UK Professional Training Co Ltd t/a Belgravia College

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

November 2012

Key findings about UK Professional Training Co Ltd t/a Belgravia College

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in November 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 Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality.

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 the awarding organisation.

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 process of student representation and the link between the Students' Union and the Student Support Officer are strengthening the student voice (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 **advisable** for the provider to:

- review and formally approve all policy documents (paragraph 1.3)
- develop and implement a strategy for teaching and learning (paragraph 2.3)
- devise and implement a staff development policy (paragraph 2.9)
- enhance its learning resources (paragraph 2.10)
- strengthen mechanisms to monitor the accuracy of public information (paragraph 3.4).

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

- complete its action plan in order to formulate policy documents in accordance with the Quality Code (paragraph 1.4)
- enhance its procedures on the observation of teaching (paragraph 2.4)
- improve its procedures for staff appointments and appraisals (paragraph 2.6)
- clarify staff roles and responsibilities (paragraph 2.7)
- establish version control for all documentation distributed (paragraph 3.5)
- make reference to its policies and procedures in the Student Handbook (paragraph 3.6).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)[1] (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at UK Professional Training Co Ltd t/a Belgravia College (the provider; the College). The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality. The review was carried out by Professor Danny Morton, Mrs Ranjinder Willis (reviewers) and Dr Heather Barrett-Mold (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: the self-evaluation, samples of student work, further documentation supplied by the provider, and meetings with staff and students.

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

- the Academic Infrastructure
- guidance from the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality.

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

Belgravia College (the College) is a higher education institution providing level 4 to level 7 programmes to international students. It is owned by a private limited company (UK Professional Training Co Ltd), which was incorporated in March 2004. The company bought the College in July 2012. The new ownership was registered with the UK Border Agency in July 2012. The College is accredited by ASIC (Accreditation Service for International Colleges) and has the UK Border Agency Highly Trusted Status. The College recruited 125 students at the start of the academic year 2012-13, enrolled on level 4, 5, 6 or 7 Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality programmes.

The College mission is to be a popular choice for overseas students especially from Asia and Africa and those living in the North West of London. The aim is to provide good quality education at a reasonable cost.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath the awarding organisation, with student numbers in brackets:

Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality (CTH)
- Level 4 Diploma in Hotel Management (2)
- Level 5 Advanced Diploma in Hotel Management (12)
- Level 6 Diploma in Tourism and Hospitality (69)
- Level 7 Postgraduate Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism Management (57)

The provider's stated responsibilities

The College has one awarding organisation and is responsible for learning and teaching, student support, and shares responsibility for learning resources. It shares responsibility for setting and marking assessments and for providing feedback to students on assignments.

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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.

At level 4, the awarding organisation has full responsibility for summative assessment. It shares responsibility for public information. The College is responsible for the recruitment of students.

Recent developments

New owners acquired the College in July 2012, and it came into existence in its current form in August 2012, with the first cohort of students starting in September 2012. The College is applying to become a centre for BTEC programmes.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team, and achieved this with the support of the Student Support Officer and the Students' Union President. They submitted a written report informed by a questionnaire, and a series of videos. These were made available at the time of the review. The team found the student submission helpful and explored its content in meetings with students to gain a clear picture of the student learning experience.

Detailed findings about UK Professional Training Co Ltd Belgravia College

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The College has, with its awarding organisation, an effective process for the management of academic standards. Responsibilities for the management of standards are assigned to the College through the licence agreement with the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality (CTH). The College has a small management team, which allows for informal communication. The Principal's work focuses on the institutional financial strategy and the Director of Studies deals with the curriculum operations, awarding organisations and works with the two teaching staff and support staff.

1.2 The College is reliant on the awarding organisation's Centre Manual for guidance on programme delivery and the administration of assessments. The awarding organisation issues a Qualification Handbook, available to students, which gives specific information about assessment, learning, teaching and unit syllabi. The College's Student Handbook gives information about conduct within the College, student support and attendance. The College has some policy documents in place, which include academic misconduct, plagiarism, and internal verification and moderation. At the time of the review, students had not undertaken any assessment and so the effectiveness of these policies could not be evaluated.

1.3 The College's Academic Board is responsible for academic development, annual review and evaluation of provision, business development and quality of learning opportunities. While it does not have terms of reference, there is a document which explains its role, including the development and review of policies and procedures. The Board has met on four occasions since the establishment of the College in August 2012, discussing a range of academic issues. There is limited, detailed evidence in the minutes of the discussion, follow-up actions and timelines resulting from its activity; the minutes show little evidence of the Board's involvement in formulating and approving the College policy documents. The College publishes some policy documents related to the management of academic standards, and which are broad in scope. Teaching staff hold formal meetings in accordance with CTH regulations. The minutes of these meetings are discussed at the Academic Board. It is advisable for the College to review and formally approve all policy documents.

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

1.4 The College relies on its awarding organisation for information about external reference points for the management of standards and enhancement of learning opportunities. Staff have had limited engagement with the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*), although the College Academic Director is developing an action plan to address elements of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education applicable to its activity. This action plan is incomplete and there is little evidence of staff development in this area. However, staff noted aspects of the Academic Infrastructure in their preparation for the review. It is desirable that the College completes its action plan to formulate policy documents in accordance with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

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

1.5   The College has a generic internal moderation policy, but its effectiveness is undetermined, as the College has not yet internally verified formative or summative student assessment.

1.6   The College engages with the awarding organisation in moderation, verification and examining. Students at the College receive a timetable for CTH examinations and submit summative assessments online. The College receives student results and generic feedback, which is not specific to the College. The team observed academic staff support students' progress by using diagnostic assessments to test academic ability and English competence. The results enable staff to monitor progress towards final summative submission, that they record on CTH documentation. Students confirmed they had undertaken a diagnostic assessment in preparation for their summative assessment in January 2013.

1.7   The awarding organisation states that the admission of students is the responsibility of the College. The College demonstrates that it has clear admissions processes to ensure that students are qualified to study their chosen area, including interviews with the Principal and Director of Studies to assess English language and academic qualifications. The College relies on the awarding organisation's admission criteria, as detailed in the CTH Centre Manual.

1.8   The College uses student feedback to evaluate academic staff and module delivery, and students confirmed the College responded to comments and suggestions from the surveys and that they could raise matters of concern with staff and tutors. The Academic Board has discussed student feedback and agreed to respond with an action plan.

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 organisation.

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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 organisational structure and responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities in the College are the same as outlined in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.4.

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

2.2   The use made of external reference points in the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities in the College are the same as outlined in paragraph 1.4.

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

2.3   The College does not have a written teaching and learning strategy or any other policy documents relating to quality enhancement. Without these, there is no formal system to review the effectiveness of teaching and learning. The Academic Board's role includes undertaking a major review and monitoring all programmes each year against agreed

performance indicators, but it does not specifically mention teaching and learning. However, the small team of teaching staff works closely together to take and respond to feedback. Students were very positive about their experience of teaching and about the support they were given by their teachers. It is advisable for the College to develop and implement a strategy for teaching and learning.

2.4 The Director of Studies currently undertakes teaching observations and records a brief overview of the teaching style and the way the class is managed. It is limited in the advice and guidance for the enhancement of teaching skills. The procedure is not documented and it is not clear whether staff view this as a developmental exercise. It is advisable that the College enhances its procedures on the observation of teaching and also reflects on any possible role for peer review. The purpose of the observation procedures needs to be clarified for all staff involved. Staff plan their teaching and each module has a lesson plan reviewed by the Director of Studies on a continuous basis. It is too early to test the effectiveness of this process. It is desirable that the College enhances its procedures on the observation of teaching.

2.5 The College gathers module feedback and has run a student satisfaction survey to accompany the student submission. The submission was prepared by the President of the Students' Union and students representing each programme of study within the College. Comments received from the student submission, module feedback and the student satisfaction surveys are generally supportive of the College.

2.6 The College staff appointments procedure is not aimed at the appointment of tutors and does not confirm that a candidate's teaching effectiveness is demonstrated at the time of appointment. Currently, there is no formal staff appraisal system in place or other performance evaluation system. It is desirable for the College to improve its procedures for staff appointments and appraisals.

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

2.7 The College has a Student Support Officer who helped students prepare the student submission and compiled evidence about student support for this review. The Officer also helped establish the Students' Union in August 2012. The Officer's role will alter to provide pastoral support and to link the President of the Students' Union and the College management, although as yet there is no official job description or terms of reference for this post. Other staff also have a student support role, although their remits are unclear. It is desirable that the College clarify staff roles and responsibilities.

2.8 Each programme of study has a student representative reporting to the President of the Students' Union, who meet twice monthly to address issues with student support. The meetings are minuted and appropriate actions are identified. The process of student representation and the link between the Students' Union and the Student Support Officer is strengthening the student voice and represents good practice.

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

2.9 Academic tutors share good practice informally in relation to curriculum delivery on a daily basis. The College does not have a formal staff development process but all teaching staff are encouraged to take teaching qualifications (that is Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector and Diploma to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector). There is little evidence of other staff development support, although it is acknowledged that the College has only been operating since August 2012 and many of the staff are new. The staff training procedure is cursory in its approach and does not address the enhancement of

teaching and learning, or an understanding of the Academic Infrastructure. It is advisable for the College to devise and implement a staff development policy.

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   There is no formal policy within the College to plan, or monitor, the adequacy of learning resources to support students on their programmes of study. Students are generally satisfied, but informed the review about the lack of access to computers and insufficient library books, noting, however, that they have routes to express their concerns and find the College to be responsive. Students are registered with a local library and confirmed that they could order books and journal papers. There is a need to ensure students have access to the resources they need. It is helpful to have multiple copies of textbooks given on the recommended reading list. It is advisable for the College to enhance its learning resources.

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 has mechanisms to communicate effectively its higher education provision to students and other stakeholders. It is responsible for publishing a range of publicity and marketing information about its higher education provision. This information includes course information related to CTH provision, academic calendar and the College Student Handbook and general information for its intended stakeholders, such as life as a student. The course information on the website is directly linked to the awarding organisation in this instance to ensure consistency of information.

3.2   The website is being developed and information is updated continuously, although the College intends to use a formal process to update the site every three months once it is established. The information on the website proves particularly useful to international students, both prior to and during their study: it provides an online enrolment facility, and includes direct links to organisations relevant to international students such as the UK Border Agency and the British Council. The students confirm that the information provided by the College on the website presents an accurate portrayal of the College, its programmes and its facilities, and meets their expectations, although their feedback is not currently used to inform its format or content.

3.3   Information on the website is supplemented with internal materials, such as awarding organisation handbooks and assignments, information on plagiarism and academic misconduct. The College has an area on the website which acts as a repository for both staff and students. The information in the repository includes lesson plans and teaching, and learning material uploaded by lecturing staff. This repository is only accessible through password protection. Students consider the information provided by the College to be very helpful.

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

3.4   The College has established lines of responsibility for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the information it produces, although these are not clearly set out in the information technology policy. Content for the website is developed by the Director of Studies and in discussion with the Principal. Pre-publication material is the responsibility of the Principal. It is the responsibility of the administration team to make amendments to material agreed by both the Principal and Director of Studies, and upload this material onto the website. Checks take place, but there is no regular monitoring procedure. It is advisable for the College to strengthen mechanisms to monitor the accuracy of public information.

3.5   The College has a range of polices from appeals and internal verification to staff training. These College policies state approved dates and review dates, but there is little evidence of version control on polices and other documentation. It is desirable for the College to establish version control for all documentation distributed.

3.6   The Student Handbook contains a great deal of information for students and makes particular reference to operational arrangements, appeals process, additional support needs and library and IT access. There is, however, limited reference to the types and range of assessment, plagiarism and examples of Harvard referencing or student representation, although these are available separately. It is desirable for the College to make reference to its policies and procedures in the Student Handbook.

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]

UK Professional Training Co Ltd t/a Belgravia College action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight November 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:						
• the process of student representation and the link between the Students' Union and the Student Support Officer are strengthening the student voice (paragraph 2.8).	Fuller engagement by the Student Support Officer so that student feedback and issues can be more formally addressed through programme boards and Academic Board Student Support Officer will be present at the Students' Union monthly meetings to listen to issues arising - he will also be responsible for	Immediate February start with regular reviews through the Academic Board	College Management, Director of Studies and Principal	Student Support Officer clearly participating in Programme Boards and Academic Board - monthly action list drawn up and clearly auctioned/ signed off	Director of Studies	Principal to agree actions on a monthly basis and report to the next Academic Board

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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 organisation.

	evaluating student questionnaires and reporting these back through the College committees					
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:						
• review and formally approve all policy documents (paragraph 1.3)	Complete review of all policies, rewrite where necessary, remove redundant policies, publish to student body and staff via the virtual learning environment The policies will be published in the virtual learning environment part of the College website - part of this is open to the public	30 June 2013	Director of Studies and Principal	Publication of policies on the virtual learning environment in line with College practice Note core policies will be handled initially - a detailed programme will be set out in the February Academic Board	Academic Board	Signed off by Academic Board
• develop and implement a strategy for teaching and learning (paragraph 2.3)	Creation of a Learning Opportunities Committee to continuously review and	Establish by 28 February 2013 and thereafter will meet at a minimum	Director of Studies	The teaching and learning strategy will be set out in February and ratified at the	Principal	Signed off by Academic Board The College, through its Academic

	enhance the learning experience	every two months		February Academic Board This will be used as a benchmark for actual progress Detailed documented evidence of teaching and learning strategy across all programmes		Standards Committee and Learning Opportunities Committee, will evaluate the effect of this strategy and incorporate this into forward planning for the College through the Academic Board
• devise and implement a staff development policy (paragraph 2.9)	Create a continuous development programme file for each tutor in line with the appraisal (see 2.6 below) Support each staff member to engage in continuing professional development	Establish by 28 February 2013 with monitoring and review	Director of Studies	Individual certification evidence - quantitative analysis at appraisal showing positive movement	Principal	Academic Board
• enhance its learning resources (paragraph 2.10)	Provision of more physical resources within the College, explore better use of online resources Note: Students are	Immediate start - ongoing throughout year Reviewed monthly at the	Director of Studies	Physical evidence of more resources, student feedback confirming improvement	Principal	Academic Board

	represented on the College Management Committee who handle the detail of resource requirements and report to the Academic Board	College Management Committee meetings				
• strengthen mechanisms to monitor the accuracy of public information (paragraph 3.4).	Creation of a Public Information Committee to formally review and propose changes to public information	Establish by 28 February 2013 - meet minimum every two months, the Public Information Committee must approve any changes to the content or infrastructure of information and this must be presented to the Academic Board	Principal	Documented evidence of the review process including rationale for changing information and why it is a benefit	Academic Board	Proposals signed off by academic board

Reports resulting from checks to be received |
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:						
• complete its action plan	Complete action	Action plan	Director of	Evidence of	Director of	Academic Board

in order to formulate policy documents in accordance with the Quality Code (paragraph 1.4)	plan in line with the Quality Code, arrange staff awareness/ training on the Quality Code - incorporate aspects of the Quality Code into teaching and learning practice	complete by 31 March 2013 - awareness sessions during the period April to June 2013 - implement-ation ongoing from 1 July 2013	Studies	awareness of the Quality Code throughout the College, in policies, in course delivery and so on	Studies Principal who then refers it to the Academic Board for approval	
• enhance its procedures on the observation of teaching (paragraph 2.4)	Produce a schedule of observations, do more formal review of lesson plans and course notes, give more formal feedback to tutor	1 February 2013 - carry out monthly	Director of Studies	Monitor improvement of lessons/tutorials via student feedback - recommendation of appropriate actions for improvement where necessary	Principal	Academic Board to approve resources for training where considered necessary
• improve its procedures for staff appointments and appraisals (paragraph 2.6)	Draw up a requirements list for each position so candidates can be vetted against the criteria set down by the roles and responsibilities checklists for each College committee Schedule annual appraisals around	Start 1 February 2013 - ongoing throughout the year	Director of Studies, Principal	Monitor improvements via peer review, student feedback, student achievement and observation	Principal and Management of the College to recommend actions and resources needed to improve the process	Academic Board approves recommendations put forward by the Principal and allocate resources where necessary

	the year with appropriate feedback and development programme					
• clarify staff roles and responsibilities (paragraph 2.7)	Provide all staff with detailed job description and list of specific responsibilities, especially lecturing background responsibilities	30 June 2013	Director of Studies	Task completed	Principal to review individual responsibilities and recommend additional staff responsibilities and/or new staff appointments	Academic Board to approve resources for change of staff profile
• establish version control for all documentation distributed (paragraph 3.5)	All College documentation to be reviewed and standardised in style and font showing update, review date and version	Ongoing from January 2013	Director of Studies	Evidence of the process being undertaken Evidence of annual review and version control	Principal to sign off change in College documentation and recommend any new documentation	Academic Board to approve the change and new recommendations
• make reference to its policies and procedures in the Student Handbook (paragraph 3.6).	All policies and procedures to be referenced in the new student handbook and published on the virtual learning environment	June 2013	Director of Studies, Principal	Completion of the handbook and publication of the new policies on the virtual learning environment	Principal	Signed off by the Academic Board

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:

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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 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.

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education