



National Film and Television School

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

June 2012

Key findings about National Film and Television School

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in June 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 Royal College of Art.

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

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

Good practice

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

- providing a collaborative preparation for the workplace through industry involvement (paragraph 2.3)
- providing industry-led feedback to students (paragraph 2.5)
- the development of a significant scholarship fund for nurturing talent and widening participation (paragraph 2.7)
- a detailed admissions and extended induction process (paragraphs 2.7 and 2.8)
- wide and easily available access to specialised resources (paragraph 2.12).

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 assessment processes for its diploma courses, similar to those employed on the master's programme (paragraph 1.8).

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

- undertake a review of assessment procedures so that there is consistent verification (paragraph 1.7)
- develop a teaching and learning strategy (paragraph 2.4)
- further implement staff development to reflect the pedagogic needs of academic staff (paragraph 2.10).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at the National Film and Television School (the provider; the School). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of the Royal College of Art. The review was carried out by Christopher Davies, Ahmed Junaid, Heather Miller (reviewers), and Brenda Hodgkinson (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 a self-evaluation document, a student submission, validation and review documents with the provider's awarding body, meetings with staff and students, British Accreditation Council reports and response, Sector Skills Council reports, minutes and records from the School's quality assurance processes, student work and programme documentation.

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

- Sector Skills Council Report 9 March 2012
- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of Practice*).

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

The National Film and Television School (the School) was established in 1971 by the UK government and the film industry. Since 2000, the School has offered a two-year MA programme in Film and Television validated through the Royal College of Art. Within this programme it offers a range of 14 specialisations and, in addition, delivers its own three specialised diploma courses that are industry-focused. The School is situated on one site at Beaconsfield Studios, Station Road, Beaconsfield, Buckinghamshire. At the time of the review, there were 196 full-time students from the EU, including the UK, and 17 full-time students from overseas studying for an award. In addition, over 700 students attend short courses during the year, which typically run for two to five days.

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

Royal College of Art
MA Film and Television

Internal National Film and Television School:
Diploma in Production Management for Film
Diploma in Production Management for Television
Diploma in Sound Recording for Film and Television

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

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

The provider's stated responsibilities

The School works closely with its awarding body, the Royal College of Art. It considers that both institutions have a similar ethos and international status. Accordingly, although the awarding body has overall responsibility for academic standards, the School developed its own MA programme using its own expertise. It takes responsibility for all curriculum development, admissions, assessments and quality assurance mechanisms.

The diploma courses are internal School awards and are industry-focused. The School has developed these using a similar format to the master's programmes and undertakes all responsibilities for the quality and standards of the diplomas.

Recent developments

The School has recently opened a new building to accommodate a rise in student numbers. There has been some development of the curriculum to include 3D working practices and the launch of a new Games design and development specialism within the MA programme. A new curriculum management structure has been established to implement further partnership development and enhance curriculum planning. A recent appointment to the post of Director of Curriculum and Registrar has led to a realignment of some responsibilities.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the School were invited to present a submission to the review team. The Director of Curriculum and Registrar had met with the students to outline the REO process and what was expected in the student submission. One student prepared a submission after 120 students who had studied at the School in the last two years submitted written feedback. This feedback included issues ranging from opinions on curriculum operation, tuition, specific projects/modules, assessments, facilities, technical and administrative support. The review coordinator met one student at the preparatory meeting and the team met a number of students at the visit. At both meetings the team was able to fully discuss the student views and their experience at the School.

Detailed findings about National Film and Television School

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The Royal College of Art (the College) validates the master's programme and approves and maintains oversight through regular audits and consideration of the School's annual synoptic report. The School designs and delivers the programme and assesses students, while the College appoints external examiners. The awarding body also appoints an internal moderator whose role is to ensure that there are appropriate mechanisms in place for the objective and impartial assessment of student work. The awarding body carries out interim reviews and the School was successfully revalidated in 2009. All conditions set at that revalidation have been met.

1.2 The School has a clear management structure headed by the Director of the School assisted by a senior management team. There is a Head of Full-time Curriculum and a Head of Department for each specialism within the master's programme. The Director of Curriculum and Registrar chairs the Academic Standards Committee (ASC), which effectively manages academic standards through an annual course evaluation process. ASC receives and considers course reports from individual specialisms, external examiners and external assessors' reports. As a consequence of the breadth of the provision, there is a rolling process of meetings so that individual specialisms can be given detailed consideration. The overall procedure leads to narrative action points for implementation.

1.3 Unlike the master's programme the diploma courses are not validated by the College. When developed, they were benchmarked against the FHEQ for level 7: Master's degree descriptors. The subject matter combines technical and theoretical study with production and is strongly practice-oriented. The Industry Advisory Boards (see paragraph 1.5) provide a relevant oversight of these courses.

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

1.4 The School largely relies on the College to ensure that the master's programme is aligned with the FHEQ and the *Code of practice*. During the validation process, reference is made to the appropriate section of the *Code of practice*. The College is currently reviewing all its own programme specifications to make links to the Academic Infrastructure more explicit and the School will participate in this review so that the learning outcomes and assessment criteria already in place are more accessible to all stakeholders.

1.5 The Sector Skills Council has designated the School as a Skillset Film and Media Academy. This accreditation confirms that there are strong links with industry and that the links are effective in informing standards and ensuring the currency of the curriculum. All the School's courses have been accredited by Skillset for both Screen and Media Academy status and in addition two specialisms within the master's programme, Screenwriting and Directing Animation, are additionally accredited under the Skillset course-specific accreditation scheme that only considers certain subject areas. In addition, the School convenes Industry Advisory Boards whose members have prestigious standing in the industry for each of the specialisms in the master's programme and for the diploma courses.

These boards provide a further reference point to ensure that the curriculum is current and that students are meeting the expectations of the industry.

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

1.6 The external examiner process for the master's programme is effective and external examiners report standards and student achievement as being outstanding. The School follows the same procedures as the awarding body and operates within its regulations. The nature of student work means that the final examination is a cumulative piece presented to senior School staff. Recommendations are then made to the Graduation Board, membership of which includes senior School staff, external examiners and the awarding body internal moderator. The Board considers the recommendations and ensures that the results for each student are consistent with their overall performance and in accordance with the assessment scheme.

1.7 Dissertations are internally double marked and then the external examiner verifies an appropriate sample. This process of written double marking was not clearly evidenced across other assessments, although students participate in a large number of formal face-to-face project reviews. In addition, external assessors annually review student work and are effective in providing an industry perspective of the standards achieved by individual students. The review team considers it desirable for the School to undertake a review of assessment procedures so that there is consistent evidence of verification across the assessment regime.

1.8 The procedure for the School's diplomas is not the same as for the master's programme. There is currently no external examiner in place or a formal examination board. The Director of Curriculum and Registrar manages the processes for assessment in conjunction with the relevant Head of Department. Like the master's programme, senior School staff and specialist tutors review student work internally. There is external oversight through the external assessors who review and give feedback on both individual students and the courses. The team reviewed student work and was able to conclude that external assessors were providing clear verification of standards. However, this procedure is currently under review and the review team considers it advisable for the School to implement assessment processes for its diploma courses, similar to those employed on the master's programme.

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 body.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 The Director of the School delegates to the Director of Curriculum and Registrar responsibility for the management and quality of learning opportunities. The master's level programme is reviewed through an annual course evaluation process, which is understood by staff and well informed by a wide range of sources, including students, industry, external assessors and examiners. Individual specialisms produce a robust review of the previous academic year, which is considered by the ASC and summarised into a School Report for discussion with the awarding body. The diploma programmes have a separate, more

informal, review process. Action plans for the forthcoming year are produced for both programmes. Although target setting, reporting and monitoring of action plans could be clearer and more systematic, individual course teams do follow them through.

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

2.2 Reference to the Academic Infrastructure is not always systematic; however, through the College procedures reference is made to it where appropriate. The FHEQ informed the validation of the master's provision and is adequately reflected in handbooks and the recent validation of the Games specialism. The *Code of practice, Section 3: Disabled students* and *Section 4: External examining* guided responses to issues in student pastoral care and the provision of external examiners. Engagement with the Academic Infrastructure is also demonstrated in the current review of programme specifications noted in paragraph 1.4.

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

2.3 Students value the collaborative approach to teaching and learning with its strong focus on current industry practice. Students work in groups linking different specialisms and this provides a student learning experience that effectively meets individual needs, through highly personalised work schedules and programme assessments. It is proactively managed by heads of department, who routinely use their extensive links with industry to provide placements, mentoring, guest speakers and visit opportunities of the highest quality. The review team considers this collaborative preparation for the workplace and the tailored student experience to be good practice.

2.4 The School appoints teaching staff with significant industry experience, who use seminars and workshops to integrate theory and practice. A large team of part-time visiting tutors is recruited to assist heads of department with providing the specialist skills necessary to deliver individual disciplines. There is an informal mentoring process of new staff by experienced staff. The opportunity to promote and provide a professional and shared framework for didactic review is limited by the fact that the School does not have a teaching and learning strategy. The review team considers it desirable that a teaching and learning strategy is developed.

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

2.5 The School encourages students to develop creative and industrial skills by providing a supportive learning environment. The students confirmed that academic, pastoral and learning support strategies give them the confidence to experiment with new and challenging ideas. The small size of the School enables close professional relationships to grow between staff and students. The high staff to student ratio and generous student contact time aids this process. Students benefit from the appointment of external assessors to provide an industrial perspective on coursework. This industry-led feedback is an extremely valuable support mechanism for students and the team considers it good practice.

2.6 Pastoral support is comprehensive and has been systematically developed since 2009, following the revalidation of the master's programme by the College. The student information handbook specifies support available and students are confident in the ability of the School to respond to their needs.

2.7 The School's admissions processes are robust and detailed. They ensure that students are recruited on merit, with relevant practical skills and qualifications. The School

makes considerable investment in the process. A panel of specialist tutors and industry experts considers applications. Candidates are evaluated against carefully defined criteria, using portfolios, interviews and extended selection workshops. The Assessment and Concessions Committee, in consultation with the College, considers the merits of non-standard entries. The progress of non-standard entrants is monitored and success rates from this group equal those of traditional entrants. The School has developed a significant scholarship fund that effectively supports its strategy of nurturing talent and widens participation by lessening student financial concerns, and the team considers this to be good practice.

2.8 The extended induction process effectively supports new students. Discipline-specific foundation workshops provide up to a month of pre-course immersion. This is followed by an interdisciplinary induction that introduces students to the programme ethos of collaborative study. Activities are varied and meticulously planned, and include visits and talks from industry leaders. The team considers the School's admissions and extended induction processes to be good practice.

2.9 The School seeks regular formal feedback from students through a variety of means, including active participation in Governor and Industry Advisory Board meetings. There is constant informal dialogue between staff and students. The views of students represented in annual course evaluations and curriculum planning have led to significant programme changes. The students feel that their views are valued and that the School is flexible and swift to respond to issues of concern.

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

2.10 The School has a staff development policy in place that is focused on non-teaching staff. The Director of the School has the overall responsibility for the appraisal of staff although he delegates the operation of appraisals to individual line managers. No formal appraisals of academic staff are undertaken. The development needs of academic staff are identified through various channels, initially in the probation period, then by self-identification of needs or where there are changes in equipment and/or technology. Heads of department are responsible for raising staff development requirements within their departments. The annual course evaluation report is also an indicator for staff development needs of academic staff. There is no observation of teaching scheme in place or a minimum academic level of qualification to teach on a master's level programme. The review team considers it desirable that the School implements further staff development to reflect the pedagogic needs of academic staff.

2.11 As noted in paragraph 2.4, the School has a large number of part-time visiting tutors. They generally come from industry and have relevant experience within their specialism. Tutors continuing to work in their area of expertise ensure their continued professional development. The visiting tutors are provided with a detailed visiting tutor guide. This guide provides them with all vital information about the School and other health and safety related areas.

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

2.12 The School delivers courses that have high resource needs in terms of equipment. It invests heavily in the equipment that supports and enhances the quality of learning opportunities. Courses are designed in a way that provides hands-on learning for the students. The Head of Engineering and the Director of Curriculum and Registrar have overall

responsibility for identifying the need for new equipment and replacing and upgrading current equipment. They discuss the allocation of budgets and future expenses with the heads of department so as to prioritise allocation of the equipment budget. Heads of department are also given a departmental budget for particular specialist needs, such as facilitating external trips for the students to support and enhance learning. The team found that the level of student support and access to resources is outstanding and its impact on learning opportunities was good practice.

2.13 The School has a well stocked library with over 9,000 items, from which over 400 items per week are regularly out on loan. Students also have lending rights at the awarding body's library. Although it does not currently have a virtual learning environment, the School is in talks with its awarding body to acquire access to its virtual learning environment and an extended library 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 School publishes a comprehensive set of student packs, course handbooks, student information handbooks, a prospectus and a visiting tutors' guide. The School website is a key medium of communication. Students reported that they found the website informative and that it contained all the pre-entry information they required. Diploma students specifically reported that they were clear about the standing of their course and the way in which it differed from the master's programme. The validation agreement with the College provides for the use of its seal on all certificates awarded on the master's programme and the use of the School's logo on all publicity material.

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

3.2 There is a clear and coherent system for the management of public information. The limited extent of the higher education provision at the School means that the system is somewhat informal. The School does, however, seek to operate within the College's publication policy and, as set out in the validation agreement, all documentation is lodged with the College annually. The Director of Curriculum and Registrar has overall responsibility for the provision of public information and, together with the Assistant Registrar, effectively acts as a publication steering group. Between July and September, discussions take place with heads of department regarding the updating of information to be published. The Assistant Registrar checks for accuracy and the Director of Curriculum and Registrar signs this off. The Assistant Registrar arranges for the information to go live. The process appeared to work satisfactorily and information is current and accurate.

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

National Film and Television School action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight June 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> providing a collaborative preparation for the workplace through industry involvement (paragraph 2.3) 	<p>Ensure currency of Industry Advisory Board memberships is reviewed and maintained annually</p> <p>Write synoptic report reviewing discussion/outcomes of all advisory board meetings</p>	<p>March 2013</p> <p>June 2013</p>	<p>Director of Curriculum and Registrar</p> <p>Director of Curriculum and Registrar</p>	<p>Enhanced engagement with advisory boards</p> <p>A synoptic report which can be discussed and used to monitor effectiveness of advisory boards</p>	<p>Director</p> <p>Academic Standards Committee</p>	<p>Annual course evaluations; Feedback from employers/Creative Skillset and student feedback</p> <p>Synoptic annual course evaluation report for the Royal College of Art</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> providing industry-led feedback to students (paragraph 2.5) 	<p>Introduce a template feedback form for all external assessors to complete</p>	<p>February 2013</p>	<p>Director of Curriculum and Registrar</p>	<p>More consistent qualitative feedback</p>	<p>Academic Standards Committee</p>	<p>Annual course evaluations and external examiner feedback</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the development of a significant scholarship fund for 	<p>Work to increase total funds available for scholarship funding</p>	<p>October 2013</p>	<p>Director of Curriculum and Registrar/Head</p>	<p>More available funds</p>	<p>Management</p>	<p>Feedback from Scholarship Panel and feedback from</p>

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 body.

nurturing talent and widening participation (paragraph 2.7)	Monitor decliners survey to assess whether funding is increasing as a barrier to entry	December 2013	of Fundraising Assistant Registrar	Decliners survey shows no increase in the number of students declining a place at the School due to funding	Director of Curriculum and Registrar and Management	applicants Comparable data from previous years Applicant feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a detailed admissions and extended induction process (paragraphs 2.7 and 2.8) 	Add multi-disciplinary working into the induction programme for foundation courses (for example Cinematography working with Fiction)	December 2013	Head of Full-time Curriculum	New workshop elements introduced	Academic Standards Committee	Student feedback on foundation courses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> wide and easily available access to specialised resources (paragraph 2.12). 	Formalise policy and criteria for technological development and priorities of the school	April 2013	Head of Engineering/ Director of Curriculum and Registrar	Clear road map for purchasing decisions going forward and buy-in from heads of department	Management/ heads of department	Feedback from heads of department on the plan
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"> implement assessment processes for its diploma courses, similar to those employed on the master's programme 	<p>Appoint external assessors for diploma courses</p> <p>Introduce annual course evaluation process for diplomas</p>	<p>December 2012</p> <p>February 2013</p>	<p>Director of Curriculum and Registrar</p> <p>Director of Curriculum and Registrar</p>	<p>Greater external oversight of diplomas</p> <p>Enhanced monitoring of diplomas and</p>	<p>Academic Standards Committee</p> <p>Academic Standards Committee</p>	<p>External examiner feedback</p> <p>Academic Standards Committee review</p>

(paragraph 1.8).	Investigate validation of diplomas with the Royal College of Art	January 2013	Director of Curriculum and Registrar	clearer action planning Road map for validating diplomas is outlined	Management	effectiveness of process after first cycle Management review process for validation and develop action plan
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"> undertake a review of assessment procedures so that there is consistent verification (paragraph 1.7) 	<p>Publish a list of assessed modules and ensure each module has a clear assignment brief and assessment criteria</p> <p>Clarify approach to assessment information in course handbooks</p> <p>Students will consistently receive module feedback with one month of the module concluding through a standardised</p>	<p>January 2013</p> <p>January 2013</p> <p>December 2013</p>	<p>Head of Full-time Curriculum</p> <p>Director of Curriculum and Registrar/Head of Full-time Curriculum</p> <p>Director of Curriculum and Registrar/Head of Full-time Curriculum</p>	<p>A consistent approach to assessment is evident</p> <p>A consistent approach to assessment is evident</p> <p>A consistent approach to assessment is evident</p>	<p>Academic Standards Committee</p> <p>Academic Standards Committee</p> <p>Academic Standards Committee</p>	<p>Director of Curriculum and Registrar will audit a number of modules to ensure the new practices have been implemented</p> <p>Student feedback at six month progress review and end-of-year feedback</p> <p>Student feedback at six month progress review and end of year feedback</p>

	feedback pro forma					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a teaching and learning strategy (paragraph 2.4) 	Write and publish a teaching and learning strategy	January 2013	Director of Curriculum and Registrar	Shared ambition for the developing of teaching and learning at the School	Academic Standards Committee/ heads of department meetings	Annual course evaluation process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> further implement staff development to reflect the pedagogic needs of academic staff (paragraph 2.11). 	Run a series of teaching and learning seminars for heads of department and tutors on issues including assessment, feedback and dealing with difficult students	June 2013	Director of Curriculum and Registrar	Attendance at sessions and emerging evidence of enhanced teaching and learning practices	Academic Standards Committee	Heads of department and tutor feedback

About QAA

QAA is the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. QAA's mission is to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education.

QAA's aims are to:

- meet students' needs and be valued by them
- safeguard standards in an increasingly diverse UK and international context
- drive improvements in UK higher education
- improve public understanding of higher education standards and quality.

QAA conducts reviews of higher education institutions and publishes reports on the findings. QAA also publishes a range of guidance documents to help safeguard standards and improve quality.

More information about the work of QAA is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk.

More detail about Review for Educational Oversight can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/tier-4.

Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary. Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#)⁴

Academic Infrastructure Guidance developed and agreed by the higher education community and published by QAA, which is used by institutions to ensure that their courses meet national expectations for academic standards and that students have access to a suitable environment for learning (academic quality). It consists of four groups of reference points: the **frameworks for higher education qualifications**, the **subject benchmark statements**, the **programme specifications** and the **Code of practice**. Work is underway (2011-12) to revise the Academic Infrastructure as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

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

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

awarding body A body with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the **framework for higher education qualifications**, such as diplomas or degrees.

awarding organisation An organisation with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the Qualifications and Credit Framework for England and Northern Ireland (these qualifications are at levels 1 to 8, with levels 4 and above being classed as 'higher education').

Code of practice *The Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, published by QAA: a set of interrelated documents giving guidance for higher education institutions.

designated body An organisation that has been formally appointed to perform a particular function.

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

enhancement Taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of **learning opportunities**. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

feature of good practice A positive aspect of the way a higher education institution manages quality and standards, which may be seen as exemplary to others.

framework A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

framework for higher education qualifications A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks:

⁴ www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx.

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

highly trusted sponsor An education provider that the UK government trusts to admit migrant students from overseas, according to Tier 4 of the UK Border Agency's points-based immigration system. Higher education providers wishing to obtain this status must undergo a successful review by QAA.

learning opportunities The provision made for students' learning, including planned **programmes of study**, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios) and staff development.

learning outcome What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

operational definition A formal definition of a term, which establishes exactly what QAA means when using it in reports.

programme (of study) An approved course of study which provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

programme specifications Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of **programmes of study**, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

provider An institution that offers courses of higher education, typically on behalf of a separate **awarding body or organisation**. In the context of REO, the term means an independent college.

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

reference points Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured. Internal reference points may be used by providers for purposes of self-regulation; external ones are used and accepted throughout the higher education community for the checking of standards and quality.

quality See **academic quality**.

subject benchmark statement A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

threshold academic standard The minimum standard that a student should reach in order to gain a particular qualification or award, as set out in the **subject benchmark statements** and national qualifications frameworks. Threshold standards are distinct from the standards of performance that students need to achieve in order to gain any particular class of award, for example a first-class bachelor's degree. See also **academic standard**.

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

RG 1022 09/12

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