Barnsley College

Initial Review
by the Quality Assurance Agency
for Higher Education

March 2013

Contents

About this review

This is a report of an Initial Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Barnsley College. The review took place on 18-19 March 2013 and was conducted by a team of three reviewers, as follows:

- Dr Carol Vielba
- Mr Brian Whitehead
- Mr Jamie Clark (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Barnsley College and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality are likely to meet UK expectations. In this report the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
    - threshold academic standards[1]
    - the quality of learning opportunities
    - the quality of information
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the institution is taking or plans to take.

A summary of the key findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. Explanations of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 4.

The QAA website gives more information about QAA and its mission.[2] Background information about Barnsley College is given on page 3 of this report. A dedicated page of the website explains the method for Initial Review and has links to the review guidance and other informative documents.[3]

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[1] For an explanation of terms, see the glossary at the end of this report.
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/pages/default.aspx
[3] www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/rche/pages/initial-review.aspx

Key findings

This section summarises the QAA review team's key findings about Barnsley College (the College).

QAA's judgements about Barnsley College

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Barnsley College.

- Academic standards at Barnsley College **are likely to meet UK expectations** for threshold standards.
- The quality of student learning opportunities at Barnsley College **is likely to meet UK expectations**.
- The quality of information produced for students and applicants **is likely to meet UK expectations**.

Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following **features of good practice** at Barnsley College:

- the review by the Curriculum and Quality Committee of a composite report on external moderation and verification, which provides effective institutional oversight of external examining (paragraph 1.4)
- the performance review system which is firmly embedded throughout all levels of the College (paragraphs 1.4, 1.8, 1.12-1.14 and 2.4)
- the five-stage internal verification system, which facilitates the integrity of assessment (paragraph 1.8)
- the identification and dissemination of good teaching and learning practice through the College's well established peer observation system (paragraph 2.2)
- the comprehensive and widely available management information, which effectively underpins the management of quality and standards (paragraph 2.14).

Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendations** to Barnsley College:

- strengthen the representation of higher education students on senior-level College committees; this should be implemented for the start of the academic year 2013-14 (paragraph 2.7)
- formalise the process for conducting end-of-module or unit evaluation by students, for the start of the academic year 2013-14 (paragraph 2.10)
- integrate existing information into a single higher education student charter or similar document in time for enrolment of students at the start of the academic year 2013-14, and ensure that the document is reviewed by staff and students annually (paragraph 2.30).

Affirmation of action being taken

No affirmations of actions being taken were made by the review team.

About Barnsley College

Barnsley College is a large, general further education and tertiary college serving Barnsley Metropolitan Borough and the surrounding areas in South Yorkshire. The College is the main provider of post-16 education in the Borough. The College operates on nine sites within Barnsley.

Barnsley is an area of high social disadvantage and income deprivation which continues to experience serious economic challenges, in particular low employment growth, skills poverty and ingrained worklessness, lack of aspiration, and a dependency culture.

The College's mission is to '…provide exceptional opportunities and inspirational learning experiences for young people, adults, businesses and the diverse communities we serve'.

In 2006, the College transferred its higher education provision to the University of Huddersfield, operating from the University Campus Barnsley. Since then, apart from one franchised Foundation Degree, the College has not offered higher education until September 2012, when it commenced offering a small portfolio of Higher National Certificates (HNC) and Higher National Diplomas (HND). The higher education offered consists of:

- Foundation Degree Engineering (franchised from Staffordshire University)
- Higher National Certificate/Diploma Sport (Pearson Edexcel)
- Higher National Certificate/Diploma Health and Social Care (Pearson Edexcel)
- Higher National Certificate/Diploma Business (Pearson Edexcel).

The total number on these programmes is 40 full-time and 20 part-time students.

In October 2012, the University of Huddersfield approached Barnsley College about a possible transfer of the University Campus Barnsley provision to the College. The University of Huddersfield felt that the Campus no longer provided a strategic fit to their five-year plans.

At the time of the review visit, the College was engaged in negotiations with the University of Huddersfield to progress the transfer. Subject to the agreement of all parties, the transfer is planned to take place in August 2013. The transfer would include the provision, building and staff. New learners would be Barnsley College learners, while second and third-year students would remain with the University of Huddersfield, with the provision remaining at the Campus on a franchised arrangement to the College. The University of Huddersfield will remain as the awarding body for the programmes currently offered at the University Campus Barnsley.

The transfer would see Barnsley College's provision increase from four programmes to 12 and from 60 students to 650.

Explanation of the findings about Barnsley College

This section explains the key findings of the review in more detail.[4]

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a brief glossary at the end of this report. A fuller glossary of terms[5] is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the Review of College Higher Education handbook, also on the QAA website.[6]

1   Academic standards

Outcome

The academic standards at Barnsley College **are likely to meet UK expectations** for threshold standards. The team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

Meeting external qualifications benchmarks

1.1   All higher education programmes within the scope of the review have been allocated to the appropriate level of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The College's two awarding bodies are responsible for ensuring that programmes have appropriate outcomes and suitable volumes of study.

1.2   Programme and module or unit specifications indicate the appropriate academic levels of programmes in the monitoring and management of provision throughout the College. Staff who met the review team demonstrated awareness of the differences between levels across and within further and higher education.

Use of external examiners

1.3   The College's awarding bodies appoint external examiners. They define the role of the relevant external examiners and are responsible for their appointment and management. Both awarding bodies have procedures whereby serious concerns about standards can be raised directly. External examiners have been appointed to the HNC/HND provision, but a full cycle of oversight is yet to be completed and so external examiner reports have not yet been considered through the College systems.

1.4   The College makes comprehensive use of its external examiner reports, both at programme and institutional level. All external examiner or moderator reports are used to inform the annual cycle of performance review (see paragraphs 1.12-1.14). The College's Curriculum and Quality Committee receives an annual summary of these external reports noting strengths and good practice, areas where action has been required, and areas with institutional-level policy implications. Although this system has been utilised mainly for further education programmes and the single Foundation Degree to this point, reports relating to higher education programmes will be considered similarly. The review by the Curriculum and Quality Committee of a composite report on external moderation and verification provides effective institutional oversight of external examining and is a **feature of good practice**.

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[4] The full body of evidence used to compile the report is not published. However, it is available on request for inspection; please contact QAA's Reviews Group.
[5] www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary/pages/default.aspx
[6] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/rche-handbook.aspx

Assessment and standards

1.5   Effective frameworks for assessment are supplied by the College's awarding bodies and the College's own assessment policy. The College's assessment policy sets out the purpose of assessment and principles of good practice in the conduct of assessment. Initiatives to enhance assessment strategies and practice are included in the higher education provision action plan. College policies are regularly reviewed and their relevance to different learners, including higher education learners, is clearly labelled. Policy documents relevant to assessment are made available electronically to staff and students.

1.6   Students are well informed about assessment requirements. Assessment schemes are published in programme specifications and student handbooks, all of which are available on the virtual learning environment. The students who met the review team confirmed that they were clear about what was expected of them and could ask for additional explanation if they were unclear.

1.7   The College's policy is to mark and return assessments that are received on time within 10 days. Students who met the review team confirmed that their work was returned promptly within the timescale and that they received helpful feedback. Grades are received on the virtual learning environment and further guidance and feedback is available from tutors.

1.8   The College has a five-stage internal verification system that is designed to assure the quality of marking and therefore the standards of the provision. The system involves mapping the assessment structure of a programme, agreeing a schedule for the review of assessment marking, sampling the work of all learners on a programme, observing and providing feedback to assessors, and moderating proposed marks. The process is managed at the departmental level and overseen by the Curriculum and Quality Committee. The outcomes of internal verification feed into local and institutional-level performance reviews (see paragraphs 1.12-1.14). The five-stage internal verification system, which facilitates the integrity of assessment, is a **feature of good practice**.

1.9   The College has a formal policy and procedures relating to plagiarism that reflect the requirements of awarding bodies. The policy includes guidance for staff on how to brief students on what is expected of them, and how to deal with suspected cases. Avoidance of plagiarism is taught in study skills sessions on the HNC/HND programmes. Student handbooks contain advice to students on good academic conduct and how to avoid plagiarism. Students who met the review team confirmed that they were made aware of plagiarism and how to avoid it.

1.10   There are effective systems for safeguarding the integrity of assessment data. The Examinations Department maintains records of student grades. All assessment records have to be signed off by all parties involved before the Examinations Department will process results.

Setting and maintaining programme standards

1.11   Standards are maintained through the College's very effective system of monitoring and review of programmes. Standards are set and programmes designed by the awarding bodies.

1.12   The College has a robust system of continuous monitoring of courses. Performance review takes place at departmental level on a quarterly basis. The performance of courses

and staff is reviewed against a wide range of key performance indicators and strategic goals. The annual cycle begins at institutional level with the College Development Plan, which is agreed by the Board of Governors. The plan contains strategic priorities and targets.

1.13   Departments finalise action plans in the early part of the cycle and discuss progress on a quarterly basis with the Senior Management Team. Departmental performance reviews are preceded by Quality Reviews, during which the head of department and the Director of Quality and Performance review key indicators. Indicators cover such areas as applications, retention, teaching observations, complaints, student feedback and external reports. The review team saw an example of the integrated nature of the process where one department's performance review meeting was immediately followed by a departmental development day to brief staff and gather ideas for new initiatives.

1.14   Departments also produce annual self-assessment reports, which grade and review performance in relation to outcomes for learners, teaching and learning, and leadership and management. The reviews contain action plans. Departmental self-assessment reports feed into an institutional self-assessment report, which is considered by the Board of Governors. The performance review process is reviewed annually and improvements embedded in the detailed instructions issued each year. The performance review system which is firmly embedded throughout all levels of the College is a **feature of good practice**.

Subject benchmarks

1.15   The College actively disseminates information about the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code), including subject benchmarks, to management and teaching staff. The College also has experience of responding to the requirements of a range of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies in the rest of its provision. Subject benchmarks do not apply directly to the Pearson Edexcel qualifications, although their relevance is noted on programme specifications. Staff teaching on the programmes are aware of the implications of subject benchmarks for teaching and assessing students in order to facilitate progression from HNCs and HNDs to bachelor's degrees.

1.16   The structure and content of the Foundation Degree franchised by Staffordshire University is informed by external reference points, including subject benchmarks and the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark*. The relevant subject benchmark is recorded on the programme specification and reviewed during programme approval. External examiners comment on the programme's continuing alignment with subject benchmarks.

2   Quality of learning opportunities

Outcome

The quality of learning opportunities at Barnsley College **is likely to meet UK expectations**. The team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

Professional standards for teaching and learning

2.1   The College is committed to the support of professional standards and learning and teaching staff are fully conversant with their responsibilities for facilitating and supporting learning. The staff currently teaching on higher education programmes are appropriately qualified in terms of both subject and teaching qualifications. Students commented on the high quality of the teaching they experienced.

2.2   The College has a very well established peer observation of teaching process, which applies to all teaching staff employed at the College. Outcomes of peer reviews are forwarded to the Quality Office, which identifies any emerging staff development needs and reports these to the Human Resources Department for incorporation in the College's staff development programme. Examples of best practice identified through peer observations have been video-recorded for use in various staff development activities throughout the year. The College also conducts a self-imposed annual external review of its teaching to verify the internal judgements made regarding the quality of teaching. The identification and dissemination of good teaching and learning practice through the College's well established peer observation system is a **feature of good practice**.

2.3   Staff are very aware of the need to continuously develop their research and scholarly activity. Staff identify what research and scholarly activity they wish to undertake through the College's appraisal system. The review team was told by members of the College's Senior Management Team that the College is committed, both financially and pastorally, to fully supporting its staff in developing their skills in these areas. The College has the early stages of a peer-mentoring scheme in place and also has 'advanced practitioners' in every department who are responsible for supporting the development of staff. The team was told that the College intends to appoint an advanced practitioner with specific responsibility for higher education.

Learning resources

2.4   Learning resources and the College's management of them ensure that students are able to meet the learning outcomes of the current higher education programmes on offer. The College currently has no specific higher education resourcing strategy, though there is a college-wide capital investment plan that sets out the wider College investment and planning strategy, including for its learning resources. The performance review process also acts as a platform for the management and evaluation of current and future resourcing needs. The College's higher education working plan recognises the need for future investment in higher education-specific learning resources.

2.5   Students are very enthusiastic about the quality and range of learning resources available to them. The College's higher education provision is taught in the College's new main building, which is equipped with new, up to date learning resources and information and technology facilities.

2.6   The College's central learning resources are managed and operated by the Learning Curve Department. The Learning Curve is responsible for providing 'quality learner resource environments', 'providing comprehensive study support facilities', and maintaining equipment and library reading materials to support all curriculum areas. Students were particularly enthusiastic about the responsiveness of the College in obtaining new book resources at short notice. Longer-term needs for resources are captured by the individual course's periodic review and business planning processes.

Student voice

2.7   The College currently has limited formal student representative structures in place for its higher education learners, but has ambitions and plans to develop them over the coming years. There is already a well established system for further education course representation at both local and central levels. The local representative system that the College uses for its further education provision has already been rolled out to students on its higher education programmes. The College has plans to introduce formal representative positions on its Curriculum and Quality Committee and its Board of Governors for higher

education learners. Formal training is provided for all course representatives and there is a dedicated section on the College virtual learning environment that provides representatives with detailed information and support to help them carry out their duties. The team **recommends** that the College strengthen the representation of higher education students on senior-level College committees. This should be implemented for the start of the academic year 2013-14.

2.8   The College actively seeks the views of students in various ways. Learner surgeries are open to all students and learner forums specifically for course representatives are the formal platforms for students and course representatives to raise any issues and give feedback to College staff. These meetings are held termly and any actions are reported to the Senior Management Team for response by the Vice-Principal (Students). Actions remain open until students have confirmed at a subsequent meeting that the issues have been resolved. Students confirmed this process has been very effective at resolving issues that have arisen. Minutes and actions from these meetings are posted on the College virtual learning environment for all to see.

2.9   Students stated that they believed that the College listened to their course representatives and that genuine action is taken on their feedback. During the review visit, it was made clear by all those who were interviewed that there is a College culture of openness and transparency. Tutors are enthusiastic about supporting their students and operate an open-door policy for students to speak to them about any issue they may have.

2.10   The College conducts a generic learner survey and has data for the first set of higher education students following their first term of study. The results feed into the College self-assessment reporting process. There is, however, no standard method or practice for gathering formal module feedback from students. Very few modules or units had formally undertaken student evaluation. In order to ensure consistency of opportunity and to assist with the enhancement of learning, the team **recommends** that the College formalise the process for conducting end-of-module or unit evaluation by students, for the start of the academic year 2013-14.

Management information

2.11   The College has a well established and maintained management information system in place to monitor its further education provision. The same system is now being utilised for its higher education provision. The system is constantly updated, for instance when registers of attendance are taken, and provides what is in effect real time data. Both College management and course staff can easily access the information they require, and individual staff can access information about their own performance.

2.12   Management and staff can view information about individual students, such as learning support needs, attendance and progression of each student. Students are tracked at all stages of progression through their course. The College management can track students' attendance across different classes or modules and compare the results to identify any anomalies that can then be addressed with a targeted response.

2.13   The system is also used to keep a record of the College staff peer observations. The information is available to the senior and course management teams, and enables them to see a detailed picture of what is happening. For example, each set of data can be interpreted and presented in a visual format so that it can be easily understood and compared with previous data.

2.14   The management information system provides accessible and timely information for use in the performance review and self-assessment processes. The College and its staff use

this information at all levels of the organisation to inform College management of quality and standards. The comprehensive and widely available management information, which effectively underpins the management of quality and standards, is a **feature of good practice**.

Admission to the College

2.15   Current students enrolled on the HNC/HND courses were admitted primarily through internal progression. All students who were interested in taking up a place were interviewed by the subject's course leader. Students said that they felt that they had been provided with ample information about what to expect from the course, and about what was expected of them to gain entry. From 2013 onwards, the College will be using the UCAS online application system for all higher education applications. Special training has been given to staff working within higher education in preparation for this change.

2.16   The College has a published admissions policy. This was reviewed in early 2013 to incorporate reference to higher education courses. Students who met the team confirmed that they felt the admissions process was clear, fair and understandable.

Complaints and appeals

2.17   The complaints and appeals process is well established for the College's further education programmes and this has been recently adapted to accommodate higher education students. The College's procedures clearly set out the process that any complaint or appeal will follow, and give clear information about deadlines and turnaround times to be expected.

2.18   Students whom the team met were aware that the procedures existed, although none had needed to use them. They stated that the first point of contact was generally their subject tutor, with whom they could initially discuss any queries that they may have. If this did not resolve their issue, then students were aware of where to get information on the formal procedures.

2.19   An annual report that summarises complaints received by the College as a whole goes to the College's Curriculum and Quality Committee. The review team was informed that this report would in future be separated into sections to include data relating to higher education-specific complaints and appeals.

Career advice and guidance

2.20   Careers advice and guidance for higher education students is currently adequate. Careers advice is available from the centralised College Careers Advice Service if students want it. The College also has a large careers resource area on its virtual learning environment. This is used by students to find out information about career advice and opportunities.

2.21   In general, careers advice is given by the course teams in the context of the course discipline. This advice and support is not built into the course curriculum and is an informal arrangement between tutors and students. The small class sizes allow for a very personal approach to support and careers guidance, and as such the students whom the team met were happy with the careers advice that they had so far received.

Supporting disabled students

2.22   The College has appropriate policies, procedures and services in place to support the needs of disabled students. The College's Additional Learning Support Unit is responsible for the management and provision of student learning and disability support. The team liaises with academic staff to ensure that they are kept informed of the specific needs of an individual. They maintain and manage the information relating to a student's specific needs using the College's management information system. The system allows academic and support staff to see all information relating to a student's learning and disability needs. This information can be personalised to the individual student and notes can be added.

2.23   Students were clear that they are aware of where to go to get additional support should they require it, and were very complimentary of the support they had received so far from the College. Students identified the College's virtual learning environment as the main source, after tutors, for finding out information relating to any learning support questions.

Supporting international students

2.24   The College has no international students enrolled on its higher education courses, however it does have aspirations to recruit in the future. It has recently been awarded a Highly Trusted Sponsor Licence rating from the UK Border Agency, allowing it to sponsor international students at an as yet unspecified date.

Flexible, distributed and e-learning

2.25   Students at the College have access to a wide range of technologies to support their learning, but the College does not currently offer learning opportunities through flexible and distributed learning, and it is not its intention to do so for at least three or four years. However, one of the College's strategic priorities is to develop an 'improved twenty-first century information technology structure', and the possibilities of programmes delivered through flexible and distance learning in the future will be considered.

Work-based and placement learning

2.26   All four higher education programmes currently offer - or will be offering in the second year of the programme - learning opportunities through work-based or placement learning. College-based placement officers try to arrange suitable placements. This has proved difficult in some cases, being the first year of the programmes, but the students confirmed that every effort is made to match their needs to the placement. The placement officers ensure that the placement provider is fully aware of the expectations of the College, the needs of the students, and the support available to them from the College. The placement officers also perform regular monitoring visits, with additional visits from course leaders when necessary.

2.27   In all of the HNCs/HNDs, there are assessments that draw on the work-based experiences of the students, and students commented on the usefulness of these experiences. The Foundation Degree in Engineering has a double-module work-based project that involves students making presentations and interim reports, as well as a final assessment based on the experience. They are supported by a work-based mentor and regular visits by their College tutor.

2.28   The majority of students were satisfied with their work-based experiences, although some students commented that they did not get their preferred options. However, these

students also commented that the College responded to their comments and the College has acknowledged that the development of employer links is a key area for improvement across all programmes.

Student charter

2.29   The College does not have a document setting out the mutual expectations of the institution and its students. However, students do have the information available to them in many forms and they do know what they can expect and what is required of them, and what to do if things do not meet expected standards. Students also sign a student agreement at the beginning of their programme.

2.30   The team **recommends** that the College integrate existing information into a single higher education student charter or similar document in time for enrolment of students at the start of the academic year 2013-14, and that the document be reviewed by staff and students annually.

3   Quality of information for students and applicants

Summary

The quality of information at Barnsley College **is likely to meet UK expectations**. The team's reasons for this judgement are given below.

3.1   Information for the public and prospective students is provided through a prospectus and various marketing channels, such as the website, newspapers and radio, and these are signed off by the Vice-Principal (Students).

3.2   Most current students are those who have progressed internally and received information about the higher education programmes directly from tutors, although some students responded to advertising. The College has collected information on where students learned about the programmes, but there is no evidence at the moment that the internal mechanisms are effective in bringing about changes.

3.3   Information for current students is fit for purpose, trustworthy, and is readily accessible in several forms. Handbooks are produced by course leaders, signed off by the head of department, and available in hard copy and on the virtual learning environment. Students are also given a pocket-sized Student Guide 2012-13, although the main source and first line of information continues to be the College tutors.

3.4   As the College is in the first year of the Pearson Edexcel programmes, there is only one programme - the Foundation Degree in Engineering - that has received external examiner reports, and these have not been shared with students. However, the College is aware of the need to be transparent and to provide this access in the future.

Glossary

Initial Review is very similar to Review of College Higher Education (RCHE). The guidance note for Initial Review is intended to be read in conjunction with the RCHE handbook. The RCHE handbook gives formal definitions of terms such as 'threshold standards' and 'learning opportunities' (pages 17-20). This glossary provides a quick reference to the terms.

The guidance for Initial Review can be found on the QAA website at: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/initial-review-guidance.aspx.

The RCHE handbook can be found on the QAA website at: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/rche-handbook.aspx.

If you require formal definitions of other terms, please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/pages/default.aspx.

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **glossary** on the QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary/pages/default.aspx.

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

credit(s): A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education programmes of study, expressed as 'numbers of credits' at a specific level.

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

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.

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

Quality Code: Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of reference points for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the Expectations that all providers are required to meet.

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.