



Bradford Metropolitan College Ltd

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

June 2014

Key findings about Bradford Metropolitan College Ltd

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in June 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 Pearson and the Chartered Management Institute.

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.

Good practice

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

- the enhanced learning experience featuring interactive experiential engagement and sensitive exploration of topical and challenging issues (such as gender, equality and race) within a diverse cohort of overseas students (paragraph 2.1)
- the use of learning style questionnaires to develop appropriate teaching and learning strategies (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:

- make full use of achievement and attendance information to review student performance and withdrawals (paragraph 1.4)
- apply College assessment policies consistently (paragraph 1.7)
- improve the consistency and quality of feedback to students (paragraph 2.7).

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

- review the Operations Committee's terms of reference (paragraph 1.2)
- develop customised programme specifications (paragraph 1.6).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Bradford Metropolitan College 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 and the Chartered Management Institute. The review was carried out by Dr Richard Samuels, Mrs Jenny Steer, Mr Brian Whitehead (reviewers) and Professor Patricia Higham (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 organisations, meetings with staff and students, and reports of reviews 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 awarding organisations' guidelines and requirements.

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

Bradford Metropolitan College (the College) was founded in 2009 as a limited company which currently has two directors and one shareholder. The College provides higher education programmes and professional education services, and is located on a single site in a science and commerce park adjacent to Bradford College and the University of Bradford. The College currently has 111 full-time enrolled students.

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

Chartered Management Institute

- Diploma in Leadership and Management - level 5 (1)
- Diploma in Leadership and Management - level 6 (1)
- Diploma in Leadership and Management - level 7 (8)
- Diploma in Leadership and Management - level 8 (67)

Pearson

- Higher National Certificate in Business - level 4 (6)
- Higher National Diploma in Business (Management) - level 5 (16)
- Higher National Certificate in General Engineering - level 4 (7)
- Higher National Diploma in General Engineering - level 5 (1)
- Higher National Diploma in Mechanical Engineering - level 5 (3)
- Higher National Diploma in Electrical Engineering - level 5 (1).

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx

² www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=2669

The provider's stated responsibilities

In respect of the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) and Pearson awards, the College is responsible for recruitment, first marking, annual monitoring, public information, student feedback, programme evaluations, quality reviews, staff development, library and learning resources, and employer involvement. CMI and Pearson are each responsible for programme design, programme specifications and learning outcomes, academic standards and strategic development of higher education. The College is jointly responsible with the awarding organisations for setting assignments, moderating or second marking assignments, and operating the student appeal system.

Recent developments

In early 2014 the College received successful quality visits from CMI and Pearson. The College recently increased its enrolments from 49 to 111 students. Its plans include developing a BA degree in partnership with a university, and offering short courses for continuing professional development. Future growth may include moving to larger premises in the same area.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider prepared a written submission for the review team, assisted by staff. Reviewers met students during the review visit, and the coordinator met students at the preparatory meeting. Both meetings were productive and informative.

Detailed findings about Bradford Metropolitan College Ltd

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The College has higher education agreements with two awarding organisations, the CMI and Pearson. The awarding organisations retain principal responsibility for programme design and academic standards. The agreements set out the share of responsibilities for programme delivery, operational management and the maintenance of academic standards, and the quality of provision. The College is responsible for developing a teaching and assessment strategy, marking and internal verification and for complying with requirements for external verification. The College's own well written policies and procedures provide a controlled and generally effective framework within which it exercises these responsibilities, and awarding organisations' reports confirm that their expectations are being met.

1.2 Management arrangements and committee structures are well conceived, simple and effective. The Management Committee, chaired by the Principal, meets twice per semester with responsibility for programme validation and the monitoring of quality and standards. The Principal is assisted by the Academic Director who also sits on the Management Committee and chairs the Operations Committee. The Operations Committee, which reports directly to the Management Committee, meets monthly and deals with all matters related to the management of learning opportunities. The Management Committee reports directly to the Executive Committee, which includes within its remit a review of academic standards and quality. Committee meetings are minuted and actions noted in a separate tracking document. Considerable improvement in the quality of minutes and action-tracking has taken place since the College's last review. Awarding organisations have commented positively on well-documented meetings in which actions and targets are clearly identified and tracked to ensure implementation. While minutes of the Executive and Management Committees clearly reflect their terms of reference, there is a limited link between the terms of reference of the Operations Committee and its minutes. Arrangements would be enhanced by specifying clearly in the minutes the results of actions planned in previous meetings. It would be **desirable** for the College to review its terms of reference for the Operations Committee.

1.3 Teaching staff sit on both the Operations Committee and the Management Committee, which enables them to understand issues affecting quality and standards at all levels of the organisation, and make a constructive and valuable contribution to the management and running of the College. Students are represented only on the Operations Committee. Their views are sought additionally through questionnaires and informal means. Management information is not shared directly with students, but the Academic Director reports relevant management decisions to the Operations Committee together with material elements from reports. Overall, students are happy with the academic standards and confident in their ability to gain the qualifications they require. In addition to the minutes of the committees, the College produces a series of reports at programme and management level. These are shared with staff representatives on the Management Committee and with students to the extent that aspects of the reports are discussed in the Operations Committee on which they are represented. Programme annual monitoring reports are produced under the comprehensive guidance of the College's own Annual Programme Review Policy and Procedure. Standardised reports for CMI and Pearson programmes address all aspects including a summary of student cohort achievement, but the College does not make full use of its student achievement and attendance information to review comparative performance at unit level and conduct a deeper analysis of reasons for withdrawal. It is **advisable** that the

College makes full use of achievement and attendance information to review student performance and withdrawals.

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

1.4 Use of external reference points is linked to arrangements made by the awarding organisations. The College has delivered in-house developmental workshops on the Quality Code and on level descriptors in particular.

1.5 The College states that the awarding organisations are responsible for programme specifications and intended learning outcomes. However, the guidelines from Pearson state that further developing customised programme specifications is the responsibility of the course team, which contrasts with the College's statement. The College relies in the first instance on the programme specifications produced by the awarding organisations. The College has made a deliberate decision to simplify, and reduce to a minimum the initial set of programme-level information it gives to new students. College-specific versions comprise a set of course handbooks containing a brief outline of the programme and a separate set of unit handbooks. The handbooks are supplemented with additional information such as calendars, timetables and assignment briefs that are issued during the induction period and at various times during the academic year. Students seeking further details can access the awarding organisations' guidance through the College virtual learning environment (VLE). It would be **desirable** for the College to develop customised programme specifications.

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

1.6 The College is responsible for the design of assessment tasks to satisfy the unit assessment criteria set by the awarding organisations. Assessment briefs are prepared (if required) by the assessors, then internally verified and signed off by the external verifier appointed by the awarding organisation. Consistent internal verification of assignment briefs and marked assignments is a College policy requirement. Positive external verifier reports confirm that the College has continued to meet awarding organisation requirements. In practice, the team saw no examples of assignment briefs that required adjustment following internal verification, no examples of marked assignments requiring regrading, and only a small number of examples of marked assignments with critical recommendations from the internal verifier to the assessor. The team found examples of assessments where the language used in feedback to the student within the body of the text was inconsistent with the grade awarded. It is **advisable** that the College applies College assessment policies consistently.

1.7 External verifiers, appointed by the awarding bodies, verify samples of student assessed work provided by the College once a year. The College responds to feedback from the verifier and reports on this in programme annual reviews.

1.8 In summary, the College fulfils its responsibilities for the management of academic standards with well written policies and procedures, and well conceived, simple and effective management arrangements, but it is advisable that it makes full use of achievement and attendance information to review student performance and withdrawals and applies College assessment policies consistently. It is desirable for the College to review its terms of reference for the Operations Committee and develop customised programme specifications.

The review team has **confidence** in the College'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 College fulfil its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities?

2.1 The College is generally effective in fulfilling its responsibilities for the quality of learning delegated by the awarding organisations. The awarding organisations report that the College is fulfilling its responsibilities effectively. The College is responsible for the Teaching and Assessment strategy, internal marking and verification, appeals and dealing with academic malpractice. Setting assignments is a shared responsibility. Value is added to the students' learning through an enhanced learning experience with visits to companies, visiting speakers, cultural visits and interactive exposure to current issues and ethics including innovative and creative learning strategies to motivate and engage students. The enhanced learning experience featuring interactive experiential engagement and sensitive exploration of topical and challenging issues (such as gender, equality and race) within a diverse cohort of overseas students is **good practice**.

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

2.2 The College makes effective use of external reference points for learning opportunities although it is largely dependent on the awarding organisations' policies and programme information. The College also uses the awarding organisations' quality assurance and external validation processes as external reference points. The College has ensured that staff members are aware of external reference points by delivering workshops on and providing examples of the Quality Code, and by circulating the Qualifications and Credit Framework, which staff members signed. Students are provided with contextual guidelines.

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

2.3 The College has policies and processes in place to ensure that it maintains the quality of teaching and learning. The College operates a Teaching and Assessment strategy, but not a Teaching and Learning strategy. The Management Committee reviews the Teaching and Assessment strategy annually, and staff members showed knowledge and application of the strategy.

2.4 The College has developed a number of teaching observation schemes. All new teaching employees and students on teaching practice are assigned a mentor to support their teaching progress. Additionally, the College conducts a twice-yearly peer review process where staff members observe and are observed several times over a short period. The timings vary from 10-minute snapshots to more lengthy sessions. Staff members reported that they found the observations very useful, particularly for sharing good practice.

2.5 Students spoke positively about the teaching and learning methods and confirmed that they can use several alternative means to provide feedback. Informally, students reported that staff members are very accessible and supportive. Formally, anonymous questionnaires are completed for each programme and an analysis presented to the Management Committee for action where necessary. Each programme elects a student team representative who attends the monthly Operations Committee meetings. Students confirmed that their views are taken seriously and acted upon.

2.6 The number of staff reflects the current size of the College. A College policy requires staff to have a qualification at least one level higher than the level they are teaching,

and there is a preference for staff with a teaching qualification, preferably at postgraduate level. Staff members who do not have a teaching qualification are encouraged to gain the qualification. Staff members are also encouraged to become members of a relevant professional body to assist with their continuing professional development.

2.7 The Teaching and Assessment strategy is comprehensive and clearly documented but could be applied more robustly. Feedback on some assignments was thorough but on others it was minimal, with two or three comments in the margins of the work that did not communicate to the student how improvements could be made. Comments were more detailed on other assignments but inconsistencies were noted between positive comments and the grade awarded. It is **advisable** for the College to improve the consistency and quality of feedback to students.

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

2.8 The College operates effective policies and processes to support students. College staff interview all students prior to admission and this includes interview by telephone or via the internet with students from abroad. Once accepted, students receive information in a pre-arrival pack, and on arrival students attend a full-day induction involving all teaching staff. Course information is distributed, initial assessments of literacy and numeracy are made, expectations of both sides made clear, and detailed talks on plagiarism and referencing take place. The Student Welfare Officer is introduced during the induction day and subsequently students or staff can communicate problems directly to the Officer.

2.9 Support for students is evident throughout the year. Active group learning takes place in seminars. Team building exercises help students to address cultural differences. Students have previously experienced a wide range of different teaching styles, some very formal. The College helps students to identify different approaches to learning by completing self-assessment questionnaires on learning styles and discussing the outcomes. The use of learning style questionnaires to develop appropriate teaching and learning strategies is **good practice**.

2.10 The College takes students' views seriously and has effective processes in place to gather them, including programme reviews and evaluations conducted at the end of each academic year, and anonymous questionnaires. The Management Committee discuss the findings. In addition, the College provides three direct routes where students can discuss and share their views: individual tutorials, a student forum, and student representation on the Operations Committee.

2.11 Students reported positively about their ability to comment and express their opinions, and the responsiveness of the College. Programme annual reports and the College's annual report analyse retention data. Much of the data relates to students who withdrew because of problems with their visas or due to personal issues. Students who experience difficulties with their programmes are supported with study skills and additional tutor support, although as noted in paragraph 1.4, the team is not aware of deeper analysis of this data to understand the reasons for different standards of student performance.

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

2.12 The College supports staff development activities and encourages staff to undertake continuing scholarly activity and to maintain their own professional development records. A staff development policy is in place. Staff members may request support for suitable staff development activities or conferences that they have identified. All members of staff undergo an annual appraisal with the Principal which helps to identify their development

needs. The College also provides internal staff development workshops on topics that include an introduction to the Quality Code, assessment, feedback, and questioning techniques.

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 uses a range of learning resources to support students. Students are able to use the awarding organisations' online resources which provide them with course materials, access to e-books, journals, and internet media presentations that can be accessed on networked computers in two College laboratories or on their own computers. The students can also access resources from public libraries. The College is aware of the need to increase resources, and has plans to invest more in this area. Students commented that they are satisfied with the resources available to them.

2.14 In summary, the College has built on previous reviews and developed management structures, policies and processes to support and enhance the quality of learning opportunities. The use of enhanced learning experience and learning style questionnaires to develop appropriate teaching and learning strategies is considered good practice. It is advisable that the College improves the consistency and quality of feedback to students.

The review team has **confidence** that the College 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 communicates information about learning opportunities to students, staff and stakeholders effectively. It produces a range of information and is transparent about policies and procedures. The College website provides useful information to students with relevant links to learning resources, government information, and other websites. The College is developing its website further to increase its usefulness. The VLE has been developed recently and allows immediate student access to relevant policies and procedures. As discussed in paragraph 2.13, students confirm that the VLE provides an effective platform from which to locate useful study material. In addition, the College is attempting to build connections with university libraries and is promoting use of Bradford Central Library resources to students.

3.2 A prospectus provides relevant information to recruitment agents and prospective students, including the College's mission, aims and objectives. The College has an Agent Manual to clarify arrangements between them and is currently building a small network of active recruitment agents that promotes visits to the premises.

3.3 The awarding organisations provide a check on information published by the College. Students can access the awarding organisations' programme specifications through the VLE. Programme handbooks provide basic information on the running of the programmes for prospective students but lack concise programme-specific information for enrolled students. Enrolled students instead receive a generic student handbook that mainly outlines College policies. Students receive detailed unit-specific information through unit handbooks.

3.4 The College provides a sufficient record of achievement. Information on retention and progression is used in programme reviews. As noted in paragraph 1.4, the overall record of student achievement is unclear because of the broad definition of withdrawals.

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

3.5 Responsibilities for ensuring that information is accessible, complete and trustworthy are clearly defined and effective. The Principal is responsible for the Publication Scheme. In addition, a short Public Information Policy clarifies documentation published, the mode of publication, and where documentation is located. The Executive Board is responsible for reviewing the completeness and accuracy of public information, with changes to documentation signed off by the Board. The Board functions as an appropriate body that provides a check on information, although as discussed in paragraph 1.2, minutes of Board meetings are limited and do not expand on discussions held.

3.6 The College has effective procedures to ensure that policies are reviewed annually, with the tracking of reviews documented in a Policy Review Tracker. The College additionally uses a standard template for documentation, including a document history that tracks each version. Staff and students have access to the documentation, which is transparent and satisfies the needs of the College.

3.7 In summary, the College is effective in communicating complete and accurate information to internal and external stakeholders. It has an established and reliable process for reviewing information annually, with updated versions clearly labelled. To strengthen provision of information further, the College may wish to review how it communicates specific programme information and how it defines student withdrawals.

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

Action plan³

Bradford Metropolitan College Ltd action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight of June 2014						
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 enhanced learning experience featuring interactive experiential engagement and sensitive exploration of topical and challenging issues (such as gender, equality and race) within a diverse cohort of overseas students (paragraph 2.1) 	Cross-college adoption of current issues and ethics embedded within the curriculum	Regular peer observation, team teaching and collaboration to experience effective engagement and support interaction	November 2014 and April 2014 then once per semester thereafter	All teaching staff	Academic Director	Student feedback Minutes of committee meeting Virtual Learning Environment resource repository Student visits

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 organisations.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the use of learning style questionnaires to develop appropriate teaching and learning strategies (paragraph 2.9). 	Student motivation, engagement and higher satisfaction and success rate	Evaluate and disseminate an appropriate questionnaire at induction and also during teaching and learning. Plan into the scheme of works	Start in September 2014 and use during each induction session	All teaching staff	Academic Director	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of implications through Operations Committee minutes of meeting Annual programme reviews College annual report Student achievement data
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"> make full use of achievement and attendance information to review student performance and withdrawals (paragraph 1.4) 	Identify remedial action required for individuals or cohorts	Consider the data at the Management Committee meeting	August 2014 and annually thereafter	Academic Director	Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Minutes of Management Committee and action tracking Annual programme reviews College annual report

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> apply College assessment policies consistently (paragraph 1.7) 	Develop staff understanding of the assessment policy further	Deliver staff development workshop on assessment and internal verification and discuss in Management Committee meetings	August 2014 and annually thereafter	Academic Director	Principal	Discuss at staff development workshop Minutes of committee meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve the consistency and quality of feedback to students (paragraph 2.7). 	Develop consistent and appropriate feedback to students across all programmes and assessors	Deliver staff development workshop on assessment feedback strategies	August 2014 and annually thereafter	All assessors	Academic Director	Review of assessed work to identify consistency at Verifications and Standardisation meeting
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 would be desirable for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the Operations Committee's terms of reference (paragraph 1.2) 	Standardised agenda and minuting of Operations Committee	Change the minutes of meetings template, use all agenda items and clearer tracking of actions	August 2014 and monthly thereafter	Minutes taker	Academic Director	Minutes of Operations Committee meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop customised programme specifications (paragraph 1.6). 	Separate programme specification for each programme	Rewrite existing documentation into a focused programme document by merging student handbook, course and unit handbooks	September 2014	Academic Director	Principal	Programme specification document Minutes of committee meetings

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/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx

Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx>. 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.

⁴ www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=2669

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.

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**.

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