



# Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Anglo-European College of Chiropractic

March 2017

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## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Anglo-European College of Chiropractic. The review took place from 14 to 15 March 2017 and was conducted by a team of reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Seth Crofts
- Mrs Fahmida Khan Rushdy.

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provision and to make judgements as to whether or not academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code)<sup>1</sup> setting out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

In Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - the setting and maintenance of academic standards
  - the quality of student learning opportunities
  - the information provided about higher education provision
  - the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

A check is also made on the provider's financial sustainability, management and governance (FSMG) with the aim of giving students reasonable confidence that they should not be at risk of being unable to complete their course as a result of financial failure.

The College has recently been granted Teaching Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP) by the Privy Council following detailed scrutiny of the College's application by QAA, which included consideration of the setting and maintenance of academic standards and the quality of students' learning opportunities. Consequently, this review focused exclusively on the two judgement areas of information about higher education provision and the enhancement of students' learning opportunities at the College.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#)<sup>2</sup> and explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).<sup>3</sup> For an explanation of terms see the glossary at the end of this report.

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<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code).

<sup>2</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk).

<sup>3</sup> Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education).

## Key findings

### Judgements

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision.

- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities is **commended**.

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following feature of **good practice**.

- The highly effective partnership between staff and students which results in the continuous enhancement of the learning experience (Enhancement).

### Recommendations

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendation**.

By September 2017:

- the College articulates a strategy for the further development and management of the virtual learning environment (Expectation C).

### Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following action already being taken to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to students:

- the steps being undertaken to develop the process for monitoring and approving information published on the website (Expectation C).

### Financial sustainability, management and governance

The financial sustainability, management and governance check has been satisfactorily completed.

## About the provider

Anglo-European College of Chiropractic provides education and clinical training in its specialist areas of health. Since its establishment in 1965, the College has been a leading provider of chiropractic education and training, with a strong reputation for quality and excellence both nationally and internationally. As part of its strategy to diversify its educational provision, the College now provides education and training in a number of other health areas including medical ultrasound, exercise science (with Bournemouth University) and rehabilitation. The strategy remains one of further growth of higher education provision within the institution's specialist areas of health education, clinical training and research.

The College has, since 2005, been in a partnership agreement with Bournemouth University. The University validates all the College's undergraduate and postgraduate higher education programmes. A separate Shared Delivery Agreement with the University covers the jointly delivered Clinical Exercise Science programme.

In March 2016, the College was designated a direct HEFCE-funded institution. Subsequently, in May 2016, the College was awarded Teaching Degree Awarding Powers. The College will admit all new students to its own degrees from September 2017. The College is in discussion with the University regarding whether or not existing students will be given the choice to transfer to a College award in September 2017. In preparation for the College acting as an independent higher education institution from September 2017, an implementation plan is in place. The College has submitted a formal application to HEFCE for a University College title.

The College's recently revised strategic plan reflects its aim to build on its heritage and reputation and use its new powers and opportunities to apply for government funding, to invest in its staff and physical infrastructure to enhance learning opportunities, and to move forward with growth and expansion within its specialist area of musculoskeletal health. The College's mission is to be a leading higher education institution in the university sector specialising in chiropractic and other healthcare disciplines, nationally and internationally recognised for quality and excellence.

In 2012, the College underwent a successful Institutional Review (IRENI). Since then, the College has been monitored through the Review for Educational Oversight (REO) process. The most significant change for the College since the last Institutional Review in 2012 has been the College's move into the independent higher education sector, following its successful applications for TDAP and direct HEFCE funding. The College's franchise agreement with Bournemouth University will terminate in September 2017, although a modified franchise agreement with the University will continue thereafter until those students who remain with University after September 2017 complete their studies on their University degree.

In separating from the University, the imminent requirement will be to ensure that the College has its own complete academic regulatory framework in place and has the academic support services previously supplied by the University. The major challenges the College faces are not primarily in implementing its new powers and operating as an independent higher education institution, but rather in ensuring that it continues to develop beyond this. The challenges for the College in the next five to 10 years will be in exploiting these opportunities as a new fully independent higher education institution and achieving the best possible outcomes. At the time of the review the College had 703 students.

The College Institutional Review in May 2012 concluded that the College meets UK expectations for the threshold academic standards that it delivers on behalf of its awarding body, that it meets UK expectations for the quality of student learning opportunities, and that

it meets UK expectations for the enhancement of student learning opportunities. Three areas of good practice, five recommendations and four affirmations were identified. In May 2016, the annual monitoring review report recorded that the College had made acceptable progress against its action plan.

The review team considered the progress made by the College in developing the good practice and implementing the recommendations and concludes that that they have all been satisfactorily addressed.

## Explanation of findings

This section explains the review findings in greater detail.

### **1 Judgement: The maintenance of the academic standards of awards offered on behalf of degree-awarding bodies and/or other awarding organisations**

**Expectation (A1):** In order to secure threshold academic standards, degree-awarding bodies:

**a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)* are met by:**

- positioning their qualifications at the appropriate level of the relevant framework for higher education qualifications
- ensuring that programme learning outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptor in the relevant framework for higher education qualifications
- naming qualifications in accordance with the titling conventions specified in the frameworks for higher education qualifications
- awarding qualifications to mark the achievement of positively defined programme learning outcomes

**b) consider and take account of QAA's guidance on qualification characteristics**

**c) where they award UK credit, assign credit values and design programmes that align with the specifications of the relevant national credit framework**

**d) consider and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A1: UK and European Reference Points for Academic Standards**

#### **Findings**

1.1 As a result of the recent grant of TDAP to the College, the current review did not focus on this judgement area.

## **2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities**

**Expectation (B1): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval***

### **Findings**

2.1 As a result of the recent grant of TDAP to the College, the current review did not focus on this judgement area.

### **3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities**

**Expectation (C): UK higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the higher education they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.**

#### **Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision**

##### **Findings**

3.1 The College produces a variety of information relating to learning opportunities and publicises this through a number of means including the College website, the internal virtual learning environment for students, the Staff Information Portal and printed materials including the College prospectuses and College and programme handbooks.

3.2 The College publishes information for the public mainly through its website, which includes key documents about the College. This includes detailed information about study at the College, the programmes of study, teaching and other College facilities, together with information about admission criteria including English language requirements. Information on learning services, the Student Union, leisure facilities and accommodation are also available on the website. Information is also made available through the printed prospectuses and through open days. Information for current students is published in the student handbook, programme specifications and on the virtual learning environment, which includes all key College policies.

3.3 The College has a Quality Assurance Statement which provides information about policies and processes for the management of quality and standards and the availability of wider information.

3.4 The College has clear procedures for the publishing of information and has a policy entitled Information for the Public Domain, which is owned by the Head of Marketing and approved by Senior Management Group (SMG). There is also a comprehensive published information flow chart which sets out routes and responsibilities for the publishing of information. The SMG has overall responsibility for the oversight of public information and it annually receives and considers reports on public information.

3.5 The policies and procedures of the College would allow Expectation C to be met.

3.6 The review team tested the effectiveness of the process of publishing information by scrutinising policies, the College website, virtual learning environment, prospectus, programme handbooks, programme specifications and minutes of meetings. The review team also held meetings with senior staff, students, teaching and support staff.

3.7 The College has a detailed scheme that outlines the key responsibilities, the stages of checking and final sign-off for all published information. The College has recently undertaken a review of its information against Expectation C of the Quality Code, the HEFCE Wider Information Set and the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). The review was considered by SMG and resulted in a number of changes to the procedures for publishing information. The College has taken steps to ensure that public information is accurate and consistent and key members of staff have attended training sessions.

3.8 All marketing materials for the prospectus are approved by relevant departments to ensure that information is accurate, appropriate and useful to potential students, and the College undertakes appropriate checks by the relevant Vice-Principal to ensure accuracy



before it is signed off by the Principal before publication.

3.9 All key policies are published on the website. The owner of the policy document, working with the Marketing Department and the Quality and Enhancement Manager, is responsible for ensuring that the published information is accurate and up to date. The approved version of the policy is published on the website, staff information portal and the virtual learning environment for students. As the College moves to its own procedures for awarding degrees, it is planning a complete re-build of its website, with a target implementation date of July 2017.

3.10 Definitive programme specifications and information about links with professional, regulatory and statutory bodies, including the outcomes of accreditation visits, are published on the College website. The College ensures that any changes in a programme are communicated to students at the earliest stage.

3.11 The College has also developed a Student Agreement for prospective students on chiropractic programmes, providing information on key regulations, policies and procedures, student engagement and additional costs. It is currently being reviewed and adapted to be applicable to all undergraduate and postgraduate students who will enrol on programmes from September 2017, in view of the College having successfully achieved its own degree awarding powers.

3.12 The College has identified the need to develop more formal mechanisms to ensure that necessary checks of information on the website are carried out and documented. A new scheme being introduced will train web editors as brand ambassadors to ensure consistency of information. A new role of moderator will be established from July 2017 to provide a final check, using the new content management system, before final publication. The Marketing Team has overall responsibility for improving functionality of the website, and the Quality and Enhancement Manager undertakes spot checks to ensure the accuracy of published information and reports to the SMG. The review team **affirms** the steps being undertaken to develop the process for monitoring and approving information published on the website.

3.13 The College runs a number of on-campus and virtual Open Days for chiropractic students, organised by the marketing department. The College has introduced a new Student Ambassador scheme and provides training to enable students to understand the importance of delivering consistent, accurate and professional information.

3.14 Students with whom the team met confirmed that information available prior to enrolment is clear and easy to access. Students also made positive comments about information available to them as being fit for purpose and easily accessible.

3.15 Programme handbooks include information on learning outcomes, curriculum details including teaching and learning methods, assessment details, research supervision and the College's policy on research ethics. Definitive programme specifications, approved through the programme approval and review processes, are available for students on the virtual learning environment.

3.16 External examiner information is published to students in the College Student Handbook. External examiners' reports are made available to students on the virtual learning environment together with the approved responses. Copies of confirmed minutes for all academic committees are also available on the virtual learning environment.

3.17 The chiropractic programmes assessment regulations are agreed between the awarding body, Bournemouth University and the College as part of the process of programme approval. All assessment regulations are set out in the programme specification, included in Programme Handbooks and available on the virtual learning environment.

Assessment schedules are published every year and made available to students through the Undergraduate Programmes Office and on the virtual learning environment.

3.18 Detailed unit information is located on the virtual learning environment, which may include study guides, assessment information and marking criteria including assessment briefs, lecture material, printed and video manuals, recommended reading lists, web links and revision material. The Unit Leader is responsible for ensuring that unit information is maintained and updated as required. There is a minimum requirement for the level of information to be published on each unit. The provision of this information varies across the College with some units having more detailed content than others.

3.19 The virtual learning environment is in the early stages of development and it is being used primarily as a document repository. The level of engagement and usage of the virtual learning environment varies among staff and students. The College has taken steps to support staff on the use of the virtual learning environment and make them more digitally literate. Individual tutors are responsible for publishing information on the virtual learning environment and, presently, the quality and quantity of this information is not consistent. The Quality and Enhancement Manager is responsible for reviewing and updating all the academic policies and procedures but there is no overall policy to manage the virtual learning environment consistently across the college. The review team **recommends** that, by September 2017, the College articulates a strategy for the further development and management of the virtual learning environment.

3.20 The College's Staff information portal (SIP) is the key repository for official documentation for staff and contains information about administrative and academic functions of the College at the institutional level. The Quality and Enhancement Manager ensures that the latest and most up-to-date version of all college-specific regulations, policies and procedures, and minutes of all academic committees, are available on the SIP. The overall responsibility to ensure that all academic information on the SIP is appropriate lies with the relevant department.

3.21 The College is in the process of developing and approving its own academic regulatory framework following the award of degree awarding powers. All policies and procedures have been reviewed and either have been approved or are due to be approved at the next Academic Board.

3.22 The College provides clear and relevant information about higher education to its intended audiences. Staff and students are positive about the information they receive from the College.

3.23 The review team concludes that Expectation C is met. The associated risk is low because the College has appropriate processes for checking that information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The quality of the information about learning opportunities: Summary of findings

3.24 In reaching its judgement the review team matched its finding against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

3.25 The Expectation is met and the risk is low. One recommendation and one affirmation are made.

3.26 The recommendation is for the College to articulate a strategy for the further development and management of the virtual learning environment, and the affirmation is recognition of the steps being undertaken to develop the process for monitoring and approving information published on the website.

3.27 The review team concludes that the quality of the information about learning opportunities at the provider **meets** UK expectations.

## 4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

**Expectation (Enhancement): Deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities.**

### Findings

4.1 The College has established a highly effective strategy to ensure that its provision is continually enhanced. The Senior Management Group has an overall operational responsibility for the enhancement of learning opportunities and allocation of learning resources. Enhancement is driven by clear strategies and policies operated by the College. The College Strategic Plan 2016-2021 and Learning and Teaching Strategy both identify measures to continually improve the experience of students.

4.2 The College has a strategic approach to enhancement, which is systematically monitored. There is a committee structure that has enhancement embedded in its terms of reference. The key academic committees responsible for the enhancement of learning opportunities are the Learning and Teaching Subcommittee and Academic Development and Quality Committee, with an important role also played by the Student:Staff Liaison Committee in enabling the College to obtain additional feedback information from students to supplement formal evaluation from student surveys.

4.3 Quality assurance mechanisms operate in a systematic manner to plan enhancement. Parallel initiatives such as student liaison, estates management and student voice mechanisms are brought together to promote the enhancement of learning opportunities. Information generated through 'standard' quality assurance procedures is used to identify and inform areas for enhancement. The process of preparing annual reports on continuous monitoring takes into account feedback from key stakeholders, such as external examiners and professional and statutory bodies, and student feedback. Unit leaders reflect on individual units through annual unit monitoring reports and monitoring data such as continuation and wastage statistics. This feedback culminates in the production of a continuous action plan. The annual reports on continuous monitoring are discussed at Academic Development and Quality Committee to maintain strategic oversight of student and programme performance at College level. The overall (Faculty) Quality Report is authored by the two Vice-Principals and brings together the entire education provision of the institution. This is discussed at Academic Board and presented to the Board of Governors, which assures the Board of the quality and standards of the College's provision.

4.4 Feedback is systematically collected from a range of stakeholders including students, staff and service users. The College is highly responsive to this feedback and acts to ensure that any concerns are addressed promptly. The College has established an effective process for reviewing its provision, which is undertaken at both unit and programme level and takes into account the views of students, external examiners' comments and feedback from professional bodies. Unit leaders produce monitoring reports, which consider student evaluations and data. These reports form the basis for annual monitoring reports, which are produced by programme leaders. Additionally, an overall (Faculty) Quality Report is produced by the Vice-Principals involved with undergraduate and postgraduate programmes. This provides an overview of the education provision across the institution and includes a comprehensive action plan, which is monitored during the following academic year. This assures the Board that appropriate steps are continually being taken to enhance the student learning experience. This is discussed at Academic Board and presented to the Board of Governors.

4.5 The policies and procedures of the College would allow the Enhancement Expectation to be met.

4.6 The review team considered a range of documentation including strategic plans, Committee minutes, and annual monitoring reports at programme and unit level. The review team considered policies and procedures that related to enhancement. Feedback was gathered from students via the student written submission and student meeting. There were detailed discussions with staff at all levels representing academic and professional support staff. A detailed review of the virtual learning environment was completed prior to the review and a virtual learning environment demonstration was provided during the review.

4.7 The College has established a highly effective partnership between students and staff which results in the continuous enhancement of the learning environment. There is a multifaceted approach to collecting feedback from students and to listening to the student voice. A Student:Staff Liaison Committee is highly valued by the student body and students are also supported to act as representatives on College committees.

4.8 Students feel that their feedback is welcomed by the staff, and that there is a high level of responsiveness among the staff to enhance the provision as a result of this feedback. There is a strong partnership between students and academic staff that is founded upon a culture of mutual respect. This partnership underpins the enhancement process. There are high levels of student satisfaction and there is a strong commitment to engaging with students and establishing action plans to enhance teaching and learning and improve facilities.

4.9 Additional feedback from students is obtained from focus groups set up to consider specific aspects of the learning environment. For example, in 2015, Learning Services held the department's first Student Focus Group, the aim of which was to review and collaboratively revise the library rules, policies and procedures to ensure that students' needs are being fully addressed. There are plans for this approach to be rolled out to other areas of the student experience, such as admission and induction.

4.10 Examples of enhancement of the student learning experience in response to student feedback include the expansion of the range of pathologies used to support teaching in ultrasound, an increase in the availability of drop-in sessions with tutors, and additional revision sessions provided in response to student requests. The timetabling process has been reviewed systematically to improve course organisation, which has led to the drafting of a Timetabling Policy.

4.11 The College has identified concerns in relation to the response rate for annual student surveys, which has resulted in initiating a number of measures to obtain more representative levels of feedback, including a detailed analysis of the issues related to student feedback provided by an external consultant. This represents a proactive and problem-focused approach to a high level of commitment to student engagement. The highly effective partnership between staff and students, which results in the continuous enhancement of the learning experience, is an example of **good practice**.

4.12 Peer Observation of Teaching has been introduced during the current academic year. This has been favourably received by the academic staff who have been involved as this allows them to increase self-awareness and to enhance their teaching skills following reflective feedback. Although this process is at an early stage of implementation there are plans to roll this out across all academic staff.

4.13 The College has established an effective staff development strategy that builds upon processes for peer observation and staff appraisal. This strategy involves both locally delivered sessions and attendance at national and international courses and conferences.

Staff development is used to support enhancement in areas such as student assessment feedback. Funding is made available for external courses that allow staff to develop their academic and pedagogic skills. The Senior Management Group works with academic and professional support staff across the College to systematically plan staff development. For example, PhD progress is discussed at Research and Staff Development Committee and wider discussions take place that address a range of staff development needs, which allows the enhancement of the student learning experience.

4.14 There is an impressive commitment from staff at all levels of the College to continually develop the learning experience. There is a highly strategic approach to the management of enhancement which is driven by student feedback.

4.15 The review team concludes that the Enhancement Expectation is met. The associated risk is low because the processes relating to enhancement are well established and there is a strong commitment by students and staff at all levels to provide and respond to feedback that continually develops the student learning experience.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

4.16 In reaching its judgement about the enhancement of student learning opportunities, the review team matched its findings against the criteria specified in Annex 2 of the published handbook.

4.17 The Expectation in this area is met.

4.18 The review team considered that the highly effective partnership between staff and students, which results in the continuous enhancement of the learning experience, is an example of good practice.

4.19 The review team concludes that the enhancement of student learning opportunities at the provider is **commended**.

## Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 21-24 of the [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\) handbook](#).

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality: [www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality).

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer Glossary on the QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx).

### Academic standards

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

### Award

A qualification, or academic credit, conferred in formal recognition that a student has achieved the intended **learning outcomes** and passed the assessments required to meet the academic standards set for a **programme** or unit of study.

### Awarding organisation

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

### Blended learning

Learning delivered by a number of different methods, usually including face-to-face and e-learning (see **technology enhanced or enabled learning**).

### Credit(s)

A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education **programmes of study**, expressed as numbers of credits at a specific level.

### Degree-awarding body

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

### Distance learning

A course of study that does not involve face-to-face contact between students and tutors but instead uses technology such as the internet, intranets, broadcast media, CD-ROM and video, or traditional methods of correspondence - learning 'at a distance'. See also **blended learning**.

### Dual award or double award

The granting of separate awards (and certificates) for the same **programme** by two **degree-awarding bodies** who have jointly delivered the programme of study leading to them. See also **multiple award**.

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.



### **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 our review processes.

### **Expectations**

Statements in the **Quality Code** that set out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations. See also **distance learning**.

### **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: *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FQHEIS).

### **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 audit and review processes.

### **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.

### **Multiple awards**

An arrangement where three or more **degree-awarding bodies** together provide a single jointly delivered **programme** (or programmes) leading to a separate **award** (and separate certification) of each awarding body. The arrangement is the same as for **dual/double awards**, but with three or more awarding bodies being involved.

### **Operational definition**

A formal definition of a term, establishing exactly what QAA means when using it in reviews and reports.

### **Programme (of study)**

An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

**Programme specifications**

Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of programmes of study, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

**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.

**Self-evaluation document**

A report submitted by a higher education provider, assessing its own performance, to be used as evidence in a QAA review.

**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.

**Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)**

Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

**Threshold academic standard**

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** and **Subject Benchmark Statements**.

**Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

An intranet or password-only interactive website (also referred to as a platform or user interface) giving access to **learning opportunities** electronically. These might include such resources as course handbooks, information and reading lists; blogs, message boards and forums; recorded lectures; and/or facilities for online seminars (webinars).

**Widening participation**

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

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