



# **Tech Music Schools Ltd trading as BIMM London**

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

November 2014

## Key findings about Tech Music Schools Ltd trading as BIMM London

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in November 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 West London.

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 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**:

- provision of comprehensive responses to external examiner reports (paragraph 1.5)
- provision of on-site psychological and medical support that focuses on live performance-related issues (paragraph 2.9).

### Recommendations

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

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

- improve the quality and consistency of written, summative feedback (paragraph 2.2)
- develop a mechanism to monitor that students attend induction and understand the relevant processes to access information, and ensure that those who do not attend receive the relevant information (paragraphs 2.3 and 2.12).

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

- formalise the role of student meetings within the College committee system (paragraph 1.3)
- review the consistency of reporting of annual teaching observation action points in the bi-annual appraisal (paragraph 2.5).

## About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)<sup>1</sup> (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Tech Music Schools Ltd trading as BIMM London (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 University of West London. The review was carried out by Mrs Amanda Greason, Mr David Jones and Mr David Knowles (reviewers) and Dr Margaret Johnson (Coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).<sup>2</sup> Evidence in support of the review was provided by the College and awarding body and included a self-evaluation with supporting documents, annual and periodic review reports, validation reports, meetings with staff and students, and examples of student work.

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

- *The Framework for Higher Education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)
- programme specifications
- Subject Benchmark Statements
- 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 based in Fulham, West London, and is part of the BIMM Group of specialist music colleges that offers popular music education and training at Further and Higher Education levels, specialising in popular music performance (drums, vocals, guitar and bass), music production, songwriting and music business. The BIMM Group comprises five colleges based in Brighton, Bristol, Dublin, London, and Manchester. Tech Music Schools Ltd trading as BIMM London was established by Francis Seriau in 1983 as Drumtech, a drum and percussion school initially offering one-to-one tuition. The business expanded to include new schools specialising in vocals, guitar and bass which were officially brought together as Tech Music Schools in 2007. Tech Music Schools was acquired by the BIMM Group in June 2010 and operated as Tech Music School London until September 2014 when, as part of a BIMM group-wide rebranding, the name changed to Tech Music Schools Ltd trading as BIMM London to bring it in line with the Group's other four colleges. The College relocated to its current site in September 2013, which enabled it to expand its academic portfolio, and to increase full-time student numbers. The relocation, expansion in student numbers and the appointment of a new Principal in July 2014 prompted a Review for Educational Oversight by QAA in November 2014.

There are 1,240 higher education enrolments across seven programmes which is a 71 per cent increase in student numbers since 2012. Non-UK students number 360, with 65 per cent of the enrolments from Europe and five per cent from non-UK or EU countries.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight)

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2669](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2669)

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

### **University of West London**

#### Validated provision

- BMus (Hons) Popular Music Performance (428)
- BMus (Hons) Popular Music Performance with Foundation year (182)
- BA (Hons) Creative Musicianship (186)
- BA (Hons) Music Production (245)
- BA (Hons) Songwriting (108)
- BA (Hons) Music Business (91)

#### Franchised provision

- MMus Popular Music Performance (5)

## **The provider's stated responsibilities**

With the exception of one (MMus Popular Music Performance), all programmes are validated provision. The University of West London (the University) delegates responsibility to the College for all aspects of programme development and provision and annual reporting but retains responsibility for quality review of the provision and student appeals. There is shared responsibility for the franchised provision, with the College responsible for curriculum development, assessment setting, marking and moderation, staff development, student feedback and monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning. Shared responsibilities include strategic development, programme specifications, recruitment and selection, annual monitoring, student induction and learning resources. The University retains responsibility for quality review, student appeals and the accuracy of information available in the prospectus, and on the website.

## **Recent developments**

The College relocated to new premises in Fulham, London, in September 2013 and has increased its student numbers by 71 per cent. New programmes in music production, songwriting and music business were introduced in September 2012 and a new Principal was appointed in July 2014. There have been significant changes to the academic structure of the BIMM Group and in August 2014 the College appointed a College Manager and Head of Education. In September 2014 a new College management and academic infrastructure was implemented and the effectiveness of the new appointments and structures will need to be evaluated as part of the annual monitoring in 2015.

## **Students' contribution to the review**

Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the review team. A small group of students was supported by staff and produced an innovative four-page leaflet outlining their experiences of the College and their aspirations following successful completion of their programme. The leaflet was helpful to the team and provided an insight into student involvement in a range of activities and included a section on improvements that could be made to enhance the student experience. A large group of students met the Coordinator at the preparatory meeting and the team had the opportunity to meet students during their visit.

## Detailed findings about Tech Music Schools Ltd trading as BIMM London

### 1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The College effectively manages its responsibilities for academic standards and this is enhanced by the close working relationship with the University of West London. Course design ensures that the appropriate academic level is met with due reference to the Quality Code, *The Framework for Higher Education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. The franchised master's programme has been developed jointly between the College and the University with due reference to the Quality Code. The College appreciates the need for a robust approach to the development of new courses and its Academic Board has recently developed a course approval process. It provides for a critical review of programme development documentation, including programme specifications and programme handbooks, prior to the University validation stage, and includes the use of external academics. The College is clear, however, that the University has ultimate responsibility for academic standards.

1.2 The College has effectively allocated responsibilities for academic standards to key management personnel, some of whom operate on a group-wide basis, while others work solely at the local level. The Principal has responsibilities at London and two other colleges in the BIMM Group. The Director of Academic Development and Quality Assurance is also a group-wide role which has specific responsibilities for standards. Other key managers are appointed at local level and include a College Manager with responsibility for day-to-day operations and a Head of Education who is responsible for the curriculum. Formal communication is effected through the Higher Education Management Group that meets every two weeks. A monthly Senior Management Team meeting brings together College Managers from across the Group and provides an opportunity to share good practice.

1.3 The College's newly introduced academic infrastructure has centralised strategic responsibility for curriculum development and quality assurance across the whole Group and has a comprehensive committee structure. This is directed by Academic Board which has three committees reporting to it: Learning, Teaching and Enhancement; Quality Assurance; and Research and Ethics. The Board of Studies is foremost in the management of the provision at local level and reports to the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee and the Quality Assurance Committee. Each committee has detailed and relevant terms of reference and membership including student representatives. Minutes of the first meetings indicate that the College has an active approach to action planning. There are regular student representative meetings that are not included as an integral part of the College academic infrastructure but they are highly effective in enabling the student voice to be heard. It would be **desirable** that the role of student meetings is formalised within the College's committee system.

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

1.4 The College uses external reference points effectively and has undertaken a considerable amount of work to ensure effective engagement with all sections of the Quality Code. This has included a detailed mapping of the Code against the College policies, procedures and practices which has assigned responsibility for implementation and

monitoring. The mapping has been discussed and approved at Academic Board and has confirmed to the College that it currently meets the Quality Code's expectations, but that some indicators require further action to enhance practice. It plans to monitor the mapping on an annual basis. Training and briefing sessions have taken place to raise awareness among teaching staff.

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

1.5 The College implements a robust assessment process which is outlined in its Assessment Policy. All assessments are set by the module leader and approved by the programme leader who subsequently ensures that all work is internally moderated. The moderation process is clearly outlined in the Marking and Moderation Policy: Higher Education Programmes, which is well understood by staff. External examiner reports are carefully considered by the College and referenced in the programme annual reports which are then considered by the Board of Studies and the Quality Assurance Committee. The College's responses to external examiner reports are comprehensive and include an action plan to confirm the action to be taken on matters raised. This is **good practice**.

1.6 There is effective management of academic standards, enhanced by the close working relationship with the University. The College makes appropriate reference to the Quality Code, the FHEQ and the relevant Subject Benchmark Statements. However, the new internal academic infrastructure will need to be evaluated to assess its effectiveness in identifying, tracking and addressing matters raised at the local level. An effective committee structure meets regularly, but it is desirable that the role of student meetings is formalised within the College's committee system. The College implements robust assessment and moderation processes and the comprehensive responses to external examiner reports is considered to be good practice.

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 body.

## **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 effective mechanisms in place for the management and enhancement of quality of learning opportunities that reflect those outlined for academic standards in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.3. The recent restructuring process has introduced a range of policies, procedures and committees that have yet to be fully implemented. Newly defined roles for senior staff are specific and clear and the continuity of staff employed by the BIMM Group ensures that action points from previous committees are followed and completed. Committees meet regularly to report and review issues, with detailed minutes and action points. However, it is too early to determine how effectively such action points are followed through.

2.2 The College's draft Teaching and Learning Policy sets out clear and realistic guidelines and expectations for assessment and classroom experience, but it has not yet been fully implemented. Academic staff are beginning to understand the essential requirements of lesson planning, marking and feedback but students comment that written feedback varies in length and quality between modules and individual markers. Most feedback is thorough, detailed, and constructive, focusing directly on the learning outcomes.

However, in a small number of cases, feedback is not consistent, and is less outcome-specific, with written comments that do not reflect the final mark awarded. This has been highlighted in external examiner reports and the College has provided staff development on feedback. It is **advisable** that the College improves the quality and consistency of written, summative feedback. Students reported formative feedback to be developmental and encouraging.

2.3 An appropriate range of procedures ensures that students receive good support. Pre-entry guidance is effective and all students are interviewed. Students attend an induction process where relevant passwords, programme handbooks, and library and virtual learning environment (VLE) procedures are introduced. However, some students claim to have missed this crucial information. It is **advisable** for the College to develop a mechanism to monitor that students attend induction and understand the relevant processes to access information, and ensure that those who do not attend receive the relevant information.

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

2.4 The partnership and validation agreement with the University plays a key role in assuring the quality of programme specifications to meet the requirements of the Quality Code. External examiners' reports are used to determine the quality and effectiveness of the assessment process and to highlight any required changes. There was a robust and effective Partnership Annual Review Audit and Periodic Review in 2013 with actions reported in the 2013-14 Annual Programme Reports and at the November 2014 Board of Study. The College has extensive links with the music industry and all teaching staff are involved professionally with the music business beyond their teaching commitments. Students report that the staff use this knowledge and experience to enhance the teaching and learning process.

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

2.5 The College's policies and procedures for maintaining and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning are effective. The Revised Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Policy underpins the core values of the College and is overseen by the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee. All teaching staff with significant regular teaching at the College undertake an annual teaching observation by the management team that is further supported with peer observations. Feedback from the annual observation is focused and detailed, and contains clearly defined action points. However, there is no clear link to the bi-annual appraisal. It would be **desirable** that action points from the annual teaching observation are more consistently reported in the bi-annual appraisal. Staff development sessions are offered by the College based on information from appraisals, teaching observations and student feedback.

2.6 A number of staff hold a teaching qualification and those not having prior experience are offered training and support and, where necessary, undertake the in-house postgraduate teaching certificate programme. Students report that teaching and academic support is of a very high quality.

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

2.7 Support for students is effective. Students receive appropriate information prior to, and on arrival, at the College about accommodation and finance, with comprehensive course information in the form of college and programme handbooks. Students commented that resources were very useful, but that navigating the website and VLE for relevant information was sometimes difficult.

2.8 Support is also available through a tutorial system, which can be booked online. Students clearly understand and are able to articulate the processes and procedures to obtain further support should they need it.

2.9 The College has a dedicated Head of Student Services and a student support team that offers a wide range of pastoral advice and support. Support includes on-site psychological and medical support which is **good practice**. This support focuses on live performance-related issues such as vocal problems and stage nerves. The College also makes provision for students with specific learning needs and adjustments have recently been made to accommodate a student with visual impairment.

2.10 Students state that their opinions are valued by the College, and that they are aware of the role of the student representative. The College has recently developed a draft Student Representative Scheme to further formalise the process. Students gave an example where the College has provided more rehearsal space following their representation. There are also opportunities for students to be involved in committees to discuss course design and college policy and they are invited to attend validation events where their views on programmes are solicited by the panels.

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

2.11 The support and development of staff is effective. In addition to the support for teaching and learning outlined in paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6, the Employee Handbook contains a section outlining the staff development policy. New staff attend a comprehensive induction, are mentored and supported by a peer, and are offered further support through formative observations. All academic staff have a clear understanding of the development process, and articulate a number of good examples where their needs have been recognised and met.

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

2.12 The College has effective procedures for ensuring that learning resources are sufficient and accessible. The relocation has provided more classroom and rehearsal space and students are very positive about the facilities on offer. Programme Leaders and Heads of Department generate initial requests for resources that are submitted to the Head of Education and then the Principal for final approval. Student feedback is also taken into account, and the College is responsive to student requests. The College has an extensive e-library, and students have full access to the University library. However, the relocation makes access to the facilities at the University more difficult, and the team was made aware that some students did not understand University membership procedures. The College may wish to keep under review its arrangements with the University to enable students to access all facilities.

2.13 The management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities is effective with a range of new policies and procedures and clearly defined roles and responsibilities for staff, although these are not yet fully implemented. There are clear and realistic guidelines and expectations for assessment and classroom experience, but written feedback is variable between modules and individual markers. It is advisable that this is improved. Students receive good support and can attend an induction process but it is advisable that the College develop a mechanism to monitor that students attend and understand how to access information, and that those who do not attend receive the relevant information. Regular staff development sessions are offered based on information from appraisals, teaching observations and student feedback. However, it would be desirable that



action points from the annual teaching observation are more consistently reported in the bi-annual appraisal. Support for students is effective and includes on-site psychological and medical support focusing on live performance-related issues such as vocal problems and stage nerves that is considered to be good practice.

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 communicates effectively with students, staff and other external stakeholders about information on learning opportunities. The new website, launched in October 2014, is the primary source of information about the College and its academic provision. It is comprehensive, and informative, with links to the college prospectus and an online application form. However, the College has yet to carry out a full evaluation of its effectiveness.

3.2 The College prospectus is comprehensive and well presented and is available on the website and in hard copy. The students find it helpful and informative and are able to access all the information they need prior to making an application.

3.3 Students make effective use of social networking sites to communicate with one another, to access information from their tutors on events and activities and to upload and share videos of recordings and performances. Social media plays a key role in the College's communication and information sharing processes and are also used extensively by College tutors, managers and University personnel.

3.4 Programme-specific handbooks and specifications, and a generic College Handbook are detailed and informative with clear reference made to the College's partnership with the University. They include key information on all aspects of the provision including the teaching staff and relevant working practices, policies and procedures.

3.5 The College's VLE provides comprehensive programme information and supports a range of well structured learning, assessment, and personal development materials. It is valued by most students who make active use of the information, the tutorial booking facility and links to an electronic library. They are able to access annual monitoring and external examiner reports, minutes of relevant meetings and all key policies and procedures. A termly newsletter gives students feedback on progress made on issues raised at student representative meetings. Tutors use the VLE to provide current and relevant insight and perspectives into the modern music business. They also advertise opportunities for students to perform, and engage in internships, supplemented with posters around the College premises. Staff and students find the VLE a useful source of information, but the College has recognised that improvements in its design are needed and plans a major upgrade for 2015.

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

3.6 There are well established and reliable mechanisms to ensure that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The University

approves, annually, all publicity and marketing information. The new BIMM London Ltd website was developed by the Group Marketing Team in consultation with a steering group of staff and students from each of the five BIMM Colleges. Final approval was undertaken by senior representatives from the University. The Admissions Manager is responsible for ensuring that information about fees, the application and audition process, and the enrolment process is comprehensive and accurate.

3.7 Amendments or updates to the College prospectus are initiated jointly by the relevant module and programme leaders. These are checked by the Head of Education and passed for proof reading by a private external contractor. A final internal check is carried out by the College Manager and Principal before submission to the University for final approval.

3.8 Student-related materials are uploaded to the College's VLE on an ongoing basis. The overall content of the platform, together with the review and updating of the generic College Handbook, is closely monitored by the Head of Education in order to ensure that it is valid and meets BIMM's required standards.

3.9 The College communicates effectively about information on learning opportunities. The website is the primary source of information with links to the prospectus and an online application form. The prospectus is helpful and informative and students are able to access all the information they need. Social media play a key role in the College's communication and information sharing processes and students make active use of the College's VLE. However, the College has recognised that improvements are needed to the latter and a major upgrade is planned for 2015. The College has well established and reliable mechanisms to ensure that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Specific staff are responsible for ensuring that amendments or updates are checked before submission to the University for final approval.

<p>The team concludes that reliance <b>can</b> be placed on the information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.</p>
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## Action plan<sup>3</sup>

Tech Music Schools Ltd trading as BIMM London action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight of November 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 <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provision of comprehensive responses to external examiner reports (paragraph 1.5)</li> </ul>	Maintain good practice	<p>Continue to provide comprehensive responses to external examiner reports</p> <p>Action plans in response to external examiner reports are now collated into College action plans and approved/monitored through the academic committee structure</p>	September 2015	Course Leaders supported by Director of Academic Development and Quality Assurance	Quality Assurance Committee reporting to Academic Board	External examiner responses, action plans and tracking including Quality Assurance Committee and Academic Board minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>provision of on-site psychological and medical support that focuses on live performance-</li> </ul>	Enhance and share good practice	<p>Continue to provide a diverse and appropriate range of services</p> <p>BIMM Brighton and Manchester have recently run workshops on</p>	September 2015	Head of Student Services	Quality Assurance Committee	Minutes of Quality Assurance Committee

<sup>3</sup> 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 body.

related issues (paragraph 2.9).		performance psychology led by London's Psychologist  All good practice is shared at termly Heads of Student Services meetings which the College plan to report on at Quality Assurance Committee				
<b>Advisable</b>	<b>Intended outcomes</b>	<b>Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes</b>	<b>Target date(s)</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation (process or evidence)</b>
The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improve the quality and consistency of written, summative feedback (paragraph 2.2)</li> </ul>	All students receive thorough, detailed and constructive feedback focused on the learning outcomes	Identify from external examiner reports where issues have arisen and provide additional training to academic staff, and ongoing training to new academic staff	1 April 2015 training completed  2 July 2015 moderation report	Head of Education	Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee	Head of Education to moderate samples of work from the modules/courses identified as problematic and report to Quality Assurance Committee
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop a mechanism to monitor that students attend induction and</li> </ul>	Refine the system for recording attendance at induction to ensure and improve the assimilation of information by	1 Continue to register students at induction and any students not attending will be offered additional	1 In place for 2015-16 inductions	Head of Education and Head of Student Services	Quality Assurance Committee	Head of Education and Head of Student Services to report to Quality

<p>understand the relevant processes to access information, and ensure that those who do not attend receive the relevant information. (paragraphs 2.3 and 2.12).</p>	<p>students, and ensure that students who do not attend are identified and provided with the information as a follow-up</p>	<p>induction session</p> <p>2 The College to review the information and guidance provided at induction</p> <p>3 To introduce a questionnaire on the induction process (in addition to the current discussion by staff and representatives at term 1 Board of Studies) to assess the student experience and where improvements might be made</p> <p>4 To identify students who do not attend induction and provide them with the information as a follow-up exercise</p>	<p>2 To be reported to Quality Assurance Committee by April 2015</p> <p>3 October 2015</p> <p>4 October 2015</p>			<p>Assurance Committee on all three actions as they are addressed</p>
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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 <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>formalise the role of student meetings within the College committee system (paragraph 1.3)</li> </ul>	Establish terms of reference and membership for student representative meetings	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Terms of reference to be drafted and approved by Quality Assurance Committee and Academic Board</li> <li>Student representative meetings terms of reference to be included in Academic Infrastructure group-wide</li> <li>Minutes of student representative meetings to be considered by Board of Studies</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>March 2015</li> <li>April 2015</li> <li>May 2015</li> </ol>	Director of Academic Development and Quality Assurance, and Education Manager	Academic Board	Minutes of Board of Studies, Quality Assurance Committee and Academic Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review the consistency of reporting of annual teaching observation action points in the twice yearly appraisal (paragraph 2.5).</li> </ul>	Establish a clear link between lesson observations and appraisals	Revise the staff appraisal paperwork to include a section on teaching observation results for full- and part-time academic teaching staff	May 2015	Human Resources	Academic Board	Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Committee, and Academic Board to monitor new paperwork

## 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](http://www.qaa.ac.uk).

More detail about Review for Educational Oversight can be found at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/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](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary). Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).<sup>4</sup>

**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 UK Visas and Immigration points-based immigration system. Higher education providers wishing to obtain this status must undergo a successful review by QAA.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2669](http://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**.

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