



Chaucer College Canterbury

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

March 2012

Key findings about Chaucer College Canterbury

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 University of Kent.

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**:

- the effective academic and pastoral support (paragraph 2.7)
- the innovative approach to language support facilitated by the employment of residential conversation tutors (paragraph 2.8).

Recommendations

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

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

- support staff to engage with the Academic Infrastructure and relevant external reference points to inform teaching (paragraphs 1.5, 2.3)
- improve assessment feedback to more clearly reflect intended learning outcomes, grade descriptors and marking criteria (paragraph 1.6)
- consider the process for sharing external examiners and marking moderators reports with the University to more fully support effective oversight of assessment (paragraph 1.8)
- formalise a framework for staff development that captures the needs of both the individual and the College (paragraph 2.10)
- make the pre-enrolment oral guidance on pedagogic and cultural differences between the UK and Japan available on the College website (paragraph 3.2).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Chaucer College Canterbury (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 one programme of study that the provider delivers on behalf of the University of Kent. The review was carried out by Mr Benjamin Calvert, Mr Chris Maguire, Mr Brian Whitehead (reviewers) and Ms AnnMarie Colbert (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 the University of Kent, reports provided by the British Accreditation Council for Further and Higher Education, and meetings with staff and students.

The review team also considered the providers use of the relevant external reference points:

- the Academic Infrastructure
- the Qualifications and Credit Framework
- the regulations of its awarding body.

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

Chaucer College Canterbury (the College) was established in October 1992 by the Shumei Foundation with the support of the University of Kent. The residential, self-contained College is located on the University of Kent Canterbury campus. A total of 182 full-time international students are enrolled at the College on University of Kent and Shumei University programmes. Of these, 178 students are enrolled on short Shumei University programmes at level 3, and 4 are enrolled on the single higher education programme validated by the University of Kent.

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

University of Kent

- Certificate in Social Sciences and Humanities

The providers stated responsibilities

Responsibility for programme delivery is shared between the College and the University of Kent. The College has responsibility for delivery of a small proportion of the programme and shares responsibility for the academic standards and quality with the University of Kent. The College has limited responsibility for recruitment. Shumei University acts on behalf of the College to admit students.

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

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

Recent developments

The College plans to recruit the first cohort to the new Foundation and Certificate Programme in Social Sciences in September 2012. Validated by the University of Kent in June 2011, this will replace the Colleges established foundation and certificate programmes originally validated by the University of Kent in 1994. The programme is designed to prepare Japanese students for the second year of degree study in the UK by giving them an opportunity to develop their linguistic, academic and cultural skills.

Students contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the review team. The student submission was a short video coordinated by one student, which featured a short presentation by each of the four students. It proved useful to the review team. The students also met the coordinator in a helpful preparatory meeting. During the review visit, current students were accompanied by three students from the previous cohort and three students enrolled on a short Shumei University programme. This resulted in a very productive meeting.

Detailed findings about Chaucer College Canterbury

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 Overall management of the provision is sound and standards are effectively assured. The working relationship between the College and the University of Kent is productive in ensuring academic standards are maintained. There are appropriate structures for the management and administration of academic programmes, and provision of support to students. Delivery, curriculum development, and oversight of quality and standards are jointly managed. Alignment of policies and processes, such as student complaints and appeals and resit policies, is appropriate.

1.2 College staff work together effectively to manage academic standards. Programmes are overseen by the Director of Academic Programmes who reports directly to the Vice Chancellor. Both work together to administrate the provision. Governance resides with two boards of governors. The Vice Chancellor is also involved operationally undertaking observation of teaching for College seminar tutors. In a small College this is feasible and ensures that management has a regular insight into the delivery and quality of programmes.

1.3 An effective, formal Board of Studies is attended by a student representative to ensure that the student voice is heard. Management of student matters operates well through day-to-day interactions facilitated by the small size of the College. As a result, the support environment is strong, with good contact between tutors and students, and a supportive management culture.

1.4 Reporting on academic standards operates well within the established frameworks of the University of Kent. Annual monitoring is sound and reflective, although more specific targeted action plans arising from external examiners reports would be useful (see paragraph 1.7). Periodic review is robust and reflective, and the College responds proactively to matters raised.

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

1.5 Engagement with external reference points is clear in programme specifications. However, more could be done to develop the awareness of College staff on the Academic Infrastructure, particularly for the College staff teaching at level 4. Programme specifications are approved in validation by the University of Kent and are written to standard templates that cross-reference the Academic Infrastructure and relevant subject benchmark statements. Levels align with *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and are adequately reflected in published module guides through appropriate learning outcomes.

1.6 Assessment feedback does not always clearly reflect achievement against intended learning outcomes and the College should consider ways to assure this. Assessment criteria are not contextualised to the specific challenges of individual assessments. Doing so would enhance clarity for students. That said, students are aware of what is expected of them and are assisted in this by one-to-one tutorial support. Students regard the published generic grade criteria useful and consider feedback helpful and developmental.

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

1.7 External moderation and verification of awards is effective. Responsibilities for curriculum development, setting assignments, marking and moderation are shared. The University of Kent oversees academic quality, approving module specifications and assessments, together with monitoring and review of provision. Ownership of modules is shared. One module is delivered by the College and other modules by University of Kent staff. College students are integrated with University of Kent students when attending modules. This integration results in some aspects of the provision being considered by two separate boards. University of Kent examination boards consider the work of the University of Kent students and the College examination boards consider that of the College students.

1.8 Matters raised by College external examiners and through moderation of marking are not always fully shared. One example of this is the external examiners comment about a sociology exam paper and its approval process. To enable effective oversight and continual improvement, the College should routinely appraise the University of Kent of matters emerging from the reports of College examiners and College moderation processes. College and University of Kent membership of boards in respect of College students attending University of Kent modules allows for joint discussion of teaching practice and the curriculum. This external examiners recommendation was welcomed and is introduced as standard practice.

1.9 Processes for gathering and monitoring student feedback are appropriate at module and programme level. Student feedback informs annual monitoring reports and College reflection is sound, with evaluation of the effectiveness of the programmes, their management, and the assurance of standards. There is also a formal process of student representation, with a representative elected to the Board of Studies. Although it is recognised that instituting a formal representative system is rather challenging given the small size of cohorts, this is welcomed by students.

1.10 There is some sharing of practice between the College and the University of Kent. This includes a standing item on College issues at the University of Kent Learning and Teaching Committee of the Department of Politics. This is attended by the College Programme Coordinator and is regarded by staff as a mutually beneficial form of developmental engagement.

The review team has **confidence** in the providers 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 arrangements described in paragraph 1.1 support the delivery of learning opportunities.

2.2 The provision is well coordinated and provides an effective programme within the agreements with the University of Kent. Responsibility for the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities is shared. The University of Kent quality assurance procedures are applied with College quality assurance of the management and

enhancement of the programmes. Much of the teaching is provided by staff from the University of Kent, with College staff providing extra tutorials and English language support.

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

College staff are not conversant with the Academic Infrastructure and are unable to exemplify how the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* contributes to the teaching and learning experience of the students. The College is supported by the University of Kent to ensure provision aligns with the Academic Infrastructure. Formal and explicit use of the Academic Infrastructure will enhance the means by which the College manages its oversight of the quality of learning opportunities.

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

2.3 The teaching and learning experiences of students are effectively managed. Sheltered subject teaching and English for Academic Purposes is provided by those with appropriate subject specialisms and qualifications. Teaching and learning strategies are aligned with the specialist focus of the programme and are therefore not completely consistent with the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy of the University of Kent. The teaching and learning strategies are effective in supporting the students.

2.4 Observation of teaching and learning is operated efficiently and consistently with formal and relevant feedback. However, observation feedback is not related to the University of Kent Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. Newly introduced peer observation is rotated annually, with management-led teaching observation undertaken by the Vice Chancellor or the Director of Academic Programmes. Management observations, together with peer review and additional feedback from students, support the College in assuring itself of the quality of provision. Additional oversight is provided through the University of Kent periodic review and the British Accreditation Council reports which are considered by the Vice Chancellor and Director of Academic Programmes.

2.5 Arrangements for formal end-of-module and programme questionnaires with reporting to the Board of Studies are clear. Student satisfaction is high, with students commenting favourably about their teaching and learning experiences. The Colleges provision, being very small, supports very good relationships between staff and students. Informal opportunities to receive student opinion are well used by both staff and students. Further formal feedback comes from an elected student representative.

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

2.6 The academic, pastoral and learning support policies and processes are robust and effective in offering the students a relevant, rewarding and worthwhile developmental experience. The structure of the programme, with sheltered subject teaching and English for Academic Purposes, provides the students with an incremental progression of academic and language skills delivered by specialist staff. This is effective in helping students adapt to the culturally differing approaches to learning.

2.7 The College offers a high level of academic and pastoral support. The employment of residential conversation tutors to support the language development of students and provide additional social contact is particularly innovative. Students benefit from weekly one-to-one academic progress tutorials. Tutors support students through early assignments, carefully explaining expectations and procedures, for example those related to plagiarism.

A seminar tutor gives individual tutorials to help students overcome any language difficulties. Students are also supported to understand their assessment feedback by the seminar tutor and their language tutors.

2.8 The College seeks regular formal feedback on the effectiveness of its support mechanisms. There is constant dialogue between students and staff. Students consider teaching staff very supportive and value the ways in which they are supported. They are aware of the developmental process from the very full support provided initially to more independent learning. They confirmed that their views are heard and that matters they raise are acted upon immediately. Some students commented that they would like more interaction with University of Kent students. The team is aware that the College has made, and continues to make, efforts to help its students integrate more while appreciating the possible language barriers.

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

2.9 The processes for staff development are partially effective. Development requests from individual staff are well supported, as are development needs identified as a result of appraisal. However, the identification of development needs does not systematically relate to the broader requirements of the College. A more proactive identification of staff development needs would be beneficial, for example enabling staff to develop a working knowledge of the Academic Infrastructure or matching assessment feedback to learning outcomes. Staff are released or funded to attend internal training, external events or programmes leading to higher qualifications, and this is monitored and recorded. Good practice is usually disseminated informally as the College has a small number of staff. The recently introduced peer observation also provides an opportunity for staff to share good practice.

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

2.10 Excellent and readily accessible learning resources are provided for students. The well appointed, purpose-built residential College in the University of Kent's grounds contains a lecture theatre and classrooms equipped with multimedia technology and interactive whiteboards. The well stocked College library affords students access to the internet, photocopying, past examination papers, course outlines, and journals. Students also benefit from access to University of Kent services, including computing, student union, medical centre, learning resource centre, counselling service, disability support, and the library.

2.11 Appropriate arrangements for determining and evaluating resource sufficiency and accessibility are in place. Resources are initially determined during validation and subsequently through formal evaluative processes. The College has guaranteed all resources required by the new programme will be purchased and made available. Resources are routinely reviewed through evaluations, periodic review, and with reference to informal student feedback. Students were very appreciative of the resources available to them.

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 providers public information communicate to students and other stakeholders about the higher education it provides?

3.1 The College provides an appropriate range of academic, cultural and social information in a publicly accessible form via its website, printed brochures and handbooks. This is supplemented by personal guidance provided directly to potential applicants by College and Shumei University staff. Shumei University acts on behalf of the College to admit students. Students valued the presentations and one-to-one guidance that Shumei University and the College offered because, in particular, it prepared them for the different cultural behaviours and pedagogical methods that they would experience in the UK. Students reported that the opportunity to study at the College was among the attractions of enrolling at Shumei University. The Shumei University website provides links to the Colleges website, to which potential applicants are referred.

3.2 The Colleges website provides an appropriate breadth and depth of information. This includes description of the physical, social and cultural environment of the College, the programmes available and the student experience. The College website does not carry the programme handbooks or programme specifications. Although these are available on the University of Kent website, they are not easy to locate for a prospective applicant. The College could explore ways to enable prospective students to easily locate and access the contents of the handbook. The team also recommends that the valuable oral advice and guidance about the cultural and pedagogic challenges of studying in the UK provided by Shumei University and the College is made available on the College's website.

3.3 The content and presentation of information in the current Foundation and Certificate Programme handbooks are inconsistent and lack coverage. In contrast, the new handbook for the programme planned to start in September 2012 is detailed and thorough. However, its presentation and style may be challenging for students. The College is invited to review it so that it is more accessible and includes an introductory section on the expectations and obligations of both students and the College.

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

3.4 The College has appropriate mechanisms for assuring the accuracy and completeness of the information which it has responsibility for publishing in relation to its current provision. With effect from the 2012-13 academic year, the College and the University of Kent have jointly agreed on new requirements to safeguard the accuracy and completeness of public information with regard to the Foundation and Certificate Programme, which are more rigorous than those currently in place.

3.5 At present, the College exercises appropriate oversight and approval of public information. It reviews and approves public information through an executive group which meets at least four times each year. The group comprises the Vice Chancellor, the Director of Academic Programmes, the Dean of Students, the Academic Website Coordinator and the Systems and IT officers. A key safeguard in assuring the quality and completeness of public information is that the final version must be approved by the Vice Chancellor before it is published. Such information is published in English and Japanese, and the Dean of Students, together with another member of staff fluent in Japanese, takes responsibility for ensuring the material is accurately translated. This material is then checked with Shumei University to ensure accuracy and conformance to cultural expectations.

3.6 With effect from the introduction of the new Foundation and Certificate Programme in 2012, all public information relating to it must be agreed and approved in writing by both the College and the University of Kent. The future division of responsibility for the provision of public information and support to students between the College and the University of Kent are appropriately defined in the Validation Agreement. The College shall continue to be responsible for handling student enquiries pertaining to the pathway programmes and for producing information for students about the courses. The University of Kent is responsible for providing academic counselling for students, or those proposing to take the courses, and with providing students on arrival with an induction programme.

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

Chaucer College Canterbury action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight March 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"> the effective academic and pastoral support (paragraph 2.7) 	The College will continue to provide the same level of support by holding weekly one-to-one progress tutorials and employing seminar tutors to support students in the modules	In place for September 2012 (or next cohort if different)	Vice-Chancellor and Director of Academic Programmes	Monitoring of the efficacy of these measures from student feedback to Boards of Studies and end of module feedback	Boards of Studies	Evaluation will be obtained through information provided by the student representative at the Boards of Studies and from Programme evaluation sheets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the innovative approach to language support facilitated by the employment of residential conversation tutors (paragraph 2.8). 	The College intends to continue its policy of employing residential conversation tutors to assist students in understanding UK academic study and with their English	In place for September 2012 (or next cohort if different)	Vice-Chancellor and Director of Academic Programmes with the assistance of the Conversation Teacher Coordinator	Monitoring of the efficacy of the conversation teachers role through attendance monitoring and student feedback to Boards of Studies and end of module/programme feedback	Boards of Studies Collegiate Committee	Evaluation will be obtained through information provided by the student representative at the Boards of Studies and from programme evaluation sheets

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.

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"> support staff to engage with the Academic Infrastructure and relevant external reference points to inform teaching (paragraphs 1.5, 2.3) 	<p>To arrange with the University of Kent more specific training and information sharing in this area</p> <p>Independent training for College staff</p>	In place for September 2012 (or next cohort if different)	Director of Academic Programmes in liaison with teaching staff	<p>All staff on the programme to be fully aware of the Academic Infrastructure and relevant benchmark levels and know how <i>The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)</i> levels apply to their modules</p>	The Vice-Chancellor of Chaucer College and the Quality Assurance and Validation Manager, University of Kent	Staff to be fully conversant with the standards by September 2012
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve assessment feedback to more clearly reflect intended learning outcomes, grade descriptors and marking criteria (paragraph 1.6) 	<p>Examine thoroughly student handbooks and module outlines and ensure that marking criteria and band descriptors for each module are coherent and consistent</p> <p>Also to make sure that cover marking sheets reflect the same information</p>	In place for September 2012 (or next cohort if different)	Director of Academic Programmes working with module conveners and seminar leaders	A clear coherence to be evident to both tutors and students in time for the next student cohort	The Vice-Chancellor of Chaucer College and the Quality Assurance and Validation Manager, University of Kent	Clarity reflected in student feedback and evaluation sheets

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consider the process for sharing external examiners and marking moderators reports with the University to more fully support the effective oversight of assessment (paragraph 1.8) 	<p>Information has hitherto been shared with the sponsoring department, Politics, but not with the Sociology Department</p> <p>We will explore ways of ensuring greater communication with the Sociology Department by suggesting a member of Chaucer staff sits on their Learning and Teaching committee and that external examiners reports relating to Sociology modules, are discussed</p>	<p>In place for September 2012 (or next cohort if different)</p>	<p>Director of Academic Programmes and the Dean of Students</p>	<p>Reporting back to Boards of Studies Minutes from Departmental meetings within the Sociology Dept</p>	<p>The Vice-Chancellor of Chaucer College and the Quality Assurance and Validation Manager, University of Kent</p>	<p>Effective reporting at the Examinations Board and end of year boards of studies</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> formalise a framework for staff development that captures the needs of both the individual and the College (paragraph 2.10) 	<p>Staff development will be targeted specifically to the programme needs and in the case of the Certificate programme, staff will be expected to attend training sessions specific to their subject areas</p>	<p>This will be an ongoing policy, but staff will be directed by the Director of Academic Programmes to specific training in their field</p>	<p>Director of Academic Programmes in conjunction with staff - and approved by the College management team</p>	<p>All subject staff to be more conversant with the subject areas they teach and for this to be reflected in their syllabuses and teaching</p>	<p>The Vice-Chancellor of Chaucer College and the Quality Assurance and Validation Manager, University of Kent</p>	<p>Content to be evident in module outlines as approved by the University of Kent</p> <p>Effective teaching reported back during teaching observations - and recorded</p>

		from September 2012 onwards				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make the pre-enrolment oral guidance on pedagogic and cultural differences between the UK and Japan available on the College website (paragraph 3.2). 	To prepare a document for the college website making more detailed and specific reference to the differences between Japanese university study and that of the UK	To be prepared immediately and to be uploaded when recruitment for the programme resumes	Director of Academic Programmes and the Dean of Students in conjunction with the Head of Information Technology	Prospective students are aware of the differences in teaching and assessment and come prepared for the rigours of the programme	The Vice-Chancellor and the Quality Assurance and Validation Manager, University of Kent, The President of Shumei University	Evaluation will be obtained through information provided by the student representative at the Boards of Studies and from programme evaluation sheets

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 one to eight, with levels four 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 QAAs 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 bachelors 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 bachelors 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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