



All Nations Christian College

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

November 2012

Key findings about All Nations Christian College

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in November 2012, 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 awards it offers on behalf of the Open University.

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

The team considers that **reliance can** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the provider is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Good practice

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

- the range of opportunities for student representation and the responsiveness of the College to issues raised (paragraph 2.4)
- the distinctive emphasis on a College community (paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6)
- the extensive and thorough support for student learning on placements (paragraph 2.7).

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:

- extend moderation procedures to include assessment at certificate level (paragraph 1.7).

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

- develop adequate protocols to support staff in assessment using the full range of marks available (paragraph 1.6)
- arrange equivalence in virtual learning access to all students (paragraph 2.11)
- arrange timely induction and training for ministry placement supervisors prior to the commencement of placements (paragraph 2.12)
- implement formal procedures for verifying the accuracy and completeness of all published information (paragraph 3.3).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at All Nations Christian College (the provider; the College). 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 Open University. The review was carried out by Ms Ana Almeida, Mr David Charlton, Professor Jethro Newton (reviewers), and Ms AnnMarie Colbert (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 and Open University, meetings with staff, students and work experience placement providers, and reports by the British Accreditation Council.

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

- the Academic Infrastructure
- the regulations of its awarding body.

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

All Nations Christian College (the College) is an independent mission training institution with no formal sponsoring links with any churches, missions or organisations. It follows the evangelical Christian tradition and aims to provide training for Christian ministry in a cross-cultural context. The College was established in 1971, following the merger of All Nations Missionary College and two other providers. Resources and residential facilities are housed in the College's Easneye campus.

The College first gained approval to offer programmes leading to Open University-validated awards in 1992. A total of 88 students are enrolled at the College on Open University-validated awards, of which 54 are full-time students on the undergraduate pathways and 11 are full-time students on the postgraduate pathways. Twenty-three students study their master's degree part-time, of whom 11 primarily study online. The College also offers mission training through its own short courses.

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

The Open University

- Master of Arts Contemporary Mission Studies (11)
- Master of Arts Development with Mission (6)
- Master of Arts Leadership with Mission (5)
- Master of Theology Contextual Theology with Mission (9)
- BA (Hons) Biblical and Intercultural Studies (9)
- Diploma of Higher Education and Intercultural Studies (9)
- Certificate of Higher Education Biblical and Intercultural Studies (9)

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4.

² www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx.

The provider's stated responsibilities

Responsibility for programme delivery is shared between the College and the Open University (the University). The College has delegated responsibility for student recruitment and induction, curriculum development, setting, marking and moderating assignments and providing feedback to students. Responsibility for analysis of retention and progression data, the quality of teaching and learning and programme currency are shared between the College and University. Responsibility for complaints and appeals initially rests with the College. If students have exhausted all college procedures open to them in requesting a review of a decision of a board of examiners they have the right to submit a formal appeal to the University. The College shares responsibility for the academic standards and quality with the University.

Recent developments

Online delivery of the Master of Arts programmes commenced in April 2012 and the College is developing the online resources to support this new programme. Computers in the student computer room have recently been upgraded and new machines have been installed at all the library enquiry and checkout work stations.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. The students produced a written submission with the guidance and support of the College, which proved useful to the review team. Student representatives met the coordinator at the preparatory meeting and a productive meeting between students and the team took place during the review visit.

Detailed findings about All Nations Christian College

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The management structure is clear and effective. The College Council is the governing body which provides strategic leadership. Organisational strategy is developed by the Executive Director working with the College Council, the Leadership Team and the Finance Committee. Operational management rests with the Leadership Team, the membership of which includes the Executive Director, Director of Training, Facilities Manager, Finance Manager, and the Marketing and Public Relations Manager.

1.2 The committee structure is effective in providing the College with clear oversight of academic standards. The Academic Board is responsible for oversight and review of quality assurance. It monitors programme delivery, approves annual reports prior to dispatch to the awarding body, and ensures recommendations are implemented. Programme monitoring procedures are robust. Annual monitoring reports include appropriate analysis of external examiner comments, student achievement and planned actions. The College uses the university-led periodic review, validation and revalidation processes to contribute to oversight. The Academic Board is assisted by the Quality Assurance Committee, programme committees and examination boards. Representatives from organisations external to the College are members of Academic Board and Quality Assurance Committee, which enhances the robustness of College procedures.

1.3 Adequate policies and procedures assure academic standards. Effective communication of these includes the Quality Assurance Handbook, Staff Induction Pack, Staff Handbook and programme handbooks. Student participation and feedback is actively sought and extensive opportunities are provided. Student representatives participate in the Academic Board, the Quality Assurance Committee and programme committees. Terms of reference for different committees include formal consideration of matters raised by students, and these are pursued and addressed in a timely manner.

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

1.4 Appropriate use is made of the Academic Infrastructure for the management of academic standards. Staff have a working knowledge of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*) and good use is made of external subject-related and mission-related networks, communities and associations.

1.5 Staff use the Academic Infrastructure in programme development. Programme design accords with the requirements of the University and reflects the principles and precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review*. Appropriate consideration is given to subject benchmark statements relevant to theology and religious studies. *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* is used to ensure appropriate levels for the awards. Processes and practices comply with those of the validating body, which are informed by the *Code of practice*. Reference is made in the teaching and learning strategy to use of relevant subject benchmark statements in formulating learning outcomes and assessment strategies. Assessment practice reflects the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. The recently updated Quality Assurance Handbook includes a mapping exercise

which reflects the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 10: Admissions to higher education*.

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

1.6 The College meets the terms of its collaborative agreement with the University for setting, marking, moderating assessments and providing feedback to students. External examiner and academic reviewer reports are very positive and confirm fair marking. However, a few inconsistencies are reported. These include some instances of high marking, a recommendation that markers be encouraged to use the full range of marks available and a recommendation for increased transparency in the derivation of final marks from marking grids. The team also noted the University validation condition for an assessment strategy that clearly distinguishes between formative, summative, graded and non-graded assessment. External examiner comments are acknowledged in the College's Annual Programme Evaluation, and procedures that require implementing are being implemented. Clear criteria, assessment policies and standard forms for feedback to students are in use. These are consistent with the *Code of practice, Section 6: Assessment of students*. Students confirm assessment requirements are clearly specified and assessment feedback is comprehensive. To embed the rigorous and consistent use of assessment criteria it is desirable for the College to establish adequate protocols to support staff assessment using the full range of marks available.

1.7 Internal assessment moderation is appropriate for the established master's degrees, years two and three of the BA (Hons) in Biblical and Intercultural Studies, and the Diploma of Higher Education in Biblical and Intercultural Studies. Moderation meeting records list assessor and moderator marks and show the outcome of discussion between moderator and assessor. Moderator comments are not recorded and marks generally remain unchanged; changes include revised feedback to students to more clearly reflect the allocated marks. The review team is unable to comment about the new online master's degree as no formal assessment had taken place prior to the review. No assessment moderation is implemented at level 4. This absence has the potential to put academic standards at risk for the Certificate of Higher Education in Biblical and Intercultural Studies and year one of the BA (Hons) in Biblical and Intercultural Studies. During the July 2012 examination board, the external examiner requested level 4 samples are available in future. The College demonstrated its receptiveness to this proposal in discussion of its draft response to the examiner, which confirmed its plan to provide samples. The extension of the College's internal process to include moderation at level 4 would also support the assurance of academic standards. It is advisable for the College to extend moderation procedures to include certificate level.

1.8 The College actively reviews curriculum currency throughout the year. The annual programme evaluation, revalidation and periodic review processes are used to monitor provision against external reference points, such as subject and mission-related networks. The effectiveness of College structures and processes are evaluated through internal deliberative processes in preparation for annual reporting to the University. Satisfactory systems are in place for sharing good practice. Sharing occurs at programme committees and training team meetings. Themes at training team meetings include assessment and group work, which reinforce sharing of good practice. Tutors also use peer observation to share good practice.

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

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 The College's processes for managing and enhancing of the quality of learning opportunities are the same as those for academic standards, as described in paragraphs 1.1-1.3.

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

2.2 The College's use of external reference points in the management and enhancement of learning opportunities is the same as those described for academic standards in paragraphs 1.4-1.5.

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

2.3 The teaching and learning strategy fosters a caring environment for learners and emphasises reflective learning. The Quality Assurance Committee has oversight of the strategy, and monitors reports on the quality and enhancement of teaching and learning. Teaching, learning, and curriculum matters are discussed at training staff meetings. Review of the strategy is allied to external review and revalidation processes. The teaching and learning strategy is effective in improving the quality of learning opportunities. Developmental peer observation of teaching is an element of the strategy that works well. Aspects of teaching are evaluated and account taken of module evaluation and improvement opportunities. Discussion takes place between peers following observation and with the line manager during performance review. The tutorial system is a particularly effective aspect of the strategy. Staff place consistent emphasis on building the student learning experience around learner's goals and preferences.

2.4 Opportunities for students to provide feedback on the quality of teaching and learning are good, as is the College's responsiveness to issues raised. Opportunities for student feedback include module review, annual programme evaluation and student representation on committees. Termly student feedback on modules and annual programme evaluation results are considered through the committee structure. Module and annual programme response rates are high and teaching teams are praised consistently. Student representatives meet each week with the Executive Director and Facilities Manager, and contribute to recommendations for enhancement. Student representation and participation in committees and quality processes is extensive and students are satisfied that arrangements work effectively. The range of opportunities for student representation and the responsiveness of the College to issues raised is good practice.

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

2.5 The highly supportive learning and pastoral care environment has a distinctive emphasis on the College as a worshipping community. Admissions and induction procedures are clearly specified. Induction includes a student-led contribution and student

mentor allocation. Tutorial groups provide a cohesive structure to the College community. Personal tutorials occur at least twice a term and tutorial group meetings occur up to three times a week for prayer and sharing concerns.

2.6 Support arrangements are effective and emphasise independent learning. Support includes essay writing and presentation skills. Policy and procedures are in place to assist students with dyslexia or dyspraxia. Volunteer-led language coaching is also provided. Additional specialist support is valued by students. Students studying online have individual and group educational support and pastoral care provided by the E-learning Coordinator. These support arrangements are overseen by the MA Programme Leader. Support arrangements are reviewed at regular training team meetings. Appropriate consideration is given to matters arising from retention, progression, and achievement data by undergraduate and postgraduate committees and programme leaders. The distinctive emphasis on the College as a community, including the supportive student learning and pastoral environment, is good practice.

2.7 Arrangements for ministry placements work well and are valued by students. The Ministry Placement Manager lists opportunities and what may be expected from them. Support for students includes informative handbooks and a dedicated administrator. Impressive supervision and support for student learning is provided by placement-based supervisors. Progress in meeting learning outcomes and placement objectives is reviewed regularly. Students provide feedback to the College on their experience. The extensive and thorough support for student learning on placements is good practice.

What are the provider's arrangements for staff development to maintain and/or enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

2.8 Staff development is informed by clear policy and planning. Activities for personal and team professional development, and the enhancement of teaching and learning include staff conferences, and college-wide workshops on curriculum and assessment-related topics. Staff development support procedures are well documented and used. The sabbatical leave policy is clear. The effectiveness of staff development is overseen by the Staff Development Group, which takes operational responsibility for the implementation of the Staff Development Plan on behalf of the Quality Assurance Committee. Annual updating of the Plan is informed by performance review outcomes which are also monitored by the Staff Development Group.

2.9 Clear requirements for recruitment of staff are incorporated in an equal opportunities policy. Induction and mentoring arrangements for new and visiting lecturers into the College ethos and matters relating to teaching and learning are well understood. The induction pack clearly describes College life and includes information on teaching, learning and assessment, and academic-related policies and procedures. The teaching of new staff is evaluated through peer observation, while staff assessment practices are monitored by programme leaders. Performance review is undertaken by line managers. Matters discussed include personal targets and achievements, teaching performance and student evaluation feedback, professional networking, and continuing professional development needs. Outcomes are reviewed by the Executive Director.

2.10 Sharing and dissemination of good practice is appropriate. Methods include performance review, staff conferences and workshops, and subject-related networks and activities. External membership of the Quality Assurance Committee, the training staff meetings, revalidation preparations, programme team staff development activities, and the peer observation scheme also contribute to the identification and exchange of pedagogic practice. Similarly, staff exchange visits for supporting professional practice, involving staff

from similar institutions across the world, make a valuable contribution. The collegial nature of the academic community, the cross-membership of undergraduate and postgraduate teams, and the range of opportunities for discussion and reflection mean that informal opportunities for sharing practice are also highly valued by staff.

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

2.11 Sufficient resources are provided to support learning. The Quality Assurance Committee monitors the quality of resources and makes recommendations to the Academic Board. The collection of biblical, missiological and cross-cultural resources is one of the largest in Europe. Subscription and inter-library loan arrangements extend resources and facilitate access to philosophical and religious online journals. Internet capacity has recently been increased and computers upgraded. Students acknowledge these enhancements, but confirmed inconsistencies remain that on occasion inhibit learning. When on-site, students access electronic copies of course materials placed in the library and stored on a College hard drive. Most students live on-site. Remote access to electronically stored learning resources is unavailable for non-residents and those students who wish to work off-site. The exception to this is access to a developing virtual learning environment for those studying the master's programme online. Proposals for virtual learning environment availability for all students are under discussion. It is desirable that arrangements are made to enable all students to have access to course material through the virtual environment.

2.12 Arrangements for ministry placements are effective and relationships between supervisors and the College are good. However, induction training is not always provided for supervisors before the commencement of placements. It is desirable for the College to provide timely induction and training for ministry placement supervisors prior to the commencement of placements to enhance provision.

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 Public information

How effectively does the provider's public information communicate to students and other stakeholders about the higher education it provides?

3.1 The College provides comprehensive and accurate information about its provision in collaboration with the University. Information is provided in a range of formats, including a helpful website, prospectus, newsletters, handbooks, and module materials. The well-organised website is the main source of information for intending students. Readily accessible information includes a useful short video, that gives a clear picture of College provision and student life. Clear information is provided about course content, admissions, fees and attendance requirements, including the possibility of online study. A former student designed the clear prospectus, which is available in hard copy or for download from the website. Students confirm the pre-entry information is helpful and further information is readily available.

3.2 Admissions procedures are clearly specified in the College prospectus and handbook. The Induction Pack provides clear information about the comprehensive 'Orientation Week', which includes a good student-led contribution and student mentor allocation. Handbooks contain helpful information to support students in their studies. Comprehensive programme handbooks include programme specifications and clear information about assessment. Helpful information is appended, including guidelines to support essay content and presentation. The Student Handbook provides useful information about College policies and procedures. An introduction by the Executive Director contextualises the content within the mission and philosophy of the College. Information provided in the Ministry Placement Handbook for students is helpful, as is the Ministry Placement Handbook designed for supervisors.

How effective are the provider's arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information it has responsibility for publishing?

3.3 Informal procedures for identifying and rectifying inaccuracies are effective. Formal guidance is in place for staff members responsible for some aspects of public information, which includes the use of the University logo and the internet security policy. Information published by the College about its programmes is submitted for approval to the Communications Manager, who also monitors the online content. Material on the website is overseen by the Communications Team and updated by academic administrators and programme leaders. The prospectus is revised by the Communications Manager and checked by programme leaders and the Executive Director prior to approval by the University. Responsibility for ensuring other published information is accurate and complete rests with the academic administrators, under the oversight of programme leaders. Programme leaders check handbooks annually and work with the Academic Registrar to ensure any changes are inserted correctly. Students have the opportunity to suggest revisions to handbooks through student representatives. Students also give feedback to tutors through regular informal meetings. The University approves draft programme handbooks at validation and revalidation and receives copies with annual monitoring which are reviewed for major changes. The College recognises the need to formalise their procedures for ensuring accuracy and completeness of all published information. A draft discussion document is currently under consideration by the Leadership Team. It is desirable that the College formalises its procedures for assuring the accuracy and completeness of all published information.

The team concludes that **reliance can be placed** on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the provider is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Action plan³

All Nations Christian College action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight November 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the range of opportunities for student representation and the responsiveness of the College to issues raised (paragraph 2.4) 	<p>To review existing good practice and identify ways of maintaining</p> <p>If required, to identify and to action ways of enhancing this good practice</p>	<p>31 March 2013</p> <p>30 September 2013</p>	<p>Chairs of Undergraduate and Postgraduate committees</p> <p>Training staff</p>	<p>Increased knowledge among the training staff of the good practice and, if required, enhancements identified and effectively implemented</p>	<p>Quality Assurance Committee</p>	<p>Undergraduate, Postgraduate and Quality Assurance committees' minutes and report</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the distinctive emphasis on a College community (paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6) 	<p>To review existing good practice and identify ways of maintaining</p> <p>If required, to identify and to action ways of enhancing</p>	<p>30 April 2013</p> <p>31 October 2013</p>	<p>Chairs of Undergraduate and Postgraduate committees</p> <p>Training staff</p>	<p>Increased knowledge among the training staff of the good practice and, if required, enhancements identified and effectively implemented</p>	<p>Quality Assurance Committee</p>	<p>Undergraduate, Postgraduate and Quality Assurance committees' minutes and report</p>

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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the extensive and thorough support for student learning on placements (paragraph 2.7). 	<p>To review the existing good practice, and identify ways of maintaining</p> <p>If required, to identify and to action ways of enhancing</p>	<p>31 May 2013</p> <p>30 November 2013</p>	<p>Chair of Undergraduate Committee</p> <p>Training staff</p>	<p>Increased knowledge among the training staff of the good practice and, if required, enhancements identified and effectively implemented</p>	<p>Quality Assurance Committee</p>	<p>Undergraduate and Quality Assurance committees' minutes and report</p>
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is advisable for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extend moderation procedures to include assessment at certificate level (paragraph 1.7). 	<p>Discuss and come up with a plan of how to introduce</p> <p>Plan to be presented and agreed</p> <p>Plan to be implemented and moderation begins</p> <p>First batch of moderation completed</p>	<p>1 March 2013</p> <p>30 April 2013</p> <p>30 June 2013</p> <p>31 July 2013</p>	<p>Certificate Programme Leader</p> <p>Undergraduate Committee</p> <p>Training staff</p> <p>Training staff</p>	<p>Timely implementation of rigorous moderation procedures at all levels</p>	<p>Quality Assurance Committee</p>	<p>Minutes of training staff meeting, Undergraduate Committee, Quality Assurance Committee and examination boards</p> <p>Moderation records</p>
Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is desirable for the provider to:						

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop adequate protocols to support staff to assess using the full range of marks available (paragraph 1.6) 	<p>Carry out staff development activities</p> <p>In area where protocols inadequate develop</p>	<p>30 June 2013</p> <p>31 September 2013</p>	<p>Executive Director/Director of Training</p> <p>Training staff</p>	<p>Increased staff confidence in assessment</p>	<p>Quality Assurance Committee</p>	<p>Quality Assurance Committee minutes</p> <p>Record of staff development activity</p> <p>Protocols</p> <p>Evaluation report</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> arrange equivalence in virtual learning access to all students (paragraph 2.11) 	<p>Carry out a feasibility study</p> <p>Implement changes required as a result of this study</p>	<p>31 March 2013</p> <p>30 June 2013</p>	<p>E-learning Coordinator</p> <p>Training staff</p>	<p>Equivalent level of access for students who study on, or off, campus</p>	<p>Leadership Team</p>	<p>Student survey and/or focus group</p> <p>Training staff meeting and Leadership Team minutes and report</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> arrange timely induction and training for ministry placement supervisors prior to the commencement of placements (paragraph 2.12) 	<p>Training materials and training schedules developed</p> <p>Training delivered, prior to the commencement of placements</p>	<p>30 September 2013</p> <p>30 October 2013</p>	<p>Training Administrator responsible for placements</p>	<p>Satisfactory level of confidence among supervisors of requirements</p>	<p>Executive Director/Director of Training</p>	<p>Training staff meeting minutes</p> <p>Record of training activity</p> <p>Participant feedback</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement formal procedures for verifying the accuracy and 	<p>Effectiveness of existing informal procedures reviewed</p>	<p>31 March 2013</p>	<p>Communications Team</p>	<p>Satisfactory knowledge of procedures among marketing</p>	<p>Executive Director/Leadership Team</p>	<p>Formal procedures and Leadership Team minutes</p>

completeness of all published information (paragraph 3.3).	Procedures, with any improvement identified, written up as formal procedures	30 June 2013	Public Relations and Marketing Manager (also known as Communications Manager)	staff		Report of marketing staff
	Implement formal procedures	31 September 2013				

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/institutionreports/types-of-review/tier-4.

Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary. Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#)⁴

Academic Infrastructure Guidance developed and agreed by the higher education community and published by QAA, which is used by institutions to ensure that their courses meet national expectations for academic standards and that students have access to a suitable environment for learning (academic quality). It consists of four groups of reference points: the **frameworks for higher education qualifications**, the **subject benchmark statements**, the **programme specifications** and the **Code of practice**. Work is underway (2011-12) to revise the Academic Infrastructure as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

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

academic standards The standards set and maintained by institutions for their courses and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

awarding body A body with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the **framework for higher education qualifications**, such as diplomas or degrees.

awarding organisation An organisation with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the Qualifications and Credit Framework for England and Northern Ireland (these qualifications are at levels 1 to 8, with levels 4 and above being classed as 'higher education').

Code of practice *The Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, published by QAA: a set of interrelated documents giving guidance for higher education institutions.

designated body An organisation that has been formally appointed to perform a particular function.

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

enhancement Taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of **learning opportunities**. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

feature of good practice A positive aspect of the way a higher education institution manages quality and standards, which may be seen as exemplary to others.

framework A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

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:

⁴ www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx.

The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) and The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland.

highly trusted sponsor An education provider that the UK government trusts to admit migrant students from overseas, according to Tier 4 of the UK Border Agency's points-based immigration system. Higher education providers wishing to obtain this status must undergo a successful review by QAA.

learning opportunities The provision made for students' learning, including planned **programmes of study**, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios) and staff development.

learning outcome 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 reports.

programme (of study) An approved course of study which 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 An institution that offers courses of higher education, typically on behalf of a separate **awarding body or organisation**. In the context of REO, the term means an independent college.

public information Information that is freely available to the public (sometimes referred to as being 'in the public domain').

reference points Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured. Internal reference points may be used by providers for purposes of self-regulation; external ones are used and accepted throughout the higher education community for the checking of standards and quality.

quality See **academic quality**.

subject benchmark statement A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

threshold academic standard The minimum standard that a student should reach in order to gain a particular qualification or award, as set out in the **subject benchmark statements** and national qualifications frameworks. Threshold standards are distinct from the standards of performance that students need to achieve in order to gain any particular class of award, for example a first-class bachelor's degree. See also **academic standard**.

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

RG 1103 02/13

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Fax 01452 557070
Email comms@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2013

ISBN 978 1 84979 788 7

All QAA's publications are available on our website www.qaa.ac.uk

Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786