Cromwell College of IT & Management

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

March 2012

Key findings about Cromwell College of IT & Management

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in March 2012, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (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 Chartered Institute for IT, the Chartered Management Institute and the Institute of Administrative Management.

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

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

Good practice

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

- staff development is effectively and systematically managed within the context of a comprehensive published policy (paragraphs 1.5, 2.11, 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:

- embed the key role of the Quality Assurance Manager more securely within the formal reporting and committee structures (paragraphs 1.7, 1.9)
- ensure that all staff rigorously operate the arrangements for written assessment feedback (paragraph 2.6)
- formalise the management of public information by completing and implementing the new communications strategy (paragraph 3.7).

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

- collate and analyse student cohort data more systematically within the annual reporting system (paragraphs 1.10, 2.10)
- implement the plans for an interactive virtual learning environment (paragraph 3.5).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)[1] (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Cromwell College of IT & Management (the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College 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 College delivers on behalf of the Chartered Institute for IT, the Chartered Management Institute and the Institute of Administrative Management. The review was carried out by Mr Seth Crofts, Mr Peter Green, Ms Ruth Stoker (reviewers) and Mr David Lewis (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with the [*Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook*](#).[2] Evidence in support of the review included a range of internal documentation, such as key policy, procedure and strategy statements; administrative procedures; committee terms of reference and records; College reports, handbooks, teaching plans and schedules; student survey questionnaires; student records; statistical data; role descriptions and staff profiles. The team scrutinised a sample of assessed student work and held meetings with staff, students, former students and an external verifier. External verification reports were also checked.

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

- Qualifications Credit Framework: level indicators and descriptors
- The Chartered Institute for IT: published module descriptions and syllabus content
- Chartered Management Institute: centre assessment guide, including programme specifications
- Institute of Administrative Management: qualifications handbooks, published unit descriptors.

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

Cromwell College of IT & Management is located in converted business premises in the centre of Hackney, East London. It was formed in 2004 and has a mission to become an outstanding institution offering affordable management and information technology-related programmes. It seeks to enable students to progress to UK university degrees and to enhance the professional profiles of managers and potential managers. In addition to the awarding organisations for the provision within the scope of this review, the College has approval to deliver the awards of the following: the Association of International Accountants, the Organisation for Tourism and Hospitality Management, the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality, the Association of Business Executives and Edexcel. It has progression agreements with three English public sector universities and is accredited by the Accreditation Service for International Colleges.

In addition to the external higher education awards covered in the review, the College offers a range of general English language courses, some of which are used by higher education students to improve their language skills. The academic structure comprises two departments, of Management and Information Technology. The departments operate under the direction of the Principal and Head of Academics. At the time of the review, there were 129 higher education students, all full-time. The large majority of students are recruited from India and Pakistan. There are 15 staff contributing to the teaching, nine on full-time contracts

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[1] www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4.
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx.

and six part-time. A total of 17 staff provide administrative and other support, some combining academic and administrative roles.

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

The Chartered Institute for IT
- Professional Graduate Diploma in IT (Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF) level 6) 10 students

Chartered Management Institute
- Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership (QCF level 7) 47 students

Institute of Administrative Management
- Advanced Diploma in Business and Administrative Management (QCF level 5) 22 students
- Diploma in Business and Administrative Management (QCF level 4) 50 students

The provider's stated responsibilities

The College states that its responsibilities are broadly the same with each of its three awarding organisations, except in respect of assessment. These common responsibilities include student recruitment, admission and guidance. The College also oversees staff development, oversight of teaching and learning, library and learning resources, student feedback and the accuracy of public information. The awarding organisations are responsible for the curriculum and its development, subject specifications and content. The College has major assessment responsibilities in relation to one awarding organisation, the Chartered Management Institute. For the level 7 Diploma, it marks, moderates and provides feedback for all formative and summative assessments. There is shared responsibility with the awarding organisations for the content of programme-related public information.

Recent developments

A key recent development has seen the range of higher education programmes being reduced from over 10 to the current four. Approval has been granted by the Institute of Administrative Management to deliver courses at level 6. The College has also gained centre and programme approvals from Edexcel and is planning to offer awards from later in 2012. Other developments include exploring new overseas markets in Africa and China, and the opening of overseas campuses. A range of internal improvements is being worked on in direct response to the requirements of Review for Educational Oversight. These include the introduction of more formal policies and strategies for quality assurance, teaching and learning, human resources and public information.

Students' contribution to the review

Students on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the review team. The submission was produced and sent independently of the College by a student representative. The College asked a student to lead on the production of the submission. The level 7 student was briefed about the review process and asked to consult with colleagues and write the submission. The lead student called a series of meetings with a group of 15 other volunteers. The outcomes of these discussions were used in the production of a draft report, which was then shared with the volunteer group and agreed. The student submission offers evaluative and supportive statements on a range of

pertinent topics. These topics include standards, teaching, student achievements, feedback, support, resources and information. It also offers a separate list of comments on areas for improvement. The submission proved useful to the team in identifying matters to be discussed with staff and students during the visit.

Detailed findings about Cromwell College of IT & Management

1   Academic standards

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

1.1   The College operates within a clear strategic plan and a well-formulated set of goals and targets. Members of the senior staff team have a good understanding of the strategic plan and are highly committed to the responsible development of higher education.

1.2   The arrangements for carrying out the College's responsibilities for the management of academic standards and quality are clearly defined and implemented. There is an explicit management structure, within which the Principal, who is also Director of Operations and the owner, oversees all academic matters. The Head of Academics is responsible to the Principal for academic standards, supported at programme level by the Academics Manager and programme coordinators. There is some potential ambiguity in the relationship between academic and administrative functions within the structure, for example in the administrative support for the management of academic quality assurance.

1.3   The College has two senior committees, each with a clearly defined constitution and terms of reference, as determined by the College Charter. The Academic Board, which has 'responsibility for matters that have academic implications', reports to the Council, the senior College committee. The Principal chairs both committees and external representation brings valuable experience and a wider perspective to the Council's deliberations. While the purpose and membership of these two senior committees are well defined, the minutes of each suggest that their functions might benefit from clearer differentiation. Such a move might give more focus to the reporting of academic matters.

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

1.4   The College makes appropriate use of external reference points in the management of academic standards and quality, reflecting the responsibilities delegated to it by awarding organisations. The key reference points for academic standards are the subject specifications issued by the awarding organisations, which are provided to all students, and the Qualifications and Credit Framework. Among the raft of new policies being introduced as part of the College's quality initiative, some are being considered against the Academic Infrastructure, using relevant sections of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* and subject benchmark statements. The College has acknowledged the merits of engaging more systematically with the Academic Infrastructure. Such engagement will take on increased significance with the intended introduction of Edexcel awards.

1.5   Staff development is being used to increase awareness of external reference points generally. The focus of recent staff development has included the Qualifications and Credit Framework, subject benchmarking and quality assurance. The staff development policy makes clear that the induction of all new staff will include the College's use of the Academic Infrastructure and an introduction to the academic standards set for the relevant awards.

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

1.6   The College has substantial delegated responsibilities for assessment on the Chartered Management Institute level 7 Diploma. These include the design and setting of assignments, marking, internal verification and feedback. There are no formally delegated assessment responsibilities for the Institute of Administrative Management or Chartered Institute of IT programmes. The College also has formal progression agreements with two English public universities and a letter of cooperation with a third.

1.7   The internal verification process is well documented and, on the evidence of College records and the sample of assessed student work, is implemented systematically. The verification records are shared between the Head of Academics, as the internal verifier, and programme coordinators, before being submitted for external verification. The Quality Assurance Manager does not have any formal role in the verification process at present and it is not clear that outcomes are processed through the committee structure.

1.8   The College makes extensive and effective use of the external verification arrangements with the Chartered Management Institute. External verifier reports are received by the Head of Academics, following which actions are followed through using a robust electronic action tracking system. The role of the external verifier is wide and has enabled teaching staff to better understand the requirements of the awarding organisation in relation to academic standards and assessment, both formative and summative. External verifier reports offer assurance that the academic standards set by the awarding organisation are being met.

1.9   A important initiative is the recent establishment of a Quality Assurance Manager post, which now needs to be embedded more securely within the formal reporting and committee structures. The Quality Assurance Manager has an explicit job description and a potentially pivotal role in ensuring that academic quality procedures are rigorously applied and monitored. However, it is not clear how the functions of the role formally interact with other important quality mechanisms such as assessment, verification, the analysis of student data, annual reporting, the dissemination of good practice and the work of the Academic Board.

1.10   The effectiveness of the annual reports that are used to monitor College programmes could be enhanced through more systematic analysis of student cohort data. The annual report uses a standard format to reflect on the academic health of each programme. While it contains some quantitative information, it would benefit from the regular presentation of tables to allow the analysis of student achievement and progression based on recruited cohorts. The data available for the review shows a high rate of completion and progression to further study on the level 7 Diploma for 2010 and 2011. There would be advantage in ensuring that annual report action plans can be tracked more easily through relevant committee minutes.

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

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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 for managing and enhancing learning opportunities are generally as described in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.3.

2.2   There is a systematic annual programme approval process, which is used to check the continued appropriateness and viability of the portfolio of awards offered. This useful initiative monitors intended learning outcomes, delivery strategies, marketing, resource and staff training needs. It also includes a risk analysis. An external adviser contributes to the approval process. This reflects the College's quality assurance policy, which includes a commitment to the involvement of external peers in quality management.

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

2.3   The use of external reference points is generally as described in paragraphs 1.4 and 1.5. The College ensures that students and staff are given clear information and guidance to allow them to understand the requirements of the awarding organisations. External verifier reports for the Chartered Management Institute award confirm that the College is meeting the awarding body requirements in respect of teaching and learning, staff resources and learner support.

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

2.4   The College has a clear framework of quality assurance checks to ensure the quality of teaching and learning. These are guided by the requirements of the awarding organisations and are well understood by the academic staff. A formal teaching and learning strategy is being developed as part of the College's quality initiative and is currently in draft form.

2.5   Teaching and learning is regularly evaluated through a clearly documented and recorded peer review process, and the consideration of feedback from students. Staff are complimentary about the peer review process, which is conducted by senior staff and an experienced external adviser. The external verifier for the Chartered Management Institute undertakes additional observations to ensure that the awarding body expectations are being met. The College requires all teaching staff to produce schemes of work and lesson plans.

2.6   The College has clear and detailed arrangements in place for giving feedback to students on their assessed work, but the standard procedures are not being used effectively. General assignment information is full and helpful, and students appreciate the oral formative feedback that is provided on all programmes. Well-designed standard feedback forms are used for the Chartered Management Institute Diploma. However, the scrutiny of assessed student work shows that while written feedback is provided systematically, it lacks the detail and focus needed if students are to understand their performance and how to improve it. There is need to ensure that assessment feedback is provided more rigorously and is monitored through the verification procedures.

2.7   Student opinion is recognised as important and is used to inform the evaluation of teaching and learning. The Head of Academics collates student feedback comments and uses them, along with peer review reports, to help identify individual training needs as part of staff appraisal. More generally, the College collects student opinion at various points during

the academic cycle, in line with its published framework for student feedback. The Academic Board receives collated feedback reports. It records student concerns, following which an action plan is produced and its progress formally monitored.

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

2.8   The College has effective support arrangements in place, which operate within the context of a comprehensive student support and guidance policy. Students confirm that academic support is effectively provided through an informal open-door policy, which ensures easy and prompt access to academic staff. The College has recognised the need to introduce more structure into the process and is developing a formal system of tutorial support. Students are assessed within the first two weeks of their programme of study to identify support requirements. Progress and further needs are then carefully monitored. Additional support for academic English and writing is available when needed.

2.9   Students have access to a range of non-academic advice and support, which is overseen by a full-time welfare officer. Admissions and induction operate according to published policies and guidance. Student feedback indicates a high level of satisfaction with the support they receive from the College, including that to assist them in adjusting to life and study in a foreign country.

2.10   The College maintains detailed records of the academic progress and standing of individual students, but makes little use of overall cohort data in its quality assurance reporting. Examination results from the awarding organisations are fed back to programme coordinators and the Head of Academics, but the documents provided for the review contained no evidence that student progression and achievement data are discussed within formal College meetings. However, the scrutiny of student records has been used by staff to identify poor academic performance with the standard of English being accepted by overseas recruitment agents. As a result, the College now tests the English skills of all applicants by online video interviews.

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

2.11   Staff development is effectively and systematically managed within the context of a comprehensive published policy and is an area of good practice. The policy confirms the College's commitment to the professional development and enhancement of its staff, while a development plan identifies priorities and the training activities that will be provided.

2.12   Staff profiles and the records of training activities show a wide range of support that includes induction for new staff, targeted in-house activities to address the needs of the College and awarding organisations, individual development arising from staff appraisal and high level scholarship. They also confirm that professional development activities support the objectives published in the College's strategic plan. Academic staff regularly attend training workshops organised by the awarding organisations, while a number have formal assessor and verifier qualifications. The encouragement to enhance scholarship and academic qualifications is evident in the support for two senior academic staff who are currently studying for doctorates. Staff development is enhanced by the use of experienced external trainers, including the external verifier for the Chartered Management Institute.
These trainers bring added relevance and currency to the development activities, which are highly regarded by the staff.

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

2.13   The Academic Board reviews the learning resources that are required for all programmes as part of its planning for each new term. The main physical resources comprise a range of well-furnished and resourced classrooms, computer laboratories, a small library and student recreational area. The meeting with students confirmed the views expressed in the student submission and College feedback reports that resources are appropriate for their needs. The most recent report of the Accreditation Service for International Colleges offers further reassurance about the quality of the accommodation and facilities.

2.14   The College has recently recognised the need to enhance the library with the appointment of a library manager. The manager is working with the Director (Administration) and academic staff to ensure that library stocks are revised to reflect the needs of the current range of programmes.

2.15   The College has well-qualified academic staff, helped by its clear staff recruitment policy. The quality of staff is recognised by students and confirmed in recent reports of the Chartered Management Institute external verifier.

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.

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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 College publishes an extensive range of helpful information that is used externally and internally to communicate with prospective students, overseas recruitment agents, current students, and academic and administrative staff. This includes a mission statement and strategic plan, prospectus, website, student and staff handbooks, marketing materials, programme-related documents and a variety of explicit policy statements.

3.2   Printed promotional materials and the website include clear information about the College and its requirements, as well as the partner awarding organisations. A useful overview of each programme and its constituent units is available on the website. The website also provides information on student services, including English language support and accommodation.

3.3   Each awarding organisation produces core information about the academic content and requirements of the programme, and this is published for students in different forms of handbook. In addition, the College produces a general handbook, which is highly regarded by students. It provides a range of useful advice and information, including relevant policies such as those relating to reviews and appeals. A detailed staff handbook offers comprehensive information relating to employee rights and responsibilities.

3.4   The College has recently introduced an extensive set of written policies and procedures, with others currently in preparation. Together, they offer a clear and coherent framework of requirements and guidance for students and staff relating to academic

practices and quality matters. The policies have been produced as part of a major quality initiative and include published statements on admissions, examinations, student feedback, reviews and appeals, student complaints, staff induction, and support and guidance.

3.5   It is desirable for the College to continue its proposed development of a virtual learning environment. This would ensure more flexible access to the materials currently in the Academic Folder, as well as supporting more interactive and independent learning. At present, the key policies that are relevant to students, as well as details of support arrangements and a wealth of useful programme information, are published in the Academic Folder, which is a dedicated drive on the College IT network. While students value the Academic Folder, they also point to the constraints due to the fact that it can only accessed from within the College.

3.6   The most recent prospectus for 2010-11 provides detailed and helpful information about the College, its programmes and general matters relating to the local area and student life in London. The prospectus for 2011-12 has yet to be published, as a result of which the previous version may have been used for recruiting some students.

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

3.7   There is a need for the College to tighten and formalise the management of public information relating to the academic provision, including the signing-off procedure. This weakness has been recognised by staff and would be resolved by the arrangements proposed in the College's planned new communications policy. It is advisable that the policy be completed and implemented as soon as possible. The current arrangements have operated satisfactorily, but are unduly dependent upon clear, but informal, practices at the level of academic departments. The departments are expected to revise published information in the light of feedback from students or other sources. Information that relates to awarding organisations or progression partners is agreed with the relevant organisation before it is distributed to students. Administrative staff make checks on the content of the College website.

3.8   The College is diligent in checking all of the information used by recruitment agents before it is given to prospective students. The admissions team has responsibility for managing key information about admissions, enrolment and induction, as well as student timetables.

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 plan[3]

Cromwell College of IT & Management action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight in March 2012						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The review team identified the following area of **good practice** that is worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
• staff development is effectively and systematically managed within the context of a comprehensive published policy (paragraphs 1.5, 2.11, 2.12).	Organise staff training on the Quality Code (Academic Infrastructure) quarterly	23/05/2012	Quality Manager and Human Resources Manager	Improved understanding of the Quality Code among staff; positive evaluation from students on academic quality; improved academic standards	Council	Annual staff appraisal; training session feedback reports; student feedback reports; awarding body/organisation reports
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:						
• embed the key role of the Quality Assurance Manager more securely within the formal reporting and committee structures	Review and revise organisational chart and constitution; improve internal verifier policy and procedures	15/06/2012	Head of Operations; Quality Assurance Manager, Head of Academics and	Clearly embedded role of Quality Assurance Manager in formal reporting and committee structure to ensure that academic quality	Council	Annual report; staff appraisal; internal verifier/external verifier records and reports; interim and

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[3] The provider has been required to develop this action plan to follow up on good practice and address any recommendations arising from the review. QAA monitors progress against the action plan, in conjunction with the provider's awarding bodies.

(paragraphs 1.7, 1.9)			internal verifier	procedures are rigorously applied and monitored; improved formal role of Quality Assurance Manager in the verification process; clearly defined interaction of Quality Assurance Manager in quality mechanisms such as assessment, verification, the analysis of student data, annual reporting, the dissemination of good practice and the work of the Academic Board		annual self-assessment
• ensure that all staff rigorously operate the arrangements for written assessment feedback (paragraph 2.6)	Revise assessment policy and procedure; ensure all assessors are properly trained in applying standard procedures for giving feedback to students on their assessed work; revise Feedback Template for assessors to give detailed and focused feedback to students	01/06/2012	Quality Assurance Manager and Head of Academics	Effective use of standard procedures to give detailed and focused feedback to students; improved and rigorous monitoring of feedback through verification process; better understanding of assessment feedback policy and procedure among staff will improve overall feedback	Council	Internal verifier/external verifier reports; staff appraisal; self-assessment (interim and annual); actual assessed work

				mechanism		
• formalise the management of public information by completing and implementing the new communications strategy (paragraph 3.7).	Institute communication strategy and signing-off process to ensure the formalisation of management of public information	29/06/2012	Quality Assurance Manager and Head of Operations	Improved and formalised system of management of public information including the signing off procedure; accurate, updated, valid, reliable, complete and comprehensive public information available on website, prospectus and other pieces of public information	Council	Annual report; self-assessment (interim and annual); student feedback
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:						
• collate and analyse student cohort data more systematically within the annual reporting system (paragraphs 1.10, 2.10)	Institute a formal Cohort Management System; reporting of cohort data in annual report; discussion of cohort data in subsequent council meetings; preparation and implementation of action plan based on analysis of cohort data	06/08/2012	Head of Academics with support of Quality Assurance Manager	Systematic analysis of student cohort data will improve the effectiveness of annual reports used to monitor College programmes; improved use of cohort data in quality assurance reporting; effective tracking of annual report action points through committee meetings	Council	Annual report; self-assessment (interim and annual); student feedback; internal verifier/external verifier reports

• implement the plans for an interactive virtual learning environment (paragraph 3.5).	Institute virtual learning environment (VLE)	21/05/2012	Head of Operations	More flexible access of learning resources to the students; enhanced support of more interactive and independent learning to students	Council	Annual report; student feedback; self-assessment (interim and annual)

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 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 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:

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[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 Review for Educational Oversight, 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 standards**.

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