** for threshold standards.
- The quality of student learning opportunities at the Conservatoire **requires further improvement to meet UK expectations**.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities at the Conservatoire **requires further improvement to meet UK expectations**.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following **features of good practice** at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance.

- The care with which the Conservatoire utilises its wide network of relevant practitioners to develop its students professionally and support them in planning their future careers (paragraph 2.1.1).
- The range and quality of support which the Conservatoire provides for students with illness or injury (paragraph 2.8.1).

Recommendations

The QAA review team **recommends** Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance to:

- review its current policy on the return of formally assessed work to ensure that all such work is returned within a time frame which supports students' future learning needs and with feedback that is consistently of good quality by one year of the date of publication of the report (paragraph 1.3.1)
- ensure that all students and staff are appropriately trained in the use of its virtual learning environment by one year of the date of publication of the report (paragraph 2.2.1)
- ensure that timetables are made available to students in time for the commencement of the academic year concerned by the commencement of the academic year 2012-13 (paragraphs 2.2.3 and 5.1.4)
- ensure that its training and support arrangements for postgraduate research students adhere in full to the expectations of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education (Code of practice), Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes* by the commencement of the academic year 2012-13 (paragraph 2.10)
- ensure that its arrangements for credit-bearing work placements are fully aligned with the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning* by the commencement of the academic year 2012-13 (paragraph 2.12)

- ensure the availability to all students of a student charter or equivalent document covering the full range of higher education provision available by the commencement of the academic year 2012-13 (paragraph 2.13)
- develop systematic mechanisms to ensure the delivery of its cross-cutting enhancement themes by the commencement of the academic year 2012-13 (paragraph 4.5).

Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms the following actions** that Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance is already taking to make academic standards secure and improve the educational provision offered to its students.

- The action being taken to explore, through the Student Engagement Review, mechanisms for obtaining feedback in an efficient and effective manner (paragraph 2.3).
- The action being taken to enhance access to careers advice by students from both faculties and all modes of study (paragraph 2.7.1).
- The action being taken to explore ways to facilitate the integration of students from both faculties and to ensure equity of experience through the proposed Master of Fine Arts, the Review of Assessment, and CoLab (paragraph 4.4).

Public information

The information Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance provides about its higher education is current, reliable, useful and accessible.

The First Year Student Experience

Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance manages the first-year student experience carefully and effectively.

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

About Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance is an independent, directly funded higher education institution. It was established in 2005 through the merger of Trinity College of Music and Laban, two internationally known specialist institutions with long histories of developing students for professional practice. In 2011-12, the Conservatoire enrolled around 1,000 higher education students.

Since its Institutional audit in 2008 (which led to judgements of confidence in its management of academic standards and the quality of student learning opportunities), the process of integration has continued. A number of structural changes to executive and deliberative committees have been made; a unitary Principal has been appointed; the former colleges have been retitled faculties, each headed by a Director; an integrated Quality

⁴ www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/pages/ireni.aspx.

Institutional Review of Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

Handbook has been produced; and all degrees are now awarded by a single validating institution, City University London.

The Conservatoire identifies as key internal challenges the planned enhancements to: learning and teaching (including imminently filling a new Head of Learning Enhancement post); embedding the virtual learning environment and strengthening cross-curricular developments; staff development, with particular reference to research and internationalisation; professional and community engagement; employability; strengthening institutional cohesiveness; and applying for taught degree-awarding powers. The Conservatoire currently has only one collaborative partner. It has clear policies and procedures to govern this area of activity.

Explanation of the findings about Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance

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 Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance (the Conservatoire) **meet UK expectations** for threshold standards. The review team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

Meeting external qualifications benchmarks

1.1 The review team found that, for the most part, programmes of study are planned with close attention to the levels specified in *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The procedures in place to ensure that this is so include rigorous initial validation, annual monitoring, and periodic revalidation. External examiners and the validating institution confirm that the Conservatoire's practices align with their respective expectations and requirements.

Use of external examiners

1.2 The Conservatoire's discharge of all devolved responsibilities in respect of external examiners was found to be satisfactory. External examiners are appointed from a wide range of institutions, and the Conservatoire complements the training provided by the validating institution to ensure that such examiners understand and are equipped to perform their duties. The Conservatoire's detailed processing of external examiners' reports ensures that areas identified as good practice or as requiring attention are reliably identified and conscientiously addressed. Responses to such reports were found to be thorough and carefully considered.

Assessment and standards

1.3 The Conservatoire's careful approach to its assessment strategies (which are themselves subject to the approval of the validating institution) ensures that students are able to meet the intended learning outcomes concerned. Its modular framework allows for a variety of module credits to be taken; this flexibility enriches students' learning by offering a wider variety and choice of subjects within and across programmes than would otherwise be the case. While the review team did note that the Conservatoire's practice of applying its postgraduate marking scheme to level 5 and 6 modules has the potential to cause confusion, this is done in only very limited cases where a clear rationale exists. It is, nevertheless, an activity the Conservatoire may wish to keep under review.

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.

1.3.1 The review team noted some student concern that assessed work is not consistently returned in a timely manner, and that in some cases comments made are either brief or illegible. Students drew particular attention to the fact that the Conservatoire's '21 day' policy for the return of assessed work can, when the institution is closed, result in a significant delay before work is returned. In consequence students may have embarked on a new assessment before receiving feedback on the previous one. It is **recommended** that the Conservatoire review this policy to ensure that all assessed work is returned within a time frame which supports students' future learning needs, and with feedback that is consistently of good quality.

Setting and maintaining programme standards

1.4 The Conservatoire's procedures for new programme approval and for the monitoring and review of existing programmes ensure that academic standards are set and maintained at appropriate levels. Annual monitoring is rigorous, and periodic programme reviews, which are strengthened by the involvement of external experts drawn from a register maintained by the Conservatoire, are thorough and professional.

Subject benchmarks

1.5 Subject benchmark statements and qualification statements are used effectively throughout. Careful consideration is given to areas such as the Postgraduate Diploma Community Dance, where no subject benchmark statements exist; in such cases the Conservatoire draws appropriately on the advice of external consultants and examiners.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

Outcome

The quality of learning opportunities at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance **requires further improvement to meet UK expectations**. The review team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

Professional standards for teaching and learning

2.1 The Conservatoire is committed to the professional development of all staff, including those who are paid hourly. Clear lines of responsibility exist for staff development and training, both institutionally and at faculty level, and the individualised support provided for staff, employees and visiting lecturers is distinctive. In the Faculty of Music, part-time and hourly paid staff are invited to departmental meetings, where they are informed about available development and training opportunities. The Conservatoire is continuing to strengthen its commitment to ensuring that teaching is informed by research, innovation and creative practice: to this end it has dedicated funds to support research development. The review team noted a number of areas of research concentration, and learned from students that staff research, scholarship and professional activities do indeed underpin their curricula.

2.1.1 In both faculties students have access to academic support, and those who met the review team expressed strong satisfaction with the personal, academic and professional attention they receive, particularly welcoming being taught by practitioners at the forefront of their profession. The review team identified the care with which the Conservatoire utilises its wide network of such practitioners to develop its students professionally and support them in planning their future careers as **a feature of good practice**.

Learning resources

2.2 The Principal's Management Group is responsible for budget allocation, and the Directors of Music and Dance oversee faculty budgets. The Learning Resources Committee discusses faculty plans and advises the Principal's Management Group.

2.2.1 The Conservatoire's learning resources score highly in the National Student Survey and the introduction of a proprietary virtual learning environment has been widely welcomed. Nevertheless, support and training in its use require strengthening in the case of both staff (whose utilisation of it is variable) and students (not all of whom, in spite of having been issued with a written briefing, were confident in using it). The Conservatoire acknowledges that e-learning has never been part of institutional culture, that the virtual learning environment had a 'soft launch', and that plans have now been put in place to advertise a new technical post to increase support for this activity. It is **recommended** that the Conservatoire ensure that all students and staff be appropriately trained in the use of the virtual learning environment.

2.2.2 While acknowledging the specialist stock in the two faculty libraries, students consider that the Conservatoire has yet to address in full the fact that (i) in spite of its extended opening hours the busy timetable in the Faculty of Dance continues to restrict student access to the Jerwood Library, and (ii) the opening hours of the Music Library (which are restricted at weekends and out of term) continue to be a cause of dissatisfaction. It is accepted, however, that the Conservatoire is keeping this issue under review.

2.2.3 Students drew attention to the fact that academic timetables are not routinely available at the start of each academic year, and that this has led both to confusion and to disappointment about the non-availability of some elective modules. While the Conservatoire explained that changes to current arrangements are in place to maximise the availability of popular options, the student experience was rather different. It is **recommended** that the Conservatoire ensure that timetables are made available to students in time for the commencement of the academic year concerned.

Student voice

2.3 The nature of the disciplines involved and the size and intimate culture of the Conservatoire mean that students have ample opportunity to express their views informally; staff were found to be as responsive as possible to suggestions made. Nevertheless, securing student engagement with formal evaluative mechanisms (notably end-of-module surveys and committee representation) has proved challenging, though the Conservatoire has recently made progress on both these fronts, in particular by means of its current Student Engagement Review. The review team **affirms** the action being taken by the Conservatoire to explore, through the Student Engagement Review, mechanisms for obtaining feedback in an efficient and effective manner.

2.3.1 The Students' Union is actively engaged in contributing to institutional policy development, and the relations between the Conservatoire and the Union are both close and positive.

Management information is used to improve quality and standards

2.4 The Conservatoire makes appropriate use of student progress and related data to inform decision making in quality and standards. The Principal's Management Group is responsible for developing the key performance indicators in the Strategic Plan, and is advised by the Data Quality Group on both the internal use of management information (including student progress, equality and complaints statistics) and external benchmarking.

Admission to the Conservatoire

2.5 The Conservatoire, which selects from a strong field of candidates, has a rigorous admissions procedure which is reviewed annually and meets all expectations of the *Code of practice*. Selectors are appropriately trained and provide feedback on auditions to any candidate who requests it.

Complaints and appeals

2.6 Appeals procedures for validated degree programmes are the responsibility of the validating institution. Students are aware of where to locate the necessary information on complaints and appeals.

Career advice and guidance

2.7 Graduates of the Conservatoire have an excellent employment record, both generally and in the profession for which they are trained; they also have access to careers advice for up to two years after graduation. Careers advice is increasingly embedded in the curriculum, and provision is mapped against the *Code of practice, Section 8: Career education, information, advice and guidance*.

2.7.1 Careers advice and guidance are provided by a Careers Coordinator whose direct services are currently, for timetabling reasons, more readily available to full-time Music students than to Dance or part-time postgraduate students. Music students also benefit from the advice of their principal study tutor. While the Conservatoire has yet to address in full the implications of Dance timetabling for the accessibility of the Careers Coordinator to Dance students, the review team **affirms the action** being taken to enhance access to careers advice by students from both faculties and all modes of study.

Supporting disabled students

2.8 The Conservatoire provides comprehensive support for students with additional needs. Staff are trained in equality and diversity, and a comprehensive report is prepared annually. The Conservatoire encourages early disclosure of additional needs to enable it to put support arrangements in place from the first. It was found that students' awareness of available support is high.

2.8.1 The Conservatoire also provides a wealth of support for students who experience injury or illness during the course of their studies; this can include free or heavily subsidised medical or health treatment. The range and quality of support provided for students with illness and injury is identified as **a feature of good practice**.

Supporting international students

2.9 Support services for international students are coordinated by the Head of Student Services and have recently been enhanced. Student induction has been revised to take full account of the needs and interests of international students; while this was found to be better developed in Music than in Dance, students conversely compared the continuing support for international students in Dance favourably with that provided in Music.

Supporting postgraduate research students

2.10 The Conservatoire is currently some way short of providing a well developed and fully supported environment for research degree students. Such students are few in number (24 registered students and two recent completions), and the review team found that, while

the process is supported by City University London, elements of the process are informal and not wholly efficient. For example:

- annual reports on research degree students are not always submitted in a timely manner and no effective procedure is in place to pursue late delivery
- in practice not all research students participate in mandatory training events
- no procedures exist to support research students' career aspirations by systematically offering teaching opportunities or for ensuring that those who do teach (normally on a one-off basis) are adequately briefed, monitored and debriefed.

It is **recommended** that the Conservatoire ensures that its training and support arrangements for postgraduate research students adhere in full to the expectations the *Code of practice, Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes*.

2.10.1 Notwithstanding these reservations, the Conservatoire's current Strategic and Research Plans express a commitment to developing both research student supervision and staff research; this includes making a submission to the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework. It is confirmed that the Conservatoire complies with the requirements of the validating institution in respect of supervisory arrangements, and noted that research students have access to a dedicated library adviser and study space.

Learning delivered through collaborative arrangements

2.11 The delivery of collaborative provision is very limited. Clear procedural requirements exist, and it is confirmed that collaborative provision operates in such a manner as to enable students to achieve their awards.

Work-based and placement learning

2.12 The Conservatoire's management of work-based placements is inconsistent. While pockets of good practice exist, there is no certainty that students on such placements are supervised by fully-briefed personnel; that their learning opportunities are appropriate to the level of their intended award; that their performance is effectively monitored; or that they receive appropriate and timely information, support and guidance. It is **recommended** that the Conservatoire ensure that its arrangements for credit-bearing work placements are fully aligned with the expectations of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*.

Student charter

2.13 The Conservatoire has constructed a Statement of Responsibilities based on an existing document in the Faculty of Dance. This will be rolled out across the institution for the start of the next academic year. No such document exists in the Faculty of Music, where expectations are contained in different policy documents which do not meet the wording of this expectation. It is **recommended** that the Conservatoire ensure the availability to all students of a student charter or equivalent document covering the full range of higher education provision available.

3 Public information

Outcomes

Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance **makes information about academic standards and quality publicly available** via its website. The information is clear, accessible, accurate, and up to date. Students find the information useful both in helping them make an informed choice when applying to the Conservatoire, and in preparing for what they might expect when they join. The review team's reasons for this conclusion are given below.

Findings

3.1 External examiners' reports are shared with student representatives by programme teams and through committee membership. The students who met the review team confirmed that the information the Conservatoire publishes, both prior to their decision to apply and after, is reliable, accessible and useful.

3.2 In collaborative provision it is the responsibility of liaison officers to check the public information on partner websites. While the review team detected minor errors on the one partner website currently operational, these were not serious enough to mislead.

4 Enhancement of learning opportunities

Outcome

The enhancement of learning opportunities at Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance **requires further improvement to meet UK expectations**. The review team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

Findings

4.1 While the Conservatoire is committed to strengthening the quality of its provision and has sought to embed enhancement into its planning cycle as set out in its Strategic Plan, the process of doing so is incomplete, and current enhancement activities are better described as a range of discrete initiatives than as systematically linked to institutional priorities.

4.2 The Conservatoire aims to focus enhancement around three cross-cutting themes: Collaboration and Partnership, Internationalisation, and Digital Futures. Teaching staff were not directly involved in selecting the themes but are critical to their development and implementation. The process is not, however, fully systematised. While the Digital Futures Steering Group has met regularly, its Internationalisation counterpart has not; the themes are not mentioned in the revised departmental review methodology; and it is unclear how good practice in respect of them would be systematically identified and disseminated.

4.3 Notwithstanding the clear priorities set out in the Strategic Plan, the Conservatoire's current approach to quality enhancement cannot be described as strategic. The review team was unable to find evidence of deliberate, systematic and planned approaches having been built into quality assurance procedures and institutional structures in such a way as to ensure that examples of good practice are identified and disseminated. Instances of enhancement activity which were found were frequently innovative and intrinsically valuable, but were by no means necessarily related to the cross-cutting themes, often occurring independently of them and at programme level.

4.4 A number of initiatives, including CoLab (a student-led period of study currently available to all Music students) are currently or potentially enhancing students' learning opportunities. While CoLab does relate to the cross-cutting enhancement themes, students reported that its cross-faculty potential is yet to be fulfilled. Nevertheless, noting also the integrative promise of both the proposed Master of Fine Arts degree and a major assessment review currently in progress, the review team **affirms the action** being taken by the Conservatoire to explore ways of facilitating the integration of students from both faculties, and of ensuring equity of experience through the proposed Master of Fine Arts, the Review of Assessment and CoLab.

4.5 Overall, while some enhancement activities are having a positive effect on student learning opportunities, the sum of institutional activity is not driven by systems linked to the priorities contained within the Strategic Plan. It is **recommended** that the Conservatoire develop systematic mechanisms to ensure the delivery of its cross-cutting enhancement themes.

5 Theme: First Year Student Experience

Each academic year a specific theme relating to higher education provision in England and Northern Ireland is chosen for particular attention by QAA's Institutional Review teams. In 2011-12 the theme is the **First Year Student Experience**.

The review team found that Trinity Laban Conservatoire of Music and Dance manages the first year student experience carefully and effectively.

Supporting students' transition

5.1 The Conservatoire makes extensive information available to potential candidates, explaining in profession-specific terms its particular expectations and the skill and attributes required to meet them. This information was found to be appropriate and helpful. Selection involves a rigorous audition designed to assess both achievement and potential; individualised feedback on candidates' performance is provided on request.

5.1.1 A comprehensive pre-registration pack is provided following selection. Pre-enrolment information is sent out to prospective students. A dedicated webpage with a range of useful information is available in both faculties, and a helpful welcome letter is sent.

5.1.2 Induction aims to ensure new students have the necessary information and are prepared academically, professionally and socially for their degree. The differences in arrangements between the two faculties appropriately reflect the differences between the two professions involved. Both faculties properly place particular emphasis on health and safety. In Dance, a diagnostic essay aims to identify students in need of additional learning support; small class sizes similarly help this process.

5.1.3 The Student Services Handbook, available on the virtual learning environment, provides contact details and comprehensive guidance. While the use of the virtual learning environment was found to be variable across the institution, first-year students appeared equipped to make positive use of it.

5.1.4 Timetables are not always available on arrival. This has had a negative effect on first-year student choice as well as other students, and has led to disappointment. It is **recommended** that the Conservatoire address this problem (see also paragraph 2.2.3).

5.1.5 Assessment and feedback are individualised, and designed from the first to introduce students to the professional expectations to which they will potentially be subject. Performance and academic expectations are clearly expressed and explained from the first.

5.1.6 Annual programme evaluation includes analysis of progression data provided by the Registry. The Conservatoire regards interim assessment boards as especially helpful in identifying at an early stage any first-year students exhibiting academic or professional vulnerability, for whom additional support would be appropriate.

5.1.7 Individual tutoring arrangements (the details vary by faculty) ensure a point of contact for all students. In both faculties attendance is carefully monitored. Students in the Faculty of Music are subject to a Performance Code of Conduct and academic protocols, while those in the Faculty of Dance are subject to a Professional Conduct Regulation.

5.1.8 While withdrawals are rare, it is confirmed that procedures are in place for handling those that do occur.

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.

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