



Oxford College of London Ltd

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

October 2013

Key findings about Oxford College of London Ltd

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in October 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 programmes it offers on behalf of Pearson.

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 this awarding organisation.

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 high level of academic and pastoral support provided to students by committed and accessible staff (paragraph 2.8)
- the supportive and appropriately developmental feedback to students on their assessed work (paragraph 2.9).

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 access of campus-based and distance-learning students to learning resources, with special reference to academic journals (paragraphs 2.13 and 2.14).

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

- develop its committee structure further and evaluate its effectiveness (paragraph 1.3)
- develop a common policy on the formative assessment of draft assignments (paragraph 2.5).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Oxford College of London Ltd (the College), 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 programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of Pearson. The review was carried out by Mr Peter Cutting, Mrs Catherine Symonds, Dr Ann Thorne (reviewers) and Mr Robert Jones (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 awarding organisation, meetings with staff and students, and a report of the previous review by QAA.

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

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)
- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)
- the Qualifications and Credit Framework
- Pearson Information Manual.

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

Oxford College of London Ltd (the College) was established in December 2005 and is located in East Ham, where it operates on a single campus. It has been running Pearson BTEC courses since 2007. Initially, its awards were campus-based only, but since 2011 it has also offered BTEC courses through distance learning. It has 312 students registered for higher education courses. There are 281 full-time students on campus-based courses and 31 part-time students on distance-learning courses. International students comprise 90 per cent of the total. There are nine academic staff, comprising an Academic Manager and eight full-time tutors.

As a result of the REO carried out in October 2012, the College achieved **confidence** judgements relating to the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. In addition, **reliance** was placed on the accuracy and completeness of information that the College published about itself. A subsequent substantial increase in the College's total student numbers has triggered the present Review.

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

Pearson

- Higher National Certificate in Business (level 4) (63)
- Higher National Diploma in Business (level 5) (50)
- Higher National Certificate in Travel and Tourism Management (level 4) (8)
- Higher National Diploma in Travel and Tourism Management (level 5) (5)

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/educational-oversight

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

- Higher National Certificate in Health and Social Care (Management) (level 4) (1)
- Higher National Diploma in Health and Social Care (Management) (level 5) (2)
- Higher National Certificate in Hospitality Management (level 4) (1)
- Higher National Diploma in Hospitality Management (level 5) (1)
- Diploma in Assessment Management (level 7) (48)
- Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership (level 7) (133)

The provider's stated responsibilities

The College teaches and assesses its students. It monitors the quality of its teaching and the standards of its assessment through an internal verification process. Pearson oversees the College's standards through moderation of its assessments and through external examiners' visits, which also check whether the College manages and enhances the quality of the learning opportunities of its students.

Recent developments

The number of students on higher education courses has increased from 207 in 2012 to 312 in 2013. There has also been an increase in the number of tutors. The College currently has eight full-time tutors compared with six in 2012. The College has developed an electronic feedback system to provide rapid and timely feedback to students.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team, but they did not do so. However, students met the review coordinator during the preparatory meeting and the team during the review visit. Both meetings were highly productive.

Detailed findings about Oxford College London Ltd

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The academic committee structure of the College provides a generally clear and coherent basis for the effective management of academic standards. Since the recommendation of the 2012 report to review the effectiveness and efficiency of its committees, the College has made significant progress by implementing its well-developed Quality Assurance Manual. This detailed, comprehensive and useful document clearly sets out the College's structure and procedures for quality assurance. In meetings with the team, College staff displayed a good degree of familiarity with the Quality Assurance Manual and its implementation. The Academic Committee is responsible for the strategic management of academic standards. More operational matters are the responsibility of the Academic Meeting. Both of these management groups have senior managers as members and have clearly identified terms of reference and reporting pathways.

1.2 The Academic Meeting is effective in the day-to-day management of academic standards. It takes place at least quarterly with additional meetings called as required. The regular meeting pattern fits in with the quarterly intakes of new students and thus ensures that appropriate action can be taken before each new cohort starts. The additional meetings provide the necessary flexibility to respond to issues as they arise. Actions resulting from the Academic Meeting can readily be tracked as they are clearly identified and reviewed at subsequent meetings.

1.3 The Academic Committee meets once a year only and the team endorses the finding of the 2012 review that its consideration of academic matters is rather limited. Its minutes do not clearly show decisions, agreed actions, timescales or who is responsible for implementation. The College has identified formal monitoring, evaluation and review, incorporating the Quality Code, *Chapter B8: Programme monitoring and review*, as a major next step in enhancing the effective management of standards. This process is currently carried out informally but effectively by the use of an electronic calendar system. As with the Academic Meeting, the intention is to run the formal monitoring reviews on a quarterly basis with a summary of outcomes passing to the Academic Committee for consideration and action. This is unrealistic for a committee that meets annually and blurs the functions of the Academic Committee with that of the Academic Meeting. It would be **desirable** for the College to develop its committee structure further and evaluate its effectiveness.

1.4 The College makes effective use of external examiners' reports in the management of academic standards. The reports are discussed at the Academic Meeting and a useful summary of action points is produced. The team was provided with strong evidence of appropriate and timely action taken. The external examiners comment favourably on the management of the courses.

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

1.5 As in 2012, the College continues to rely heavily on its relationship with Pearson, the College's awarding organisation, to ensure that its provision aligns with the Quality Code as a key external reference point. In a meeting with the team, the representative of Pearson expressed a high level of confidence in the way in which the College satisfied all aspects of the required processes in order to maintain standards. Since the recommendation of the 2012 review for a more direct and explicit engagement with the Academic Infrastructure

(now the Quality Code), the College has started to align key activities with the relevant chapters of the Quality Code. The team found staff familiar with the Quality Code and able to furnish examples of where it had been used to assure standards. However, the College has not yet systematically mapped its policies and procedures against the appropriate chapters of the Quality Code.

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

1.6 The College's responsibilities for moderation, verification and examining are effectively carried out. External examiners' reports commend the use of varied and effective assessment strategies. An internal verification system incorporating a clear and comprehensive policy ensures that assessment criteria are addressed with good quality assignments, student work is assessed accurately and detailed constructive feedback encouraged. Scrutiny of a sample of student work provided consistent evidence of a robust and effective internal verification system.

1.7 Following the recommendation in the 2012 report that monitoring and control of plagiarism would benefit from being strengthened, the College purchased a plagiarism detection system. This is now in use on all programmes and has had a positive impact on the quality of student work. In meetings with the team, both staff and students demonstrated knowledge of the purpose of and the procedures used in plagiarism detection. They were also conversant with the outcomes and penalties should plagiarism be detected.

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 organisation.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 The College has developed methods of managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities since the 2012 review. Improvements in the committee structure described in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.3 have led to an improvement in the management of learning opportunities. Staff and students stated that the relatively small size of the College enables issues and ideas to be dealt with quickly and effectively through a mixture of both formal and informal meetings. In particular, the careful recording of decisions and subsequent following up of action plans has enabled the Academic Meeting to play a central role in improving the quality of learning opportunities.

2.2 The College systematically collects student performance, retention and progression data. Staff explained that they looked forward to gaining more data to enable them to identify further trends over time.

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

2.3 The College engages closely with its awarding organisation, Pearson, and makes use of the Quality Code in fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing learning opportunities. Engagement with the Quality Code is further discussed in paragraph 1.5.

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

2.4 Since the 2012 review, the College has made improvements to the teaching and learning strategy, including staff appraisal, teaching observation, student induction and communication strategies for all students. It has also addressed the recommendations in the 2012 report relating to distance learners. The College now provides them with a clear and realistic explanation of the expectations of this mode of study. They receive a new distance learning pack with induction information, guidance, a specific handbook and website information. This is supplemented by individual support from the Distance Learning Tutor.

2.5 In their meeting with the team, students enthusiastically commended the wide variety of teaching and learning methods and individual support provided by staff. This is confirmed by the surveys of both distance and campus-based students. External examiners also report that students comment favourably on teaching, learning and assessment methods. There is, however, an issue in the amount of support provided to students for assessment drafts. These drafts are commented on in detail prior to formal submission, which students greatly appreciate. However, there is currently no College policy on the number of times tutors may review draft assignments, which may result in an unfair advantage for some students. It would be **desirable** for the College to develop a common policy on the formative assessment of draft assignments.

2.6 The College has reacted promptly to a recommendation in the 2012 report in establishing a survey system designed to elicit the views of both distance and campus-based students. The results of the first survey were available to the team and provided useful information on the quality of learning opportunities. Students now have formal representation in the College's committee system through the Student/Staff Liaison Committee. Student representatives are able to raise issues both formally and informally. Staff are exceptionally prompt and effective in responding to the issues that students raise.

2.7 A teaching observation system is now in operation. Extensive peer-to-peer support supplements the formal teaching observation scheme. The range of teaching methods used and the effective involvement of students in the sessions are reflected in the observation reports and the students' comments.

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

2.8 Student support is exceptional. Both student and external examiners confirm that staff are very accessible, exemplified by the open-door policy and one-to-one tutorials, and provide both academic and pastoral support in a timely manner. Students described their tutors as 'dedicated', 'phenomenal' and 'always ready to help any student, irrespective of their ability'. The support system has been strengthened by the new policies and procedures established since the 2012 review, notably the improved communications with students including links with the student representatives. The high level of academic and pastoral support provided to students by committed and accessible staff represents **good practice**.

2.9 All students are given a great deal of supportive, appropriately developmental feedback from staff which students confirmed enables them to gain confidence and understand and complete their assessments. Evidence from the sample of student work seen by the team demonstrates an exceptionally high level of feedback and explanation of the assessment requirements. The College has introduced electronic feedback which ensures rapid feedback in a common format. It is, however, still supplemented by extensive oral feedback on an individual basis. Retention in the College is high with a retention rate averaging over 90 per cent. The supportive and appropriately developmental feedback to students on their assessed work represents **good practice**.

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

2.10 The College's staff recruitment and development strategy enables students to maximise their learning opportunities. Tutors are all full-time and have both experience in professional practice and relevant postgraduate qualifications. Three tutors are also currently completing teaching-related qualifications. Staff attend Pearson events and update their colleagues accordingly.

2.11 The teaching observation system (see also paragraph 2.7) benefits both students and staff, as it enables good practice and areas of development to be identified and shared by the Academic Manager who undertakes the observation. This is a new scheme and is still under review.

2.12 Administrative staff meet regularly with the Academic Manager and tutors. This facilitates the implantation of new ideas and encourages cooperation between all staff to enhance learning opportunities. The Operations Director confirmed that requests for financial resources are always considered and approved wherever possible.

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

2.13 The College's resources generally meet the needs of its students. Campus-based students and external examiner reports confirm that learning resources are good. There is a well understood process for the acquisition of additional resources. Students confirmed that they have access to all the resources detailed on the extensive reading lists associated with their units. The introduction of an extensive e-library for text books is a very positive addition to the resources available on the virtual learning environment. However, there is very limited access to academic journals.

2.14 The 2012 report contained recommendations related to the provision of online resources, including that the College should implement plans to enhance the virtual learning environment and to develop interactive learning activities. There has been some useful progress. As an example, the materials now available to distance-learning students provide comprehensive information on the programmes, some lectures now have voice recordings and the use of blogs has been extended. Students now have dedicated space within the virtual learning environment to store documents. Staff are aware that this is still a work in progress and that more could be done to further enhance the materials available. It is **advisable** for the College to review the access of campus-based and distance-learning students to learning resources, with special reference to academic journals (see also paragraph 2.13).

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 College communicate information about learning opportunities to students and other stakeholders?

3.1 The College continues to be effective in communicating its provision to students and other stakeholders. The website is the primary medium for published information prior to enrolment. This is supplemented by more detailed programme and other information on the virtual learning environment. Only Pearson qualifications are offered at the College and the virtual learning environment includes the relevant Pearson programme documents.

3.2 Students confirmed the comprehensive nature of the information provided during the application process, at induction and in such publications as the student handbook. This, along with other more detailed information provided on their individual units of study on the virtual learning environment, provides a sound basis for their studies.

3.3 In the 2012 report the College was advised to review all information given to distance learning students to ensure that it was comprehensive and relevant to their learning needs. This has taken place and, as noted in paragraph 2.4, a new distance-learning pack has been made available to both prospective and existing students. In addition, in response to suggestions to provide contextualisation of the Pearson documents, some additional information has been made available for students by the College. This is, however, quite limited and could be developed further.

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

3.4 The College has recently enhanced the process for the management of public information. The action plan developed following the previous review in 2012 detailed a series of actions to establish clear systems for reviewing information to ensure accuracy and reliability. The evidence indicates that all of the actions have been implemented and appropriate mechanisms are in place. The College now has a public information policy and a public information register which records the status of the documents and other material on the website. However, while information is generally accurate and accessible, there is an isolated example of information that is not current.

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

Oxford College of London Ltd action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight October 2013						
Good practice	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the high level of academic and pastoral support provided to students by committed and accessible staff (paragraph 2.8) 	<p>Timely actions to students' issues raised via student quarterly survey, Student/Staff Liaison Committee meetings and student complaints and academic appeal process</p> <p>High level of student satisfaction with College educational provision</p> <p>High level of student retention and progression rate of not less than 95%</p>	<p>Timely, effective and supportive feedback provided to students in a variety of accessible formats, for example emails and face-to-face, within three days of receipt of student query/concern</p> <p>Strengthening of the Student/Staff Liaison Committee to ensure: significant representation from students; student issues and concerns are formally discussed, recorded and circulated to management, staff and</p>	<p>Immediate</p> <p>To hold quarterly, starting Jan 2014</p>	<p>Academic Manager, College Administrator, tutors, assessors, welfare officer, support staff</p> <p>College Administrator, welfare officer</p>	<p>Operations Director</p> <p>Academic Manager, Operations Director</p>	<p>Quarterly online student survey report</p> <p>Student/Staff Liaison Committee meeting reports and minutes</p> <p>Pearson external validation reports</p>

³ The College 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 College's awarding organisation.

		students in a variety of accessible format Academic Committee to discuss, monitor and review actions taken to address student issues and concerns	Quarterly starting Jan 2014	Academic Committee	Operations Director	Academic Committee meeting minutes/reports Pearson report Student quarterly survey report Student/Staff Liaison Committee meeting reports Student annual retention and progression data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the supportive and appropriately developmental feedback to students on their assessed work (paragraph 2.9). 	<p>High level of pass by students in their work/assignments</p> <p>Positive student feedback</p> <p>Positive feedback from Pearson external</p>	<p>Constructive, comprehensive and criterion-based feedback given to students on the assessed work within 21 days of assignment submissions</p> <p>Feedback to students sampled by Academic Manager with a view to disseminating good practice</p>	<p>Immediate</p> <p>Immediate</p>	<p>Tutors and assessors</p> <p>Academic Manager</p>	<p>Academic Manager</p> <p>Operations Director</p>	<p>Quarterly student survey report</p> <p>Student/Staff Liaison Committee meeting reports and minutes</p> <p>Pearson external validation reports</p> <p>Academic Committee</p>

	validation reports with no essential actions and not more than one recommendation in each criterion					meeting minutes/reports Reports from Academic Manager
Advisable	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The team considers that it is advisable for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the access of campus-based and distance-learning students to learning resources, with special reference to academic journals (paragraphs 2.13 and 2.14). 	<p>Fully developed e-library and on-site library</p> <p>Fully developed virtual learning environment</p>	<p>Increase the number of academic textbooks and journals in both the e-library and on-site library</p> <p>Subscribe to academic journals such as Emerald, Harvard Business review</p> <p>Add more interactive materials to the virtual learning environment</p> <p>Audio visual aids of the lectures notes to be fully developed</p>	<p>June 2014</p> <p>June 2014</p> <p>June 2014</p> <p>September 2014</p>	<p>College Administrator</p> <p>College Administrator</p> <p>Tutors</p> <p>College Administrator</p>	<p>Academic Manager/ Operations Director</p> <p>Academic Manager/ Operations Director</p> <p>Academic Manager</p> <p>Operations Director/ Academic Manager</p>	<p>Quarterly student survey reports</p> <p>Student/Staff Liaison Committee quarterly meeting reports</p> <p>Pearson external validation reports</p> <p>Academic meeting minutes</p>

Desirable	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date/s	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The team considers that it is desirable for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop its committee structure further and evaluate its effectiveness (paragraph 1.3) 	<p>Formal meetings held quarterly by all committees with minutes and action plan systematically recorded and disseminated</p> <p>An effective and efficient Academic Committee that is both operational and strategic</p>	<p>Academic Committee, Student/Staff Liaison Committee and Academic Meetings to formally hold quarterly</p> <p>Strengthen the Academic Committee membership by increasing the number of members to include one senior lecturer</p>	<p>Quarterly beginning Jan 2014</p> <p>Jan 2014</p>	<p>Academic Manager</p> <p>Operations Director</p>	<p>Operations Director</p> <p>Academic Committee</p>	<p>Academic Committee, Student/Staff Liaison Committee and Academic Meeting quarterly meeting minutes and reports</p> <p>Quarterly student feedback survey reports</p> <p>Pearson external validation reports</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a common policy on the formative assessment of draft assignments (paragraph 2.5). 	Developed equal opportunity for all students	Develop policy and procedure for the formative assessment of students' draft assignments by tutors/ assessors, including the number of times tutors may review draft assignments	March 2014	Academic Manager	Operations Director	<p>Student feedback survey</p> <p>Academic meeting minutes</p> <p>Student/Staff Liaison Committee meeting reports</p>

	Standardised assessment practice and procedures	Formal standardisation of formative and summative assessment process	March 2014	Academic Meeting	Operations Director	Pearson external validation reports
		Rigorous monitoring of the policy implementation to ensure its effectiveness	June 2014	Academic Manager	Operations Director	
		Students sufficiently informed via email of the new policy and guidance to support its implementation	April 2014	College Administrator	Academic Manager, Operations Director	

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 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 degree-awarding bodies for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standards**.

awarding body A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the power to award degrees, conferred by Royal Charter, or under Section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or under Section 48 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, or by Papal Bull, or, since 1999, granted by the Privy Council on advice from QAA (in response to applications for taught degree-awarding powers, research degree-awarding powers or university title).

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

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 review processes.

external examiner An independent expert appointed by an institution to comment on student achievement in relation to established academic standards and to look at approaches to assessment.

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*.

good practice A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's review processes.

highly trusted sponsor An organisation that the UK Government trusts to admit migrant students from overseas, according to Tier 4 of the UK Border Agency's points-based

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

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, and resources (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 (of study) 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 (s) (of higher education) Organisations that deliver higher education. In the UK they may be a degree-awarding body or another organisation that offers programmes of higher education on behalf of degree-awarding bodies or awarding organisations. In the context of Review for Specific Course Designation 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 See **academic quality**.

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.

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.

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 **frameworks for higher education qualifications** 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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