London School of Technology

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

December 2012

Key findings about London School of Technology

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in December 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 Association of Business Practitioners, Edexcel and the Institute of Commercial 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.

Recommendations

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

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

- formalise the written records of the quality management meetings to reflect clearly actions taken and follow-up at subsequent meetings (paragraph 1.1)
- act effectively on the analysis of the student achievement data at key stages within the quality cycle (paragraph 1.9)
- publish and disseminate to staff and students a formal teaching, learning and assessment strategy (paragraph 2.3)
- supplement the oral feedback given to students on their work with more detailed qualitative written feedback (paragraph 2.4).

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

- strengthen its experience of curriculum development in higher education (paragraph 1.3)
- develop a comprehensive and effective staff development policy to embrace the needs of part-time staff (paragraphs 1.4 and 2.10)
- establish formal course committees for all programmes (paragraph 1.5)
- implement fully the peer teaching observation scheme and the staff appraisal process (paragraph 2.5)
- enhance in students the acquisition of discipline-related English language skills (paragraph 2.8).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the Review for Educational Oversight[1] (REO) conducted by QAA at the London School of Technology (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 Association of Business Practitioners, Edexcel, and the Institute of Commercial Management. The review was carried out by Mr Allan Davies, Mrs Angela Maguire (reviewers) and Dr Richard Wheeler (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 its awarding organisations, and meetings with staff and students.

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

- the Academic Infrastructure
- Accreditation Service for International Colleges
- awarding organisations' requirements and guidelines
- Edexcel certification and approval requirements, and course regulations.

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

London School of Technology (the College) is a private registered company with eight shareholders and six directors. It is the sole user of a large four-storey modern building located near Southgate High Street and Southgate Underground Station in North London. The College took possession of the campus on 1 April 2010, but, owing to delays in planning permission for educational use of the building, students were first recruited in March 2012.

The College currently recruits students primarily from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Philippines. However, the declared intention of the College is to extend its recruitment rapidly to the local Southgate market, the London market and the European market. At the time of the self-evaluation (dated October 2012), there were 236 students. There was a further intake of 250 students on 8 October 2012, all of whom were from outside the European Economic Area. By the time of the review visit, student registrations had risen to 498. Students are taught by two full-time teaching staff and 12 part-time teaching staff (8 full-time equivalent), who are supported by 12 management/ administrative staff.

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

Association of Business Practitioners (ABP)
- Extended Postgraduate Diploma in Management and Leadership in the Health and Social Care Sector (21)

---

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

Edexcel
- Extended Postgraduate Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership (64)
- Higher National Diploma in Computing and Systems Development (18)
- Higher National Diploma in Business (122)

Institute of Commercial Management (ICM)
- Advanced Diploma in Business Studies (21)
- Advanced Diploma in Hospitality Management (23)
- Advanced Diploma in Professional Computing and Information Processing (27)
- Diploma in Business Studies (42)
- Diploma in Hospitality Management (7)
- Diploma in Legal Studies (2)
- Diploma in Professional Computing and Information Processing (5)
- Graduate Diploma in Business Management (98)
- Graduate Diploma in Legal Studies (4)
- Graduate Diploma in Management Studies (44)

The provider's stated responsibilities

For all awards, the College is responsible for the recruitment of students, for learning and teaching, setting and marking course work assignments, in accordance with the awarding organisations' requirements, and for student support and learning resources.

The Association of Business Practitioners (ABP) is a not-for-profit UK awarding organisation which develops and accredits business-related professional qualifications, delivered through accredited institutions, of which the College is one. The curriculum and associated intended learning outcomes are determined by the ABP. Student assignments are marked internally, but are subsequently subject to external verification. For the Institute of Commercial Management (ICM) awards, the College started providing tuition in March 2012. Assessment of students comprises a single examination in each module that is set and marked externally by the awarding organisation. Students may undertake a coursework project which must be approved by the ICM. The College is an approved centre for the delivery of Edexcel awards. The assessment of students is largely by coursework, but there are some examinations. The College is responsible for the design of all assessment modes, which are then subject to internal, and subsequent external, verification.

Recent developments

In August and September 2011, the College gained successful accreditation by the Accreditation Service for International Colleges (ASIC). In 2012, the College also obtained accreditation by the London Centre of Marketing (LCM), but it had not offered LCM programmes to students at the time of the review visit. In July 2012, it was approved to run an ABP level 7 programme in Health and Social Care. Students on ABP, Edexcel and ICM programmes are all at a relatively early stage in their studies and no students have yet completed their studies. The review was therefore based on the limited evidence of policy, procedures and practice available to the team at the time of the review visit.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. The students submitted a substantial, informative and supportive report. This was prepared largely by a lead student representative, who had attended the QAA briefing event for institutions, with the support of other student

representatives. The students who met the coordinator at the preparatory meeting pointed out that the report had been prepared in line with their understanding of QAA policy and guidance. They confirmed that the preparation of the report had benefited from good support from College administrative, teaching and management staff. The team also met a representative group of students at the review visit. They provided evidence of enthusiastic support for their studies and for the contribution of staff and the academic and pastoral support that they received from them.

Detailed findings about London School of Technology

1   Academic standards

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

1.1   The Senior Management Team, consisting of the Chief Executive/Registrar, Principal, Vice Principal, Director of Marketing and Director of Finance, normally meets fortnightly to discuss operational and strategic issues. The Board of Directors normally meets monthly to receive reports and advise on unresolved issues. Lecturers are organised in small subject departments and meet informally to discuss teaching and assessment matters. While there are minutes taken at these meetings, they are brief in nature and do not reflect clearly the action planning cycle that takes place in practice. It is advisable for the College to formalise the written records of the quality management meetings to reflect clearly actions taken and follow-up at subsequent meetings.

1.2   The Quality Assurance Manual is clear and comprehensive. It describes the quality cycle and identifies the Quality Management Steering Group as responsible for building and developing the College's management system. The Quality Manager is also the Director of Studies. A lead internal verifier provides guidance and support to the lecturers acting as assessors to ensure that standards are met, in line with the programme specifications of the awarding organisations.

1.3   The College acknowledges that it has no current experience of curriculum development in higher education, but it has identified this as a medium to long-term goal as it seeks university partners in order to offer top-up programmes at levels 6 and 7. It is largely restricted, at present, to following the procedures and protocols of its nationally recognised awarding organisations. This limits its role to the delivery of programmes that have been developed externally. It is in the early stages of its relationship with Edexcel, but it has identified the strengthening of links with Edexcel as an opportunity to enhance the experience and expertise of staff in curriculum matters. It intends to take advantage of its responsibilities for assessment, through dialogue with the external verifier and staff participation in Edexcel events, to raise awareness of assessment aspects of curriculum development. It is desirable for the College to strengthen its experience of curriculum development in higher education.

1.4   The College has recruited some well qualified staff. Approximately 12 out of 14 staff are on part-time contracts. They bring with them experience of other organisations and work, but the coordination of the attendance of part-time staff at internal College events presents a challenge in terms of coherent planning and timing of staff development events. Senior staff have attended external events to keep abreast of current developments. So far, the College has participated in an Edexcel two-day training event and is planning similar collaboration with the ABP. As the College is at a very early stage of its development, with a largely part-time staff profile, it is desirable for it to develop an effective and comprehensive staff development policy to embrace fully the needs of part-time staff.

1.5   The Quality Assurance Manual identifies three main ways of obtaining feedback on quality matters, namely through course committees, information from student representatives, and the use of student questionnaires. While the various mechanisms for obtaining student opinion are now established, the course committees are not fully operational. The College has developed an effective student feedback questionnaire on teaching, which is monitored by the Director of Studies, and the students' representatives. The Students' Union is consulted regularly on the outcome of questionnaires, both formally

and informally. It is desirable for the College to establish formal course committees for all programmes.

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

1.6   The College is confident that, within its current limited context of operations, it utilises external reference points effectively and is fully committed to the use of external moderation, verification and examining to assure academic standards. The documentation presented to the team, including the Quality Assurance Manual, and discussions with the staff confirm the College's commitment to maximising the use of external reference points in the management of academic standards.

1.7   The College is aware of the Academic Infrastructure and has taken steps to ensure that staff and students understand its significance. There have been briefing meetings for both groups. There are references in the self-evaluation to the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, *Section 6: Assessment of students,* and to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, *Chapter B3: Learning and teaching* and *Chapter B5: Student engagement*. The College also acknowledges the value of the QAA publication *International students studying in the UK: Guidance for UK higher education providers* (January 2012) in planning its student support arrangements.

1.8   The College has benefited from the discussions with the Accreditation Service for International Colleges (ASIC), with particular reference to the physical resources required of an institution of higher education.

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

1.9   The College has yet to complete a full cycle of external monitoring, although there is evidence of internal verification. The internal verifier identified two quality cycles, one for assessment and one for teaching, and articulated the methodology to the team. This was presented as evidence of the College's move from informal to more formal processes. The College's system for recording student achievement is in its early stages and there was limited evidence of how the process works. The team was concerned that recent module data, while recorded in actual and chart form, had not yet led to effective action in all programmes. The modules' results data revealed failure rates in some modules that required attention, but the College has no formal interim or stage process for identifying and acting upon these outcomes. In the computing programmes, potential student failures are identified at an early stage and acted upon swiftly, with students receiving both written and oral feedback on how to improve. The College should establish a more formal process for monitoring student achievement and the practice identified in computing programmes should be shared with other subject staff. It is advisable for the College to act effectively on the analysis of student achievement data at key stages within the quality cycle.

> 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.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 Paragraphs 1.1 to 1.5 indicate the policies and procedures that are used to ensure the maintenance of academic standards and they apply equally to the quality of learning opportunities. The Quality Assurance Handbook and Staff Handbook refer directly to the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities. The declared aim is to offer students high-quality learning opportunities and to maximise student achievement.

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

2.2 Paragraphs 1.6 to 1.8 identify the College's engagement with external reference points. This applies equally to the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities provided by the College.

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 learning and teaching strategy. It has drafted an assessment and internal verification strategy, which staff are aware of and are in the process of implementing. Staff take cognisance of the information on teaching and learning provided by the awarding organisations, linked to their various assessment requirements, but, as yet, there is no formal College statement of policy and expected practice that is owned by staff. It is advisable for the College to publish and disseminate to staff and students a formal teaching, learning and assessment strategy.

2.4 Feedback on the formative assessment of student work draws on effective oral tutorial comment, but is less well developed in terms of written comment. Staff have started to use assessment front sheets for formative assessments, but the quality of comments and completion of these sheets are variable. Students observed that they are very satisfied with the volume and quality of oral feedback and welcome the regular dialogue with the Director of Studies. It is advisable for the College to supplement the oral feedback given to students on their work with more detailed qualitative written feedback.

2.5 The College is committed to promoting the continuing professional development of staff. A formal peer teaching observation scheme is at an early stage of development to run alongside a staff appraisal process. Both should contribute to enhancing staff self-reflection and good practice in teaching and learning. It is desirable for the College to implement fully the peer teaching observation scheme and the staff appraisal process.

2.6 Students' views on teaching and learning are noted regularly through class programme questionnaires. These are analysed by the Principal and the Vice Principal, who consult with staff informally and discuss any necessary action with individual staff. The students reported improvements in teaching and learning resulting from this process. They cited other examples of responsiveness, including the provision of a student common room, access to wireless internet and arrangements for external visits to enhance learning.

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

2.7   The College has developed close professional relationships with its students, who feel well supported academically and pastorally, and value easy access to academic and administrative staff. Student performance in continuous assessment is logged both in hard copy and on the database management system. Students are required to attend all classes. The College monitors student attendance, using a daily register, and students are aware of attendance requirements and those relating to timekeeping.

2.8   Students expressed satisfaction with College policies and procedures for admissions, enrolment and induction. The computing team provides feedback in the form of learning activities within individual action plans arising from formative assessment. The College has introduced additional study skills and English language tuition, but this needs strengthening on a subject basis, according to differing student needs. It is desirable to enhance in students the acquisition of discipline-related English language skills.

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

2.9   The College is committed to support staff through the provision of in-house and external training, including support for staff seeking higher level qualifications. This is linked to the appraisal system, which includes the expectation that staff will take the initiative and consider their own training and development needs, as well as those indicated by student feedback, peer observation and formative assessment feedback from the internal verifier.

2.10   Induction forms an important element of staff development and recent in-house training has been devoted to the use of the new e-learning portal system. Lecturers are encouraged to attend developmental training sessions convened by the awarding organisations, in addition to conferences and scholarly/professional activity. As indicated in paragraph 1.4, the College needs to develop a comprehensive and coherent staff development policy, which addresses the enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities, as well as academic standards. It is aware of the need to develop a system to identify good practice and disseminate it among staff.

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

2.11   The College premises incorporate 22 suitably equipped teaching rooms, two computer suites, a small library, administration space and a student common room, in addition to open learning computer facilities. There is good access to the building, including disabled access and disabled conveniences. The ASIC reports indicate that the facilities are fit for purpose. The College has a resource allocation plan and uses feedback from students and staff to ensure the relevance and sufficiency of resources.

2.12   Access to the new learning e-portal is through the College website. This is at an early stage of development, but students and staff confirm that it is potentially very helpful and constitutes a useful form of communication, incorporating relevant programme information.

2.13   The modest library provides students with core texts and additional reference materials. Students are also directed to local London libraries and the British Library for postgraduate students. Students have remote access to the College's electronic resources. The management of learning resources has met the needs of the initial intake of students.

The rapid increase in student numbers since October 2012 presents a challenge to the College in terms of learning resources and requires continuing investment in 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 provider's public information communicate to students and other stakeholders about the higher education it provides?

3.1   The College has a range of effective mechanisms for communicating information about its provision to students and other stakeholders. The website and prospectus hold information relating to the awarding organisations' qualifications. This information is taken directly from the websites of the awarding organisations, that have full responsibility for the information. The College provides links to these websites, so that the students have up-to-date programme specifications and assessment information.

3.2   Students find the website easy to navigate and well laid out. It also provides key information for prospective students. During induction, students are provided with a detailed information pack, and a comprehensive and useful student handbook, which is also available on the website.

3.3   The College has published clear guidelines on public information for its recruiting agents abroad, in the context of stringent contractual conditions. The agent agreement indicates that the only authorised source of information and publicity is the College website.

3.4   Staff teaching the computing programmes have recently launched a new College journal aimed at the wider academic community, designating it as the *International Journal of Business Informatics*. This is an interactive site, inviting global researchers to contribute and review work in progress, thereby encouraging the creation of a society of experts in the field.

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

3.5   Responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of public information rests with the Principal. All changes to the website must be agreed by the Principal, and staff and students understand this. The policy also applies to all published information produced by agents. The Principal is committed to reading all material intended for publication, but recognises that ultimately this role will need to be supported by another member of staff. The team was informed that the Senior Management Team is developing policies and procedures to ensure that information is attractive and motivating, while being subject to a formal system of editorial control.

> 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]

London School of Technology action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight December 2012						
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:						
• formalise the written records of the quality management meetings to reflect clearly actions taken and follow-up at subsequent meetings (paragraph 1.1)	Establish membership and terms of reference for the Quality Management Group Appoint Minutes Secretary and fix dates for all 2013 meetings Agree standard Agenda All meetings to be action focused	March 2013	Principal	Membership and terms of reference agreed at earliest possible meeting Quality Management file contains minutes and actions (followed) plus calendar of meetings	Director	Annual audit of committees provides positive feedback on frequency, attendance and actions Reported in QAA annual monitoring
• act effectively on the analysis of the student achievement data at key stages within the quality cycle (paragraph 1.9)	Review data collection (formative assessment) strategy and amend/revise to ensure efficient and effective system is in operation	March 2013	Director of Studies	Increased attendance and retention rates Data bank refined and focused Evidence of	Principal	Report(s) to QAA and awarding organisations are data rich and reflect effective and efficient monitoring of students

---

[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 organisations.

	Review key data streams (attendance, student progress, awarding organisation results) in weeks 6, 12 and 16			(student focused) actions		Positive outcomes in terms of completion rates
• publish and disseminate to staff and students a formal teaching, learning and assessment strategy (paragraph 2.3)	Review existing policies and handbooks to extract relevant material Write user-friendly handbook establishing minimum standards, rights and responsibilities for all stakeholders Disseminate at staff and student induction sessions	March 2013	Principal	Aggregation of current policies/ handbooks plus additional information for newly formatted - higher levels of student/staff awareness in terms of College expectations Enhanced quality of engagement	Director	Retention rates improved - quality of teaching and learning enhanced Awarding organisations commend new guidelines - positive impact on performance
• supplement the oral feedback given to students on their work with more detailed qualitative written feedback (paragraph 2.4).	Provide briefing document and half day staff development session on minimum acceptable standards of timely student feedback - formative and summative Sample all modules in first year to ensure compliance	April 2013	Principal	Student feedback (quality and quantity) improved More effective formative function results in better summative performance Examples of good practice adopted as a kitemark	Director	Enhanced completion rates Student feedback highlights quality of guidance Staff understanding enhanced - and monitored Awarding organisation

				Minimum standards exceeded - and monitored		reports reflect improvements
	Establish feedback mechanisms					
				Session completed		
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:						
• strengthen its experience of curriculum development in higher education (paragraph 1.3)	Provide a full day, staff development event focused on expectations of the Academic Infrastructure and the awarding organisations (Edexcel/university partners)	April 2013	Director of Studies	Session completed Staff/managers empowered in terms of ability to develop own curriculum Clear understanding of guidelines - developing own modules and/or innovative assessment strategies	Principal	Potential university partners aware of the College's developing ability to provide an effective and efficient curriculum plan
• develop a comprehensive and effective staff development policy to embrace the needs of part-time staff (paragraphs 1.4 and 2.10)	Review and revise staff development policy Link to identified need - peer observation scheme - and College provision	April 2013	Director of Studies	New staff development policy evidenced Clear knowledge and understanding by all staff of expectations and opportunities	Principal	Increased level of staff retention Increased level of participation in staff development events - flexibly provided to embrace part-time

	Timetable two x three hour sessions each term - internally and externally sourced (see first desirable recommendation) Ring-fenced staff development budget, linked to fourth desirable recommendation			Calendar of staff development events Peer observation scheme in operation and evidenced in staff files		staff Increased level of staff competence and positive impact on performance
• establish formal course committees for all programmes (paragraph 1.5)	Establish course committee - chaired by course coordinator - for each area Student representative Termly meetings with an action agenda Establish terms of reference and membership	March 2013	Director of Studies	Terms of reference and membership agreed Course committees formed and meeting regularly under an agreed chair College calendar reflects schedule of meetings Action focused standard agenda	Principal	Formalisation of management roles provides effective proactive guidance and support Action focused - minutes provide context for accountability
• implement fully the peer teaching observation scheme and the staff appraisal process (paragraph 2.5)	Provide half-day staff development session on role and value of peer (observation) and student feedback and subsequent action	April 2013	Director of Studies	Session completed Linked to second desirable recommendation in terms of staff development	Principal	Awarding organisation review and QAA annual monitoring Reflect on positive impact of

	Link to second desirable recommendation – continuous professional development context for sharing ideas and/or good practice			Peer review recognised as non-threatening positive sharing of ideas and opportunities Student feedback enhanced and effective - recognised as action focused Loop closed		peer observation and far more urgent/ reactive approach to student comments
• enhance in students the acquisition of discipline-related English language skills (paragraph 2.8).	Provide briefing paper to all staff on (1) the advantages of creating an English-language only environment, and (2) the need to promote in-class group activities as part of formative assessment strategy	April 2013	Principal	Increased level of English interaction inside and outside the classroom Staff awareness enhanced - need to create formative assessment opportunities promoting language	Director	Reflected in annual reporting cycle - increased participation (attendance), retention and completion rates within 12 month period

About QAA

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

QAA's aims are to:

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

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

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

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

Glossary

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

---

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

quality See **academic quality**.

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

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

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