



Magna Carta College Ltd

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

October 2014

Key findings about Magna Carta College Ltd

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in October 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 the University of Buckingham, the University of Wales, the Association of Business Executives, and 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 these awarding bodies and 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 high level of engagement with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education by staff (paragraph 1.3).

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:

- fully implement the operation of the committees overseeing the provision (paragraphs 1.2 and 2.2)
- improve the quality of feedback to students on their work (paragraph 2.5)
- ensure the timely delivery of the staff development plan (paragraph 2.12).

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

- review the documentation and the operation of internal verification (paragraph 1.4)
- review the operation of the peer observation scheme (paragraph 2.6)
- provide training to staff on module reviews (paragraph 2.7)
- provide applicants with access to details of the available learning resources (paragraph 3.1)
- review the procedures for checking the information about learning opportunities (paragraph 3.4).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Magna Carta 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 the Association of Business Executives, Pearson, the University of Buckingham and the University of Wales. The review was carried out by Mr Dan Morgan, Dr Marie Wheatley and Professor Anthony Whitehouse (reviewers) and Dr Peter Steer (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).² Evidence in support of the review included documentation supplied by the College, the student submission, meetings with staff and the reports of reviews by QAA.

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

- the Qualifications and Credit framework (QCF)
- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code).

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

The College is an independent international business college, aiming to provide a high quality education to all, including those previously excluded from educational opportunities because of financial constraints. Its mission is to deliver undergraduate and postgraduate education that is excellent in knowledge and skills and enhances the student experience. Its students are drawn from all over the world. The College was founded in 2001 and recruited its first students for the University of Wales in 2009. In July 2012 it was acquired by Oxford Education Online Ltd. It has exclusive use of a building in the Summertown area of Oxford. During the academic year 2014-15, the College expects to open a new site in Tower Hill London, mainly for its University of Buckingham provision, although this facility was not ready at the time of the review. The College currently employs eight part-time academic staff, representing approximately two full-time equivalent staff, and 13 full-time administrative staff. The total number of students on all programmes at the College is currently 30. However, in its strategic plan the College is planning for a rapid increase in the number of staff and students as new programmes commence.

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

Association of Business Executives (ABE)*

- ABP** level 7 Extended Diploma in Marketing Management (1)
- Level 4 Diploma in Business Management (3)
- Level 5 Diploma in Business Management (1)
- Level 6 Diploma in Business Management (1)
- Level 6 Extended Diploma in Business Management (0)
- Level 7 Diploma in Business Management (2)

* All students are undertaking the online version of all these ABE programmes.

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

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

** ABP is now part of ABE

Magna Carta College

- Pre-Master's Certificate (8)
- University Foundation Course (joint with ABE) (1)

Pearson - No recruitment at present although approved

- HNC Business Level 4 (QCF)
- HND Business (Management) (QCF)
- Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership Level 7 (QCF)

University of Buckingham - Recruitment is now underway for January 2015

- MBA
- MSc Accounting and Finance
- MSc Finance and Investment
- MSc Financial Service Management
- MSc Management in a Service Economy

University of Wales - Students are at the final stages of their programme.

- MBA Healthcare Management (4)
- MBA International Management (9)

The provider's stated responsibilities

The College has some responsibility for most aspects of the delivery of all of its programmes. The awarding bodies and organisations undertake most of the curriculum design and development for the programmes and provide programme specifications for the College to customise where appropriate. They also oversee the assessment process and the award of qualifications with the help of external examiners or moderators who have access to student work after first marking by the College. Assignments are set by the College using guidance from the awarding partners.

Recent developments

Since the last REO in October 2013, the College has added a new site in Tower Hill London which will initially accommodate up to 400 students under a new franchise agreement with the University of Buckingham. It has also gained approval to run Pearson programmes and is developing online versions of ABE awards.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on the higher education programme at the College were invited to present a submission to the review team and did so in September 2014. Three University of Wales students provided a written submission which they had circulated to other MBA students for comment. The submission was useful to the team. No students were available to meet the team during the review.

Detailed findings about Magna Carta College Ltd

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The arrangements for the management of academic standards are appropriate. The College is fully aware of its responsibilities for managing academic standards with its various awarding partners and follows them closely. For example, the new programmes from the University of Buckingham and Pearson will require enhanced formal reporting compared to the requirements of the College's other awarding partners. The Dean has overall responsibility for quality assurance. The Chief Operating Officer oversees most aspects of programme delivery. Both the Dean and the Chief Operating Officer are members of the Senior Management Team. The Chief Operating Officer is supported by the Academic Manager. Until recently, because of the small number of students, many of the tasks allocated to College committees have been undertaken by the Senior Management Team, which includes the Chief Executive Officer. The College expects the number of students to increase substantially as a result of its agreements with Pearson and the University of Buckingham.

1.2 As recommended in the REO report in October 2013, the College has developed an appropriate committee structure for the oversight of academic standards, although implementation has only just started. All the committees have clearly documented terms of reference and reporting lines. A formal academic meetings diary includes a schedule for all committee meetings until 2017. The Academic Board is scheduled to meet three times a year. Five committees report directly to the Academic Board: the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee; the Teaching, Learning and Development Committee; the Programme Committees; the Programme Development Committee; and the Examination Board. At the time of review, most of the committees had met only once or twice and the Programme Committees will not meet until there are more students. Even with small student numbers, there were opportunities for greater use of some committees. For example, the College did not use the Teaching, Learning and Development Committee to provide input concerning the development of online teaching material and the enhancement of the quality of feedback to students or the Programme Development Committee to provide input in the validation of new programmes. It is **advisable** for the College to fully implement the operation of the committees overseeing the provision.

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

1.3 The College engages effectively with external reference points in the management of academic standards. Programme specifications are provided by the awarding partners and are adjusted as necessary by the College for its versions of the programmes. The College has made effective use of the guidance in the Quality Code in developing College policies and the contents of the Quality Handbook. The detailed advice in the Quality Handbook is valuable to staff in guiding their delivery of the provision. The College has made careful use of the Quality Code. For example, as changes to the Quality Code are available they are considered in a timely manner. The College has provided extensive training for staff on the Quality Code. This includes a series of detailed training sessions devoted to particular aspects of the Quality Code, which have been well attended by teaching, support and senior management staff. Staff demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the guidance provided by the Quality Code and how to apply it to their jobs. The high

level of engagement with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education by staff is **good practice**.

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

1.4 In response to the recommendations of the REO report in October 2013, the College has developed a range of useful procedures for the oversight of the internal verification and moderation of work, although these have not been fully implemented. Student work demonstrates that moderation is in place. In the case of ABE programmes, this is largely for formative work since this awarding organisation undertakes summative assessment mainly by examination. Internal verification and moderation, while adequate for the programmes running at present, do not use the full scope of the procedures that have been developed since the last REO. For example, on ABE programmes, there are few comments to help first marking in the future or reconcile disagreements about grades. The College plans to use the new procedures for its University of Buckingham and Pearson programmes and also apply them to the rest of the provision. However, guidance for staff is somewhat limited, since explicit and detailed information on the College's internal verification and moderation procedures for each awarding partner are not available in the Quality Handbook. It would be **desirable** for the College to review the documentation and the operation of internal verification.

1.5 The College responds effectively to external examiners' reports. At present, only the University of Wales provides external examiners' reports and the most recent one refers largely to programmes no longer running. The College considered the external examiners' comments in detail and took action as a result. The new committee structure provides for extensive consideration of external examiners' reports.

1.6 In summary, the College has developed suitable procedures to manage academic standards. However, full operation of the committee structure is only just starting. Enhancement of the internal verification and moderation procedures is planned for the start of the College's new programmes. The College makes effective use of the Quality Code to guide the delivery of the provision.

The review team has **confidence** in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies and 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 has developed clear processes to fulfil its responsibilities for the quality of learning opportunities. The nature and the stage of development of the committee structure for the management of academic standards, described in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2, applies equally to managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities.

2.2 Formal student involvement in decision making has been limited. There will be further opportunities for student involvement when the committee structure is fully operational. The implementation of the operation of the committees overseeing the provision, with the associated recommendation, is considered in paragraph 1.2. At present, the College relies mainly on informal contact to deal with student concerns.

In addition, the College asks students to provide feedback on their experience with modules and induction using questionnaires. The results are considered by the Academic Manager. Students indicate that the College is responsive to their requests.

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

2.3 The College's use of external reference points is considered in paragraph 1.3.

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

2.4 Oversight of teaching and learning is satisfactory. As recommended in the REO report in October 2013, the College has developed a learning and teaching strategy. However, the Teaching, Learning and Development Committee formed to support it has only recently had its first meeting. With its present small student numbers, the College maintains and enhances the quality of teaching and learning through adherence to the College's extensive and thorough Quality Handbook. The Handbook, which is readily available to all staff and students, contains policies that are aligned with the Quality Code. Students are complimentary about their teachers and identified interactive and imaginative teaching by motivated staff as being particularly valuable. The strict attendance regime and the expectation for preparatory reading supports a responsible approach to learning.

2.5 Staff provide limited feedback to students on their work. Since the last REO in October 2013, the College has developed strategies to improve the quality of feedback to students. However, at present, the feedback that staff provide to students on their work includes little guidance to prepare for future assessments. It is **advisable** for the College to improve the quality of feedback to students on their work.

2.6 The peer observation of teaching is still under development. More staff have participated in peer observation since the REO in October 2013. However, not all staff have been involved and this has limited the opportunities for quality enhancement. It would be **desirable** for the College to review the operation of the peer observation scheme.

2.7 The College operates a module review process, although there are opportunities for improvement. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee recognises that further action is required to improve the effectiveness of the module review process. In particular, there is a need for greater understanding by the module leaders of the potential of module review for quality enhancement. It would be **desirable** for the College to provide training to staff on module reviews.

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

2.8 The admissions process is appropriate. The admissions procedures are documented in the Quality Handbook and the Student Handbook. The administration of admissions is overseen by the Registrar and decisions on non-standard applicants are taken by the Dean or a member of the Senior Management Team. Admissions are reported to and discussed by the Senior Management Team.

2.9 The College provides students with a suitable induction. Recent enrolments have mostly been to ABE programmes. The College enrolls students using a comprehensive online process that may take up to six weeks depending on the students' prior knowledge. The process includes an introduction to the College, the programme structure and the

support systems available to students. The College has evaluated the online induction and has reacted effectively to the problems reported by students. Most of the negative student comment on induction concerned technical errors which were quickly rectified.

2.10 The College provides suitable academic and pastoral student support, often on an informal basis. Students have easy access to a variety of staff although they often go directly to the Academic Manager. A more structured approach is planned when the new programmes start, including the use of personal tutors. The College screens all students at induction for any additional learning support needs. Students commented favourably upon the levels of support available to them: for example, concerning dissertation supervision and the extension of deadlines because of exceptional circumstances.

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

2.11 There are appropriate processes for the recruitment and development of staff. The College has detailed procedures for the recruitment of new staff. All new posts have job descriptions and there is a documented induction process. Staff have suitable qualifications for the programmes they teach. The College has recently developed a Staff Professional Development Review process to help manage staff and support the achievement of the College's objectives. The comprehensive Staff Handbook provides valuable guidance on staff development. Staff development is a standing agenda item on the Learning and Teaching Development Committee. There is observation of teaching by managerial staff which is appropriately linked to appraisal.

2.12 The College has a suitable staff development plan, although full implementation has been delayed. The plan pays particular attention to training on the Quality Code and teaching and learning activity. While there have been several valuable sessions on the Quality Code, there has been slippage in the delivery of parts of the plan, partly due to delays in the recruitment of staff for the new University of Buckingham programmes. For example, the session aimed at improving student feedback on assignments has been delayed. It is **advisable** for the College to ensure the timely delivery of the staff development plan.

2.13 There are valuable staff sessions to exchange and enhance practice. To support staff engagement in their development, the College has encouraged regular informal opportunities for staff to exchange effective practice and highlight areas for collective development. The results are presented on a staff notice board.

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

2.14 The College has appropriate methods for allocating resources. There is a development model to ensure that new course proposals align with the College's strategy. This is supported by a costing model which identifies resourcing needs. This process is currently undertaken by the members of the Senior Management Team, but will include the new Programme Development Committee. The new facilities in Tower Hill in London have been approved by the University of Buckingham.

2.15 Students have access to sufficient resources to achieve the intended learning outcomes. These resources include a library and online academic texts, suitable teaching and learning facilities and materials on the virtual learning environment. Students have

commented favourably on the resources available to them, in particular the library and online resources.

2.16 In summary, the College has generally effective procedures for the oversight of the quality of learning opportunities. However, some procedures have not been fully implemented, due in part to the small number of students.

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 provides helpful information on its website, although some additions would be beneficial. The website is the main source of information for potential students. There is no separate prospectus although some brochures are produced. On its website, the College regularly publishes an informative newsletter about the latest developments at the College. The College admissions processes are clearly identified on the website which also provides an overview of studying in Oxford, including guidance on the locality, accommodation and transport links. Applicants are assisted in their selection of a suitable programme by information supplied by the admissions team. However, applicants are unable to gain access to extensive or detailed information about learning resources. The College provides helpful information on its learning resources on the virtual learning environment but this is only available to enrolled students. It would be **desirable** for the College to provide applicants with access to details of the available learning resources.

3.2 At induction, the College provides students with comprehensive programme handbooks and a college-level student handbook. Awarding partners provide the College with some programme information. Programme handbooks provide a clear overview of each programme, including programme structure, module specifications, learning outcomes and assessment requirements. The Student Handbook is comprehensive and includes information on-site facilities, available services and student support. Student testimonials on the website confirm that the College provides a very positive learning experience.

3.3 The College uses its virtual learning environment to provide students with helpful programme information, learning materials and handbooks. It provides training for staff and students on the use of the virtual learning environment.

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

3.4 As recommended in the REO report in October 2013, the College has reviewed its procedures for the provision of information about learning opportunities. Its mapping exercise shows that significant progress has been made in aligning College practice with the guidance in the Quality Code. The Senior Management Team is ultimately responsible for information on learning opportunities. An Information Policy details the production and approval process for information, which is subject to a sign-off procedure by the Senior Management Team. However, the minutes of the Senior Management Team meetings do

not explicitly state that materials have been approved. There are some inconsistencies of a minor nature in the information that the College provides regarding the programmes being offered and exactly where they will be delivered. It would be **desirable** for the College to review the procedures for checking the information about learning opportunities.

3.5 Policies and procedures concerning the use of social media are satisfactory. The College provides training for staff in using social media to communicate with students. The Academic Manager monitors social media postings by staff and students in an appropriate manner.

3.6 The College has proper procedures for overseeing the provision of information and guidance by agents. Student recruitment agents attend open days at the College to receive training. The College monitors their effectiveness, for example, by an analysis of the ratio of applications received to admissions. In future, the College plans to include student views in this analysis of the performance of agents.

3.7 In summary, the College has modified its procedures for the production of information on learning opportunities and used guidance from the Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision. However, further improvement could be made to the information on learning opportunities that the College provides.

<p>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.</p>

Action plan³

Magna Carta College Ltd action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight of October 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 high level of engagement with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education by staff (paragraph 1.3). 	All College activities embed the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) and staff and student understanding of it is maintained and built upon	Review College processes against the Quality Code on an annual basis Determine, resource and undertake any developments required Include the Quality Code materials in staff induction as appropriate Include the Quality Code materials in student induction as appropriate	October 2015 October 2015 June 2015 June 2015	Dean Dean/Chief Operating Officer Chief Operating Officer Chief Operating Officer	Academic Board	Report review and 'gap analysis' showing the College's progress Projects completed Report on staff induction with staff feedback Report on student induction with student feedback

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 bodies and organisations.

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"> fully implement the operation of the committees overseeing the provision (paragraphs 1.2 and 2.2) 	Fully operational committee structure as outlined in the Quality Handbook	Arrange and develop sessions for programme support staff to provide effective support for meetings Document the approaches to committee support activity agreed with staff Review committee structure and calendar activity	June 2015 June 2015 June 2015	Chief Operating Officer Chief Operating Officer Chief Operating Officer	Academic Board	Report of effectiveness of structures and operation of the calendar with inputs from programme support staff, partners, external examiners and Advisory Board feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> improve the quality of feedback to students on their work (paragraph 2.5) 	Noted improvements in feedback provided using approaches indicated in the Quality Handbook	Provide staff development at induction and meetings with current academic and programme support staff to highlight feedback and enable smooth system implementation Develop system to aid feedback on work submitted through plagiarism-detection software	January 2015 February 2015	Chief Operating Officer Dean	Learning, Teaching and Development Committee Programme Committee	Report of effectiveness of feedback developments including inputs from students and staff from internal and external verification processes

		Review feedback activity with students, and staff	September 2015	Dean	Programme Committee	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure the timely delivery of the staff development plan (paragraph 2.12). 	Staff Development is provided in support of strategic College activity	Finalise staff development plan following staff recruitment	January 2015	Dean	Learning, Teaching and Development Committee	Report on staff development including inputs from staff and students giving feedback and indicating effectiveness of staff development undertaken
		Plan, deliver and review staff development activity	June 2015	Dean/Chief Operating Officer		
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 documentation and the operation of internal verification (paragraph 1.4) 	Effective and clear documentation of Magna Carta College internal verification processes	Provide 'Delivery at Magna Carta College' document which outlines systems and activities making clear delivery staffs' responsibilities and the support provided for delivery of programmes	December 2014	Chief Operating Officer	Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee	Report on effectiveness of the document including inputs from staff, partners and external examiners
		Include operation of internal verification in staff development/induction	December 2014	Chief Operating Officer		
		Review 'Delivery at Magna Carta College' document	June 2015	Chief Operating		

		with staff		Officer		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the operation of the peer observation scheme (paragraph 2.6) 	Reviewed and embedded peer observation processes	<p>Publish calendar and operation details for peer observation process at the College and the support provided for delivery of programmes</p> <p>Report operation of peer observation scheme</p>	<p>January 2015</p> <p>June 2015</p>	<p>Dean</p> <p>Chief Operating Officer</p>	Learning, Teaching and Development Committee	Report on engagement and effectiveness of the peer observation process including inputs from staff, partners and external examiners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide training to staff on module reviews (paragraph 2.7) 	Improved documentation shown in completed module reviews	<p>Provision of 'Delivery at Magna Carta College' document which outlines systems and activities and makes clear module review responsibilities and the support provided for delivery of programmes</p> <p>Staff development/ induction</p> <p>Review 'Delivery at Magna Carta College' document with staff</p>	<p>December 2014</p> <p>December 2014</p> <p>June 2015</p>	<p>Chief Operating Officer</p> <p>Chief Operating Officer</p> <p>Chief Operating Officer</p>	Learning, Teaching and Development Committee	Report on effectiveness of the document including inputs from staff, partners and external examiners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide applicants with access to details of the available learning 	Resource information provided in full on website	Identify gaps in information and update site	January 2015	Chief Executive Officer	Programme Committee	Report on effectiveness of website updates including inputs

resources (paragraph 3.1)		Monitor site	Ongoing		Senior Management Team	from students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the procedures for checking the information about learning opportunities (paragraph 3.4) 	Processes for checking the information about learning opportunities are operated effectively	<p>Review procedures</p> <p>Ensure clear records kept of sign-off practices</p>	<p>January 2015</p> <p>June 2015</p>	Chief Executive Officer	<p>Academic Board</p> <p>Senior Management Team</p>	Report on effectiveness of procedures for checking information and their operation, including inputs from staff and students

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/about-us/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 UK Visas and Immigration 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 Visa and Immigration'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 Educational Oversight 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**.

QAA1009 - R4299 - Dec 14

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2014
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Email enquiries@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786