



London Studio Centre

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

May 2013

Key findings about London Studio Centre

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in May 2013, 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 programme it offers on behalf of Middlesex University and the University of the Arts London.

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 bodies.

The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Good practice

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

- the comprehensive student support that is highly responsive to individual needs (paragraph 2.6)
- the comprehensive, well-designed and easy-to-navigate website (paragraph 3.2).

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 the senior committee structure (paragraph 1.4)
- further develop its engagement with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraphs 1.5 and 1.6)
- update the Quality Assurance Manual and increase the scope of the Staff Handbook (paragraph 3.4).

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

- improve the timeliness of the return of written feedback to students on their academic work (paragraph 2.5)
- increase the provision of staff development related to the Quality Code, Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality (paragraph 2.9)
- increase the oversight of its social media sites (paragraph 3.6).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at London Studio Centre (the Centre), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. 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 the programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of Middlesex University and the University of the Arts, London. The review was carried out by Ms Camilla Bunt, Ms Deborah Trayhurn and Professor Anthony Whitehouse (reviewers) and Dr Peter Steer (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 Centre, meetings with staff and students and a QAA report.

The review team also considered the Centre's use of the relevant external reference point:

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education

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

London Studio Centre was established in 1978. Its original premises were in Tavistock Square, Central London. It then relocated to premises in King's Cross, which it occupied for 26 years until summer 2012 when the Centre relocated to the 'artsdepot' in North Finchley. The artsdepot is a professional arts venue which opened in 2004. The practical training of the final year students takes place at two external dance spaces, although the Centre plans to locate these activities at the artsdepot from the academic year 2013-14. Approximately 100 full-time, part-time and fractional teaching staff deliver the programmes.

Management at the Centre is led by the Director who is responsible to the Trustees. Reporting to the Director, the Dean of Studies/Programme Leader leads the management of the two higher education programmes. Each area of subject specialism is led by a Head of Department and each module administered by a Module Leader on the Middlesex University programme. Enrolment in the academic year 2012-13 totals 274. All students are full-time.

At the time of the review, the Centre offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath its awarding bodies with the number of students in brackets:

Middlesex University (years one and two only)

- BA (Hons) Theatre Dance (192)

University of the Arts London (year three only)

- BA (Hons) Theatre Dance (82)

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/educational-oversight

² www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

The provider's stated responsibilities

The Centre takes responsibility for the delivery of the provision, including the development and marking of appropriate assessments. The awarding bodies oversee the provision using a variety of procedures, including validation, annual monitoring and the appointment of external examiners. The Centre is responsible for information about learning opportunities, with the awarding bodies sharing responsibility where documents carry their name or logo.

Recent developments

The Centre is in the process of transferring the delivery of all the provision to the artsdepot, North Finchley, and having the BA (Hons) Theatre Dance validated only by Middlesex University. The validation by the University of the Arts, London was part of a long-term plan for a merger with the Centre that ultimately did not proceed. The plan had involved the Centre being increasingly integrated into the University of the Arts, London's structures and procedures.

Student numbers have grown from 217 in 2010-11 to 276 for this academic year. Only final year students are studying on the previous University of Arts, London programme.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on the higher education programmes at the Centre were invited to present a submission to the review team and did so in March 2013. The student submission was compiled by student representatives following a focus group meeting held in January 2013. This meeting was attended by the Programme Leader and the Centre's Institutional Link Tutor, as well as the facilitator. The student focus group contained 14 student representatives nominated by the Centre to be broadly representative of the student body. Administrators typed up the notes from the focus group meeting and made these available to the student group. One of the students wrote up the draft student submission, which was disseminated for comments and feedback, firstly to the rest of the focus group and then to the whole student body using the virtual learning environment. Subsequently, the student submission was reviewed by the Academic Quality Enhancement Manager (Externality) at Middlesex University. Students met the review coordinator at the preparatory meeting and with the team during the review. Their involvement was helpful for the team and provided an insight into a number of topics, including the scope and effectiveness of student representation and the value of the virtual learning environment.

Detailed findings about London Studio Centre

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 Responsibilities delegated to the Centre by its university validating partners are clearly defined in institutional agreements and are understood by staff. Managerial responsibilities were considered in detail at the Middlesex University validation.

1.2 Managerial responsibility for academic standards is clear and appropriate for the nature of the provision. The Trustees have overall responsibility for the management of academic standards with operational authority delegated to the Director. Overall responsibility for programme management lies with the Dean of Studies who also holds the role of Programme Leader. He reports to the Director. The management and delivery of the programmes is strengthened for the parts validated by Middlesex University by a university-based link tutor and a link tutor at the Centre who provide a valuable source of communication between the institutions. The link tutors liaise effectively to support the delivery of the programme. They have overall responsibility for production of the annual monitoring report using a comprehensive framework provided by Middlesex University. For the University of the Arts, London, reporting mechanisms, including the Dean's annual monitoring report and enhancement plan, reflect the proposed integration of the Centre within the University's school structure and are appropriate within that context.

1.3 The Board of Study provides effective management at programme level. It includes student and university representatives. A number of subcommittees report to the Board of Study, including Academic Resources, the Admissions Review Board, the Library Committee, the Health and Safety Committee and the Student Representatives Group. The Board of Study minutes indicate that programme management is considered in a thorough and effective way with all stakeholders being properly involved.

1.4 The Centre has identified a necessary change to its committee structure. Recently, in the context of the movement of programme validation to Middlesex University, the Centre has considered the benefits of changing its committee structure at a senior level. It identified the need for an overview of the provision above the programme level and plans to introduce an Academic Board for the next academic year. Some tasks to be undertaken by the proposed Academic Board, including detailed consideration of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code), were not necessary under the proposed integration of the Centre into the structure of the University of the Arts, London. All relevant committees, including the Board of Study, will report to the Academic Board. The examination boards will continue to report directly to the relevant University. It is **advisable** for the Centre to review the senior committee structure.

How effectively does the Centre make use of external reference points to manage academic standards?

1.5 Delivery of the provision aligns with much of the Quality Code, although there are opportunities for its more detailed use. Validations by the awarding bodies have ensured that aspects of the Quality Code are properly embedded in the award. For example, programme content is aligned with the subject benchmark statement Dance, Drama and Performance. Detailed programme specifications have been produced. External examiners indicate that delivery of the provision is informed by the Quality Code. However, the implications of the Quality Code for delivery have not been discussed in detail in the Centre's committees.

1.6 Since the Middlesex University validation in September 2011, there has been little mapping of the Centre's practice against the guidance in the Quality Code to ensure the maximum benefit is achieved. For example, a detailed consideration of the Quality Code, Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality, *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning*, has not occurred beyond validation to ensure all aspects have been covered and to inform appropriate staff development. The Centre provides staff with little detailed written guidance on assessment practice based on the Quality Code. It is **advisable** for the Centre to further develop its engagement with the Quality Code.

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

1.7 The moderation of work is effective. The assessment process is thorough with internal and external moderation in place. Internal moderators provide helpful comments to the original markers on student work and sometimes indicate possible changes to marks which then form the basis of an agreed mark. Statistics about the level and distribution of marks are considered to ensure compatibility between subject areas. Student work is subject to external moderation by the university validating partners. Moderation processes inform the progression and examination boards. University staff and external examiners attend these formal boards, the reports of which properly inform university processes and annual monitoring. Minutes of the boards indicate that academic standards are carefully considered and that decisions on individual candidates are made using the relevant university regulations.

1.8 External examiners confirm the effectiveness of the assessment process. Each assessment is accompanied by a programme description, learning outcomes and grade descriptors. External examiners visit up to five times a year giving them various opportunities to observe performances and studio-based technique assessments as well as written work. They indicate that assessment is effective in measuring student achievement. Their feedback is positive, with few suggestions for improvement. Where matters have been raised by an external examiner, the Centre has made and recorded an appropriate response coupled with suitable monitoring of the action points. External examiners have frequently acknowledged the Centres' positive response to their few concerns. The Middlesex University validated programme has not yet assessed at level 5, at which stage the University-appointed external examiner will be involved in the oversight of the programme.

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

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 The mechanisms for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities are generally appropriate. The Centre is responsible for teaching and learning, student support and the provision of resources necessary to deliver the award. The Director controls the resource budget. The Dean has operational responsibility for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. Requests for resources to enhance learning are responded to by the Director, and recent examples cited by staff and students, including the relaying of a studio floor, confirm the process is timely and effective. The Centre uses the structures described in paragraphs 1.2 and 1.3 to also oversee the maintenance and

enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities. However, as indicated in paragraph 1.4, the introduction of an Academic Board is planned for the academic year 2013-14 to enhance the oversight of all aspects of its delivery.

How effectively does the Centre make use of external reference points to manage and enhance learning opportunities?

2.2 The extent and nature of the use of the Quality Code to manage and enhance learning opportunities is the same as described in paragraphs 1.5 and 1.6.

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

2.3 Staff provide effective teaching and learning. The Centre has used an approach to the oversight and enhancement of teaching and learning that is appropriate for the nature of the provision and that is sometimes informal in nature. For example, there is no formal written teaching and learning strategy. It has suitable methods for recruiting teaching staff which include a presentation or class presentation. Overall suitability for employment is considered by a panel of staff. These procedures have resulted in the Centre employing a large number of highly skilled professional practitioners who are active in networks within their disciplines. Some are used as consultants to support the touring companies that give students an opportunity to develop their skills in live performances. The Centre is able to prevent cancellation of classes by having a list of suitable staff available to cover at short notice. External examiners indicate that the provision attains high standards in both practical and theory work aided by effective staff input. A peer observation scheme has been introduced that is valued by staff. Students report that the quality of the teaching that they receive is high. The Centre has recently introduced a virtual learning environment (VLE), which students reported is helpful for their learning.

2.4 Students provide regular and extensive feedback to staff which is properly considered. Students have access to an effective student representative system, easy access to the module leaders and to an assistant to the Programme Leader who acts as a further point of contact. Student representative meetings and the Board of Study are effective in gathering student views and taking appropriate action. Students reported that the teaching staff are easily accessible and responsive to their views.

2.5 Written feedback on academic work is not always timely. Staff indicated that they have a four to five week target for the return of work. However, this target is not always met, resulting in a significant reduction in the usefulness of the written feedback to the students when preparing their future assessments. It is **desirable** for the Centre to improve the timeliness of the return of written feedback to students on their academic work.

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

2.6 The Centre provides comprehensive student support that is highly responsive to individual needs. Its policies and procedures for supporting students are readily accessible on the Centre's VLE. Applicants are given a practical audition and an academic interview. Students reported that the application process is supportive and responsive to their individual aspirations by indicating areas for further development. Students have a personal tutor, who, through a timetabled tutorial system, provides them with detailed feedback and support on their professional development at the end of each term. Policies and effective processes on, for example, healthy eating and health and safety, detailed tutorial records and recording all aspects of student progress, mean that the Centre is responsive to individual student needs. The Centre compiles weekly updates on the student's personal circumstances, including information about those who are injured or unable to participate in

particular types of session. This information is available to teaching staff and is used to provide extensive support on an individual basis. The Board of Study and external examiners have reported that students in need are supported effectively. Students confirmed that the support they receive is comprehensive and useful in helping them to achieve their individual professional and academic aims. They reported that the various methods available for the collection of student views described in paragraph 2.4 gave them an effective influence on the nature of the support they receive. The comprehensive student support that is highly responsive to individual needs represents **good practice**.

How effectively does the Centre develop its staff in order to improve student learning opportunities?

2.7 The Centre's staff development strategy document provides adequate general guidance for the identification and dissemination of effective practice. It was produced as a condition of programme approval by Middlesex University in October 2011. Over 80 per cent of the teaching staff are self-employed and take primary responsibility for their own staff development. Two staff development priorities are the further development of the peer observation scheme and its closer linking to staff appraisals, which are being overseen by the Staff Development Strategy Group. The Centre encourages staff to undertake teaching awards although this is not a formal requirement. Ten staff have recently completed the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education award.

2.8 Staff development of a subject-specific nature is effective. Staff maintain active links with professional practice and have produced papers and undertaken higher degrees associated with their subject disciplines. Other external organisations have provided valuable guidance for staff. For example, the Centre is a member of DanceHE, the association representing universities and other institutions delivering higher education dance programmes. The Centre is accredited by the Council for Dance Education and Training, requiring alignment with the Council's requirements and guidance.

2.9 Recently, there have been few staff development opportunities not directly related to a subject discipline. For example, the guidance in the Quality Code, Part B: 'Assuring and enhancing academic quality' has not been used extensively to help staff enhance their practice. Since the decision not to merge with the University of the Arts, London in January 2011, there have been few staff development events to enhance the staff's knowledge of effective learning, teaching and assessment practice. It is **desirable** for the Centre to increase the provision of staff development related to the Quality Code, Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality.

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

2.10 Resource planning procedures are appropriate for the provision. The Director is proactive in dealing with staff and student requests for additional resources. Staff and students have made requests for additional resources through the various methods for collecting feedback. The Director quickly evaluates these requests and makes a decision. Progress is monitored by the Board of Study. This primarily managerial approach is appropriate for the nature and size of the institution, enabling action to be taken quickly. Recent improvements in resource provision include improved access to e-journals and new video capture and editing facilities.

2.11 Resources are suitable for the delivery of the provision. The Centre's location at a professional arts venue provides the resources needed for both performance and theory work and a suitable environment for the development of professional performers. Third year

students practising off-site during this year did not report any serious disadvantage although they indicated that integration onto one site would reduce their travelling time. Library staff provide active support to the staff and students. Students reported that the resources available were sufficient for the delivery of the award.

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 Information about learning opportunities

How effectively does the Centre communicate information about learning opportunities to students and other stakeholders?

3.1 Under agreements with its awarding bodies, the Centre is responsible for ensuring the accuracy of the information it makes available to stakeholders. The awarding bodies check the information that they provide themselves, for example parts of the programme handbook, and where their names or logos are used.

3.2 The website is an accurate guide to the Centre's provision for all stakeholders. It is comprehensive, well-designed and easy to navigate. This website replaces the need for a printed prospectus and is updated regularly. Hypertext links to the Middlesex University website and to the VLE are included and provide easy access to additional information. A student testimonial, information about facilities, student support services and an outline of the programmes provides prospective students with comprehensive information prior to making an application. The admissions section provides helpful information about fees and the auditioning process and includes an online application form. A particularly useful section on the website is dedicated to special events, for example, the annual Boys' Day, which is directed towards boosting the recruitment of male students. Students confirmed that the website is very valuable to them as a source of information. The comprehensive, well-designed and easy-to-navigate website represents **good practice**.

3.3 The Centre provides a comprehensive range of information concerning the provision. It publishes several high quality, printed publicity brochures. Students receive detailed programme and module handbooks, which include protocols on academic conduct, student responsibilities, assessment and moderation. The VLE provides helpful information on programme delivery as well as electronic copies of the student handbooks. The Centre uses social media to communicate with students, applicants and alumni. Students report the use of social media is a valuable component of their interaction with staff. The Staff Research Activity forum on the VLE disseminates professional and academic experience and promotes the development of a teaching community.

3.4 Guidance provided by the Quality Assurance Manual and the Staff Handbook is limited in value. The Quality Assurance Manual has not been updated for the move to the present premises or the increasing proportion of the delivery validated by Middlesex University. The Staff Handbook has recently been updated. It concentrates on administrative aspects rather than providing teaching staff, many of whom are part-time or self employed, with guidance on the Centre's expectations for delivery of the programmes, for example on teaching, learning and assessment. It is **advisable** for the Centre to update the Quality Assurance Manual and increase the scope of the Staff Handbook.

How effective are the Centre's arrangements for assuring that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy?

3.5 There are effective procedures to oversee the production of most information about learning opportunities. Responsibility for the website rests with the Director, who checks the material before it is uploaded onto the website. He is also proactive in coordinating future developments. Arrangements for the monitoring of printed publicity materials involve a staff panel producing information which is then authorised by the Director. This arrangement is effective in ensuring that the materials are pertinent to their markets and that the content is both accessible and trustworthy. The Academic Administrator manages and checks the information about programme delivery before it is uploaded onto the VLE. The attendance of a student representative at strategy meetings about the VLE contributes to its development and helps to ensure its accuracy.

3.6 Procedures for oversight of the Centre's use of social media are not fully effective. The Centre is aware of the opportunities and challenges of social media and the need for it to be rigorously monitored. Currently, an informal monitoring of the Centre's social media sites is in place. The Centre has recognised the need for formal policy although this is not yet in operation. It is **desirable** for the Centre to increase the oversight of its social media sites.

The team concludes that reliance **can** be placed on the information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Action plan³

London Studio Centre action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight May 2013						
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 Centre:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the comprehensive student support that is highly responsive to individual needs (paragraph 2.6) 	Disseminate in the Annual Monitoring Report Disseminate on the website - news article and relevant pages	October 2013 October 2013	Institutional Link Tutor/Dean of Studies PR & Marketing Administrator	Publication of Annual Monitoring Report noting areas of good practice Publication on the website noting areas of good practice	University/ Academic Board Senior Management Group	Board of Studies Minutes Marketing Committee Minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the comprehensive, well-designed and easy-to-navigate website (paragraph 3.2). 	Appointment of a dedicated PR & Marketing Administrator to promote the website on various social media and investigate its growth	September 2013	PR & Marketing Administrator	Website visitor reports	Senior Management Group	Marketing Committee Minutes

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

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is advisable for the Centre to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the senior committee structure (paragraph 1.4) 	<p>Implement the proposed committee structure for 2013-14</p> <p>Create terms of reference for each committee and review annually</p> <p>Assign Chair and minute-taking responsibilities for each committee</p>	July 2013	Director	<p>Meeting schedule showing new committee structure</p> <p>Terms of reference adopted by each committee</p> <p>Minutes of meetings showing an effective oversight of the provision</p>	Trustees	Annual Institution Report to Trustees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> further develop its engagement with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraphs 1.5 and 1.6) 	<p>Add agenda item to Academic Board</p> <p>Provide links on the staff accessible virtual learning environment</p> <p>Embed within the Staff Handbook</p>	<p>July 2013</p> <p>August 2013</p> <p>September 2013</p>	<p>Head of Learning & Teaching</p> <p>Head of Learning & Teaching</p> <p>Dean of Studies</p>	<p>Agenda and minutes of the Academic Board showing engagement with the Quality Code</p> <p>Usage of virtual learning environment links</p> <p>Publication of improved Staff Handbook</p>	Academic Board	<p>Annual Course Monitoring Report 2013-14</p> <p>National Student Survey results</p> <p>Monitor staff development</p>

	Write to all teaching staff drawing their attention to all of the points noted above	September 2013	Dean of Studies	Email sent to staff noting areas of further engagement		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> update the Quality Assurance Manual and increase the scope of the Staff Handbook (paragraph 3.4). 	<p>Rewrite the Quality Assurance Manual</p> <p>Update the Staff Handbook to include 'Tutor Handbook' to discuss learning, teaching and assessment</p>	<p>October 2013</p> <p>October 2013</p>	<p>Registrar/Head of Learning & Teaching</p> <p>Dean of Studies/Registrar</p>	<p>Publication of updated Quality Assurance Manual</p> <p>Publication of the improved Staff Handbook</p>	Academic Board	<p>Annual Monitoring Report</p> <p>Feedback from staff (to be implemented - conducted annually)</p>
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is desirable for the Centre to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve the timeliness of the return of written feedback to students on their academic work (paragraph 2.5) 	Implement deadlines in line with the Quality Code	September 2013	Head of Learning & Teaching	National Student Survey results	Board of Study	Annual Course Monitoring Report
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase the provision of staff development related to the Quality Code, Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality 	Identify the staff development priorities related to the Quality Code, develop and conduct a series of events in relation to these	November 2013	Head of Learning & Teaching	Positive Feedback from the events	Academic Board	Annual Monitoring Report 2013-14

(paragraph 2.9)	Negotiate with the University to seek access to their staff development programmes	November 2013	Institutional Link Tutor	Gain access to University staff development events; with extensive uptake by staff	Academic Board	Annual Monitoring Report 2013-14
	Pursue Higher Education Academy membership	November 2013	Dean of Studies	Membership of Higher Education Academy	Academic Board	Annual Monitoring Report 2013-14
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase the oversight of its social media sites (paragraph 3.6). 	Develop and implement a social media/online behaviour policy	November 2013	PR & Marketing Administrator	Publication of policy providing an oversight of all social media	Senior Management Group	Marketing Committee Minutes

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/educational-oversight.

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 The core guidance developed and maintained by QAA in partnership with the UK higher education community and used by QAA and higher education providers until 2011-12 for quality assurance of UK higher education. It has since been replaced by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (**Quality Code**).

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

academic standards The standards set and maintained by higher education providers for their courses and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standards**.

awarding body A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the **framework for higher education qualifications**, such as diplomas or degrees.

awarding organisation An organisation authorised to award a particular qualification; an organisation recognised by Ofqual to award Ofqual-regulated qualifications.

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 which formed the core element of the **Academic Infrastructure** (now superseded by the **Quality Code**).

designated body An organisation that has been formally appointed or recognised to perform a particular function. QAA has been recognised by UKBA as a designated body for the purpose of providing educational oversight.

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

enhancement The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. 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 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*.

⁴ www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

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 study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, resources, and specialist facilities (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

learning outcomes 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 reviews and reports.

programme An approved course of study that 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 A UK degree-awarding body or any other organisation that offers courses of higher education 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').

Quality Code Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is being developed from 2011 to replace the **Academic Infrastructure** and will incorporate all its key elements along with additional topics and overarching themes.

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 standards The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national qualifications frameworks and **subject benchmark statements**. See also **academic standards**.

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

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