London Empire Academy UK Ltd

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

March 2014

Key findings about London Empire Academy UK Ltd

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in March 2014, 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 ATHE, The Management Awarding Organisation; the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality; Pearson and The Institute of Commercial Management.

The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the quality and enhancement of the learning opportunities it offers on behalf of these awarding organisations.

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

Recommendations

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

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

- review the annual monitoring system to ensure more comprehensive reporting and action planning at the programme level (paragraphs 1.3 and 2.2).

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

- include student representation on the Quality Review Panel (paragraph 1.2)
- continue to monitor the operation of new assessment practices in line with advice from the external verifier (paragraph 1.5)
- make the reports of external verifiers available to students, as outlined in *Chapter B7: External examining* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 1.6)
- extend the checking of provision against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, giving particular attention to student support (paragraph 2.3 and 2.8)
- clarify the outcomes of teaching observations and the related reporting process (paragraph 2.4)
- resolve the recurring issue of minor errors and inconsistencies in internal documentation (paragraph 3.8).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](1) (REO) conducted at London Empire Academy UK Ltd (the Academy), which is a privately-funded provider of higher education. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the Academy 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 ATHE, The Management Awarding Organisation; the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality; Pearson; and The Institute of Commercial Management. The review was carried out by Dr Philip Davies, Mrs Kausar Malik, Mrs Trudy Stiles (reviewers) and Mr David Lewis (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 a range of internal documentation: policy, procedure and strategy statements; records of meetings; and a range of information produced for students and staff, including handbooks, curriculum and teaching materials. The team looked at a sample of assessed student work and held meetings with staff and students. It considered external verifier reports, as well as the Review for Educational Oversight reports published by QAA in 2012 and 2013.

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

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code)
- Qualifications and Credit Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland
- Regulatory and guidance documents published by the awarding organisations.

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

The Academy is an independent college of higher education located in a detached three-storey premises in Chiswick, West London. It was formed in 2000, offering English language and business English programmes. In 2004, the Academy gained accreditation from the Association of British Language Schools. It had a successful inspection by the British Council in 2010, following up its initial accreditation in 2006. The Academy moved to its current premises in 2009, when it also expanded the provision to include business and management. The mission statement of the Academy is focused on four key objectives: the offer of high quality provision; innovation and growth; continuous improvement based on rigorous evaluation; and integrity in its dealings with students.

The Academy is organised as two teams, Operations and Academic, the latter comprising the Department of Business and the Department of English. All of the higher education programmes are located in the Department of Business. At the time of the review, there are 181 higher education students (headcount) and seven academic members of staff, most of whom are part-time. In addition, some use is made of external advisers and temporary staff. The Operations Team comprises a further four full-time staff who provide a range of office and technical services. Students are recruited from 13 overseas states, with the large majority, over 77 per cent, from India and Pakistan. Male students account for a little over 60 per cent.

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[1] www.qaa.ac.uk/educational-oversight
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

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

ATHE, The Management Awarding Organisation
- Level 6 Diploma In Management (35)

Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality
- Level 7 Postgraduate Diploma in Hospitality and Tourism Management (57)

The Institute of Commercial Management
- Level 6 Diploma In Business Management (34)

Pearson
- BTEC level 4/5 HNC/HND Diploma in Business (14)
- BTEC level 7 Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership (41)

The provider's stated responsibilities

The Academy states that its delegated responsibilities are largely similar for all four of its awarding organisations, but with significant differences in relation to assessment. It has sole responsibility for all student recruitment, guidance and support; learning and teaching; staff development; resources; the collection and use of student opinion; and ensuring that information is accurate and fit for purpose. There is shared responsibility with each awarding organisation in respect of setting assessments, monitoring retention and completion, student appeals and the content of published information. The agreements with ATHE, The Management Awarding Organisation and Pearson give the Academy responsibility for marking all assignments and providing students with feedback on their assessed work. In contrast, these same responsibilities are retained by the awarding organisations on programmes of the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality and The Institute of Commercial Management.

Recent developments

In 2013, the Academy began to offer awards of ATHE and Pearson. It ceased recruitment to The Institute of Commercial Management programme, with existing students being offered the opportunity to transfer to the ATHE award that is replacing it. The Academy has recently been given approval to introduce additional Pearson awards in health and social care, IT and travel and tourism. The offer of a new media degree, as part of an agreement with the University of West London, has been postponed. There has been a near 40 per cent growth in recruitment over the past year, which has redressed a previous downward trend. This growth also meant that the Academy had met the criteria for having a full REO in 2014. An important development has seen the Academy able to enrol UK and European Union students with approval for funding by the Student Loans Company. However, problems with the process have so far prevented any student registrations. A full-time administrative post has been created to support the Quality Manager and Director of Studies.

Students' contribution to the review

Students on higher education programmes at the Academy were invited to present a submission to the review team. The submission was provided in the form of a short report, summarising student opinion on academic standards, the quality of learning opportunities and information about learning opportunities. The main evaluation is contained in a set of conclusions. The report was produced by a group of student course representatives, drawing upon a student survey that involved a questionnaire and module feedback. There were 134 respondents to the questionnaire, which is equivalent to a 70 per cent response. The final report has been sent to all students. The Academy provided administrative and technical

support to the student representatives. Overall, the submission offered a range of useful insights, including a significant increase in student satisfaction rates since the equivalent report of 2012. It proved helpful to reviewers in preparing for the visit and as a reference point in discussions with students and staff. Students further contributed to the review in a meeting with reviewers and attendance at the preparatory meeting.

Detailed findings about London Empire Academy UK Ltd

1   Academic standards

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

1.1   The Academy has clear and effective structures for the management of academic standards and quality. The Quality Review Panel is the senior committee and has overall responsibility for all of the responsibilities devolved from the awarding organisations. The Director of Studies provides a single line of contact with each awarding organisation.

1.2   The straightforward lines of communication for the discussion and reporting of academic matters and the oversight of programmes are well matched to the small size of the provision. The Quality Review Panel, which comprises the senior staff team, is responsible for academic standards, planning, quality and the enhancement of learning. It oversees the operation of the other key groups, the termly Assessment Boards and the monthly Academic Staff Meetings. The role of the Quality Manager is pivotal, chairing the Quality Review Panel and having operational responsibility for monitoring academic standards across the provision. The Academy has successfully encouraged student engagement in the management of the provision and it would be **desirable** that it include student representation on the Quality Review Panel.

1.3   The recently introduced annual monitoring system is a valuable initiative, but requires further development to make it fully fit for purpose. The first programme review report has been produced in draft for the Pearson Level 7 Extended Diploma. The standard form offers an appropriate range of headings within which to report. However, the completed report, which has been compiled by the Director of Studies and Quality manager, is limited in its range of input data, evaluation and action planning. It is unduly focused on the outcomes of student module feedback. The content is largely descriptive and the lack of formal action planning and tracking makes it unclear how the process will lead to improvement. The reports are to be reviewed by the Quality Review Panel, which will assume responsibility for any follow-up actions. It is difficult to see how the present arrangements will enable teaching teams to fully engage with the process. It is **advisable** for the Academy to review the annual monitoring system to ensure more comprehensive reporting and action planning at the programme level.

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

1.4   The Academy is making increased and effective use of relevant external reference points, including the Quality Code. The use of standard programme designs ensures that awarding organisations have already aligned content to *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* and relevant subject benchmark statements. QAA guidance has been used in the development of programme specifications. Staff are diligent in adhering to the requirements of awarding organisations, whose regulations have been mapped against Academy procedures. Staff are well informed about the Quality Code*,* which the Academy cites as its primary reference point for ensuring academic standards. A quality manual is issued to all staff and has, along with a set of policies and procedures, been checked against the Quality Code.

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

1.5   The Academy has well-defined procedures for carrying out its assessment responsibilities, but is still adjusting to the requirements of its new Pearson programmes. Some early misunderstanding led to the wrong assessment sheet being used. The scrutiny of assessed student work shows that assessment is being undertaken diligently, with evidence of systematic internal verification in line with the published strategy. However, the comments of internal verifiers are sometimes cursory, adding little to the initial assessment. Written feedback is provided consistently for students, using a standard feedback sheet. The comments are helpfully linked to published assessment criteria, although some are insufficient for students to understand their achievement or know how to improve. These various matters have been reported by the external verifier and are being addressed. It would be **desirable** for the Academy to continue to monitor the operation of new assessment practices in line with advice from the external verifier.

1.6   While appropriate arrangements are in place for dealing with the reports of external verifiers, there is opportunity to use the reports more widely. The Academy is at an early stage of engaging with the external verifiers of its new awarding organisations, ATHE, The Management Awarding Organisation and Pearson. The Director of Studies is responsible for responding to each report on behalf of the Academy. The arrangements also allow for the reports to be considered at Assessment Boards and as part of the new annual monitoring system. Staff indicate that the main outcomes of external verifier reports are shared orally with students. It would be **desirable** for the Academy to make the reports of external verifiers available to students, as outlined in *Chapter B7: External examining* of the Quality Code.

1.7   Overall, the Academy is effective in managing its responsibilities for maintaining academic standards. Reports from awarding organisations confirm that where the Academy has responsibility for assessments, these are undertaken at the appropriate level. There is a need to further develop the new annual monitoring system and to enhance the existing arrangements for involving students in the management of academic standards. The Academy is already addressing initial issues that have arisen in adapting to the assessment requirements of its new awarding organisations.

> 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 organisations.

2   Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1   The arrangements for managing the quality of learning opportunities are clear and as described in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.3 for academic standards. Operationally, the Director of Studies and the Quality Manager have joint responsibility for most aspects of quality, with admissions and student welfare coming within the remit of the Director of Operations.

2.2   As described in paragraph 1.3, the annual monitoring system would benefit from further development. The first draft programme review report and discussions with staff reveal a lack of clarity about the purpose and implementation of the new process. There is a need to ensure that the purposes and procedures are more securely defined and articulated

for staff and students. The Academy should consider how to involve staff who teach on the programmes at each stage of the system.

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

2.3   The Academy is making increased and effective use of external reference points, as described in paragraph 1.4, but there are still gaps in relation to the Quality Code. The Quality Manager uses a personal, detailed checking guide to map policies and procedures against the expectations of the REO, the Quality Code and each of the awarding organisations. However, the Academy has yet to consider all chapters of the Quality Code and relevant legislation. For example, the policies and mechanisms relating to disability, including the admissions process, do not yet reflect the indicators of *Chapter B4: Enabling student development and achievement* of the Quality Code. Similarly, the Academy has yet to develop effective arrangements for careers education, information, advice and guidance as covered in the indicators in *Chapter B4*. It would be **desirable** for the Academy to extend the checking of provision against the Quality Code, giving particular attention to student support.

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

2.4   There are appropriate mechanisms in place for assuring the quality of teaching and learning, although there is scope for them to be used more effectively. Teaching and learning is monitored mainly through student module feedback and lesson observations. Students are highly complimentary about their teaching, which is provided in the context of a published strategy. The students cite notable recent improvements in the range of approaches used and in learner participation. The Director of Studies and Quality Manager undertake annual formal observations, while the Director of Studies also makes regular informal visits to classes. The formal observations result in written reports that may be followed up individually or at Academic Staff Meetings or the Quality Review Panel. A scrutiny of the observation reports and discussion with staff indicate a lack of focus around the purpose of the observations and what they are intended to achieve. The observer comments in the reports are not sufficiently evaluative to point to improvement. It would be **desirable** for the Academy to clarify the outcomes of teaching observations and the related reporting process.

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

2.5   The Academy has arrangements in place to provide students with effective support, helped by active and enthusiastic student representatives. The programme representatives meet monthly with the Student Welfare Officer as the Student-Staff Liaison Committee. he meetings, which are minuted and disseminated, have ensured that students are able to give regular feedback and contribute constructively to the management and governance of the Academy. The lead representative has raised many issues directly with senior managers on behalf of students. Successful negotiation by the lead representative has led to the Academy agreeing to pay for membership of the National Union of Students. The students met by the team were clear that their views are valued by the Academy.

2.6   Students confirm that the academic support provided by staff is readily available and meets their needs. Informally, they are able to approach staff for tutorial advice when the need arises. More formally, staff have office hours at the end of the working day for individual tutorial advice. The Director of Studies also provides academic tutorials.

2.7   There is a clear admissions procedure that is overseen by the Director of Operations and administered by the Admissions Officer. The published procedure is limited to a short description of the process. It is underpinned by a more useful service commitment, produced in the form of a 'high level statement'. The admissions procedure is designed to ensure that international students have the necessary language skills and qualifications for the programmes on offer. Students report that the admissions process is clear and supportive.

2.8   Student welfare support is overseen by the Student Welfare Officer and is appreciated by students. Welfare support is focused on supporting international students in adapting to life and study in the UK. It also includes general advice and guidance, induction and the provision of social activities. Students have an out-of-hours telephone contact number and access to a discretionary hardship fund. The Academy does not provide students with structured support for progression to employment or higher level study.

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

2.9   The Academy has satisfactory arrangements in place for staff development, although they are not formally documented as part of a coherent strategy within existing policies, systems and procedures. All staff have an induction when they join the Academy. Staff development activities are being developed around prioritised themes, normally determined by the Quality Review Panel. External consultants are used to deliver the formal training activities. Recently, academic staff meetings have been used to raise awareness of the Quality Code. The Director of Studies has attended QAA events and has disseminated information to staff. The themed approach to staff development has contributed to more participative approaches to teaching and learning. The Academy states that its themed priorities for the rest of 2014 are the 'quality of assessment' and 'student involvement in quality assurance' although no arrangements were in place at the time of the visit.

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

2.10   The responsibilities for allocating learning resources are clearly defined and the Academy is introducing an additional procedure for improved monitoring at the programme level. The Director of Operations has overall responsibility for resources, both human and physical, and the Financial Officer must approve any new investment. The Director of Studies monitors the need for resources at the programme level. The Academy has agreed a new operational procedure for the regular review of resources, but this has yet to be implemented. The procedure is that resources are to be routinely considered as part of the Academic Planning Week, during which staff will prepare for each new term. Resources are considered as part of the centre or programme approval process and will also be reported on within the new annual monitoring system.

2.11   Students confirm that learning resources are sufficient for them to achieve their learning outcomes. Teaching staff are appropriately qualified and sufficient in number. The recruitment process requires new staff to have relevant experience and a teaching qualification. The Academy has made improvements to the library stock, which students had identified as an issue. In a bid to further improve the provision, the Academy is negotiating to subscribe to an online library. The well furnished and equipped classrooms offer an appropriate learning environment and students have free wireless access. A suite of English language resources is available to support general and business language skills.

2.12   Overall, the Academy has effective arrangements for managing its responsibilities for the quality of learning opportunities. It has an active and supportive system of student representation. The provision would be further enhanced by additional mapping of current procedures against the Quality Code and tightening the focus and operation of its teaching observations.

The review team has **confidence** that the provider is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of the intended learning opportunities it provides for students.

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3   Information about learning opportunities

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

3.1   The Academy is fully aware of its responsibilities for the publication of information about learning opportunities and communicates effectively with its students and staff. It produces a wide range of information, including a mission statement, student and lecturer handbooks, programme descriptions and specifications, advertising and promotional materials, and a variety of formal policies and strategies. It also makes use of social networking sites. The Academy is committed to using electronic forms of publication wherever possible. This results in most information being accessed through the Academy's website, intranet or virtual learning environment, called the Online Academy.

3.2   The website provides a wide range of valuable information, including marketing materials, links to other relevant sites and outline descriptions of all programmes. The list of programmes includes some that the Academy reported were not currently recruiting. The non-operational status of these programmes, as well as the proposed media award, can be found on the site, but is not prominently displayed.

3.3   Students confirm that the information they receive about their programmes and the Academy is accurate and sufficient for their needs. Useful programme handbooks incorporate the specifications published by the awarding organisations, while an attractive general handbook contains a detailed guide to life and study in the UK. A structured induction includes the opportunity for key information to be highlighted and explained in more detail.

3.4   Students value the well-organised virtual learning environment, which provides easily negotiated access to core learning materials and associated information. While students have noted a progressive improvement in the site, the content is still at a relatively early stage of development. It is limited to the provision of staff-generated materials, such as handbooks, academic calendar, lesson plans, lecture notes and supporting slides. The site also includes an area for the use of student representatives.

3.5   A range of information is published for staff, using the Academy's intranet site. The content is organised into controlled access folders and includes the Staff Handbook, quality manual and all current policies and procedures.

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

3.6   The responsibilities for ensuring the accuracy of information are well defined and generally effective. The Quality Review Panel maintains overall oversight, with operational

responsibilities distributed between the Marketing Manager and the Student Welfare Officer. The arrangements are clearly articulated in a 'procedures for the publication of materials' document. The Managing Director or Director of Operations sign off all substantive changes to information, acting on behalf of the Quality Review Panel.

3.7   The Marketing Manager checks all external promotional materials, as well as published course descriptions and formal application and entry information. The Student Welfare Officer oversees the student handbook and the detailed enrolment and living information given to students. The Quality Manager is responsible for ensuring the material produced by the teaching staff is uploaded and error free. The Director of Studies makes both routine and spot checks on the website and virtual learning environment, and also oversees that changes announced by the awarding organisations are uploaded accurately.

3.8   Despite the extensive range of checks and controls, there are minor errors and inconsistencies within and between documents. Similar issues have been reported on previous REO visits. The team noted such problems in slide presentations, a programme handbook front page, assessment forms, policies and published job titles. While none of the errors present a significant threat, it would be **desirable** for the Academy to resolve the recurring issue of minor errors and inconsistencies in its internal documentation.

3.9   Overall, the Academy publishes an appropriate range of information and has clear arrangements for ensuring it is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. While the arrangements are appropriate, there is scope for some enhancement to avoid recurring minor inaccuracies, including in grammar and spelling.

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 plan[3]

London Empire Academy action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight March 2014						
Advisable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team considers that it is **advisable** for the Academy to:						
• review the annual monitoring system to ensure more comprehensive reporting and action planning at the programme level (paragraphs 1.3 and 2.2).	Complete annual monitoring report for Pearson Level 7 programme	End of August 2014	Director of Studies and Quality Manager	All annual monitoring reports contain standardised action plans	Senior Management Team	External advisers
	Review report and rationalise annual monitoring process	End of August 2014		Monitoring of actions is part of the Senior Management Team and Academic Staff Meetings		
	Schedule timing for rest of reports to align with external verifier visits	End of August 2014				
	Expand the range of evidence used in the evaluation process to make it more objective and systematic	End of August 2014		Completed and reviewed annual monitoring reports		

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[3] The Academy 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 Academy's awarding organisations.

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is **desirable** for the Academy to:						
• include student representation on the Quality Review Panel (paragraph 1.2)	Rename Quality Review Panel to Senior Management Team and include student representative in meetings	End of May 2014	Quality and Academic Administrative Assistant	Student representatives attend and contribute to all meetings scheduled during term time	Quality Manager	Senior Management Team meeting minutes
	Revisit standard agenda to ensure that items relevant to students will be discussed at beginning of meeting when the student representative is present	End of May 2014		Meetings renamed to Senior Management Team meetings		
	Update Quality Manual	End of August 2014		Documents changed to reflect change		
	Gather student representative feedback to ensure they are receiving the relevant information from Senior Management Team meetings	End of September 2014				

• continue to monitor the operation of new assessment practices in line with advice from the external verifier (paragraph 1.5)	Create task list based on external verifier report and Pearson assessment requirements Add monitoring task list as a fixed item on the agenda of the academic staff meeting to ensure that tasks are monitored for completion	End of July 2014	Quality and Academic Administrative Assistant, teaching staff and internal verifier	New policies and procedures in place All Pearson assessment requirements implemented	Director of Studies	Senior Management Team meeting minutes and external verifier report
• make the reports of external verifiers available to students, as outlined in *Chapter B7: External examining* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 1.6)	Make available on Online Academy and inform students	End of July 2014	Quality and Academic Administrative Assistant	Report is available and students informed	Quality Manager and Director of Studies	External verifiers reports available on Online Academy and students are informed
• extend the checking of provision against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, giving particular attention to student support (paragraph 2.3 and 2.8)	Extend checklist to ensure all indicators from the Quality Code are included Use checklist to check Quality Manual policies and procedures	End of August 2014 End of August 2014	Quality and Academic Administrative Assistant, Quality Manager and Student Welfare Officer	All policies and procedures meet relevant indicators in the Quality Code	Senior Management Team	Senior Management Team meeting minutes and external verifier report

• clarify the outcomes of teaching observations and the related reporting process (paragraph 2.4)	Schedule training session on teaching observations Adapt observation form and process Schedule observations for the next academic year Review observation feedback process and staff development process	End of August 2014 End of August 2014 End of August 2014 End of August 2014	Quality manager and Director of Studies	Reporting form amended and completed for all teaching observations	Director of Operations	Senior Management Team meeting minutes and external verifier report
• resolve the recurring issue of minor errors and inconsistencies in internal documentation (paragraph 3.8).	Introduce a robust proof reading process for all published documents and notices Create a schedule to proof read all current documents and correct any errors	End of July 2014 End of July 2014	Quality and Academic Administrative Assistant	All documents and notices have been checked and are free of errors and inconsistencies	Quality Manager	Senior Management Team meeting minutes and external verifier report

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.

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 immigration system. Higher education providers wishing to obtain this status must undergo a successful review by QAA.

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

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**.