



Review for Specific Course Designation by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

The Arts Educational Schools

January 2014

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Key findings about the The Arts Educational Schools

As a result of its Review for Specific Course Designation carried out in January 2014, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (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 City University 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**:

- the School's commitment to reflection and self-evaluation through regular external monitoring and quality assurance (paragraphs 1.7, 1.8 and 2.3)
- the nurturing and supportive environment that facilitates student achievement and progression (paragraphs 2.8 and 2.9)
- the provision of thorough, constructive and effective feedback to students (paragraph 2.11)
- the development and maintenance of industry links (paragraph 2.17)
- the consistent and high quality student handbooks (paragraph 3.2).

Recommendations

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

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

- continue with the centralisation of staff development (paragraph 2.12)
- continue to implement the information technology (paragraph 2.16).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Specific Course Designation](#)¹ conducted by [QAA](#) at the The Arts Educational Schools (the School), 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 City University London (the University). The review was carried out by Emeritus Professor Malcolm Cook, Mr James Lovett and Dr Marie Wheatley (reviewers), and Mrs Freda Richardson (Coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight \(and for specific course designation\): Handbook, April 2013](#)². Evidence in support of the review included the strategic plan 2010-14, Course Board and Boards of Studies minutes, external examiners reports, annual programme evaluations, student handbooks, and meetings with staff and students.

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

- UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)
- Ofsted inspection report, 2012
- Drama UK accreditation criteria
- Council for Dance Educational and Training (CDET) accreditation report, 2011
- Trinity College London Professional Performing Arts Diplomas revalidation report, October 2013.

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

The School, widely known as ArtsEd, is one of London's leading drama schools, offering comprehensive vocational training in musical theatre, film, television and stage acting. Founded in 1909, it provides a range of courses aimed at enabling graduates to forge successful careers in the theatre, film and television industries. Higher education is delivered by two separate departments, the School of Musical Theatre and the School of Acting. In addition the School houses an independent day school for pupils aged 11 to 18, offers both part and full-time adult foundation courses in acting and musical theatre, and has a portfolio of non-credit bearing evening and weekend courses for those interested in developing their performance skills.

The majority of the higher education provision is based at the main site at Cone Ripman House in Chiswick, West London. The MA Acting programme is based at a local community centre in Chiswick with some classes and rehearsals taking place at the main site. There are currently 272 students enrolled on higher education programmes, which are all validated by City University London.

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

City University London

- BA (Hons) Musical Theatre (160)
- BA (Hons) Acting for Film and Television (83)

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx

² www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

- MA Acting (27)
- MA Musical Theatre Creative Practice (2)
- BA (Hons) Performance Studies: one-year part-time post-diploma top-up (0)

Trinity College London also validates the honours degrees in musical theatre and in acting for film and television as professional performing arts diplomas. The MA Acting, which is validated at level 7 by the University, is currently also validated by Trinity College London as a level 5 diploma. This will cease after the 2013-14 academic year as the difference in levels of the programme validated by the University and Trinity College London causes confusion. The Trinity College London qualifications are linked to Dance and Drama Awards (DaDAs) which attract government scholarships, funded and administered by the Education Funding Agency on behalf of the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills. These diplomas are inspected regularly by Ofsted and the most recent inspection took place in January 2012.

The Council for Dance Education and Training (CDET) accredits the School's musical theatre provision. CDET ensures the provision of high quality professional dance and musical theatre training through accreditation of full-time dance and performing arts schools, and has provided the industry benchmark of quality assurance for professional musical theatre and dance training in the UK since 1979.

In addition Drama UK accredits all the full-time undergraduate and postgraduate awards. Accreditation is a quality mark which is only awarded to vocational programmes that offer a conservatoire level of training, and requires compliance with the Drama UK professionally focused criteria.

The provider's stated responsibilities

The institutional validation agreement sets out the roles and responsibilities of the School and the University. The University's Validation and Institutional Partnerships handbook details the operational and quality and standards framework under which the validated programmes operate. The School is responsible for the design, development and day-to-day delivery of the programmes while the University takes ultimate responsibility for quality and academic standards.

Recent developments

Each of the curriculum schools has a distinct identity and character, which is considered a strength by staff and students at the institution. However, the 2010-14 strategic plan identified the differing staffing and managerial structures across both schools as an area of weakness. As a result, the two schools are now managed by a single person, the Deputy Principal, who previously led the School of Musical Theatre. As part of the streamlining process, the management structure of the School of Acting has been strengthened by the appointment of a Head of Acting, a Head of Film and Television, and a new Head of Year 1.

A major building project was completed in 2013. This was funded by a donation of £3.5 million from the Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation, augmented by an additional £500,000 from school reserves. The primary focus of the project was the complete renovation and refurbishment of one of the theatres and also included a film and television and a radio studio, editing suites and film production offices. Production facilities including a new wardrobe department, scenic workshop and costume storage were upgraded.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. Survey forms were distributed to all students enrolled on higher education programmes, including those who had only begun their studies a few weeks before. The survey invited students to comment on a variety of headings, based on suggestions provided in the published guidance for the student submission. The completed surveys were collated and presented to student representatives for discussion. Students used this information to present their submission in the form of a video, and the School provided camera equipment and a camera operator to help with this. Students met the review Coordinator at the preparatory meeting and also met the team during the review visit. This was very helpful in confirming the commentary provided in the student submission and in enabling an understanding of the student learning experience from the students' perspective.

Detailed findings about The Arts Educational Schools

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 There is an effective working relationship between the School and the University which closely follows the policies and practices of the University. The institutional validation agreement was signed in 2001 and the School adheres closely to the practices described in the comprehensive Validation and Institutional Partnerships handbook. The School manages effectively the close working relationship with the University through its strong leadership and management structures and processes.

1.2 The Senior Strategy Team, led by the Principal and including the Academic Manager, meets monthly and is responsible for the management of all the functional areas of the School. Each curriculum school has an Executive Team led by the Director, who is also the Deputy Principal and a member of the Senior Strategy Team. The executive teams include heads of departments and year heads. Programmes are managed by programme directors. This clear and cohesive management structure enables good communications throughout the School and is facilitating further sharing of good practice across the two schools that deliver higher education.

1.3 The University's Dean of Validation chairs the Course Board, which is a subcommittee of the University's Validation and Institutional Partnerships Committee. This provides important oversight which is fully understood by both parties. The Course Board meets once a term and acts as the central body overseeing quality and standards, and considers annual programme evaluations and actions planned for the coming academic year. The Dean also chairs the final year Assessment Boards attended by external examiners which provides further assurance of the management of standards.

1.4 The School effectively manages its higher education provision. Academic standards are monitored at Boards of Studies meetings which take place once a term in both schools. Monitoring takes place through approval of annual programme evaluations, and discussion and approval of proposals to make amendments to modules or assessment processes. The terms of reference of the Boards of Studies are explicit, and include processes to monitor and evaluate academic and vocational standards and to approve and submit annual review documents. Student handbooks give full details of assessment strategies in each programme.

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

1.5 The School, overseen by the University, takes full account of external reference points in the management of standards. Proposals for new programmes demonstrate the requirement for programmes to align with the Qualifications and Credit Framework and *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The FHEQ level of each module is given in the module specifications within student handbooks. The School uses the dance, drama and performance subject benchmark statement during validation and revalidation processes.

1.6 The School makes extensive use of external examiners who are appointed by the University and also uses an external adviser who sits on the Course Board and acts as Deputy Chair. This provides further important externality and oversight.

1.7 Very good self-assessment processes are evident. The School is evaluated by different external bodies and each requires the School to prepare an annual report or a self-assessment. In addition, the School prepares an annual higher education self-assessment report. Accreditation by Drama UK involves a rigorous assessment through documentary review, observation of programme delivery by a panel of industry experts, assessment of facilities and discussion with tutors and students. In October 2013 Drama UK confirmed that all the School's programmes fulfil their hallmarks of vocational training. Accreditation by CDET requires an extensive review of the institution, including review of facilities, meetings with staff and students, observations of teaching and analysis of graduate destinations. The CDET 2010 accreditation report found that the training observed was of a very high standard and granted accreditation for four years.

1.8 These optional external accreditations add value to the qualifications, provide extensive opportunities for reflection and enhance quality assurance processes. The 2012 Ofsted report found that the School is an outstanding school with outstanding capacity to sustain further improvement. The report commented in particular on the high quality of the curriculum, the extensive personalised feedback and the outstanding preparation for employment. The School's commitment to reflection and self-evaluation through regular external monitoring and quality assurance is **good practice**.

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

1.9 External examiners provide effective oversight of the award of degrees by acting as moderators, attending Assessment boards, and providing advice and support during the period of their appointment. They provide an annual report according to a university template. Full details of the role of the external examiner are given in the Validation and Institutional Partnerships handbook. In addition, they review performances, assessments and written assignments, and observe teaching and learning, agree assessment strategies and highlight any issues of concern. They also comment on good practice for example, the quality of feedback to students on assessments.

1.10 The external examiner reports are received by the University which highlights the many strengths and points out any areas to be addressed. They are then sent to the School for comment and action where they are considered by programme teams and Boards of Studies. The School replies directly to external examiner reports, which are pinned on notice boards for students to consult and discussed at annual programme evaluation meetings.

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 School fulfil its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities?

2.1 The School fulfils its responsibilities for the management of the quality of learning opportunities effectively. There is a clear understanding of the lead role of the University in maintaining and monitoring the quality of educational provision and of the School's role for the design, development and day-to-day delivery of the validated programmes. The management structures and processes described in paragraphs 1.2 and 1.3 also apply to managing the quality of learning opportunities.

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

2.2 The School engages with the Quality Code through its partnership arrangement with the University. The process of raising awareness and mapping School processes and practice to the Quality Code has commenced.

2.3 The external accreditation and inspection processes that support the maintenance of academic standards (see paragraphs 1.7 and 1.8) also strengthen quality assurance processes and practice. There are comprehensive reviews and inspections by these organisations, including the observation of teaching and learning. They provide extensive feedback on which the School acts and this enhances the quality of learning opportunities.

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

2.4 The School has effective mechanisms to assure high quality teaching and learning. External examiners view a selection of all assessed work and external accreditations and inspections consider the quality of teaching and learning. The 2012 Ofsted report stated that almost all students make outstanding progress as a result of good and occasionally outstanding teaching. Students confirmed the high quality of teaching and learning and this is further evidenced through the high graduate employment rate the School achieves.

2.5 Student feedback is used effectively to monitor the quality of teaching. This is collected using termly module evaluations. The executive teams consider the results, which are also discussed in one-to-one discussions between heads of departments and staff. Students then receive feedback, including agreed actions, at weekly meetings with their head of year. Student feedback has been generally positive and action has promptly ensued on the few occasions where issues are identified by students. Student representatives are members of the Boards of Studies and feed back any relevant issues which emerge to students.

2.6 Staff who are external examiners at other institutions are able to assure themselves that the quality of learning opportunities is equivalent to those offered elsewhere. The School employs many industry practitioners as teachers and this ensures subject currency and enhances student learning. The majority of teaching staff have an undergraduate degree as well as accredited vocational training in their subject specialism.

2.7 Teaching observations take place annually. In the 2012-13 academic year the School formalised class observations as an integral part of annual appraisal and, in future, this will enable the identification of training needs. Tutors are observed at least once a year

by their line manager and peer review, which enables the sharing of good practice, takes place regularly.

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

2.8 Students have termly academic tutorials with the Programme Director and other tutors offer academic support as required. Weekly group tutorials, known as company meetings, provide opportunities for students to discuss any aspect of their programme. Students were extremely positive about the support they receive and the open-door policy and availability of all staff.

2.9 Staff provide an exceptionally caring and supportive environment which builds students' confidence and facilitates their progress through their programmes and entry into the profession. This positive relationship continues after graduation in maintaining contact and offering support. Graduates of the School often return to take part in activities that enrich student learning. The nurturing and supportive environment that facilitates student achievement and progression is **good practice**.

2.10 Additional student support is provided in the form of pastoral tutorials, and a professional counsellor is available for students. There is a dedicated disability officer and a sports masseur, a physiotherapist and a podiatrist are available on a weekly basis at heavily subsidised student rates.

2.11 Feedback to students on their assessed work, including public performances, is comprehensive and developmental. Students confirmed that feedback helps them identify any areas of weakness and to become more effective performers. External examiners comment on the high quality of feedback to students, which includes assessment by outside professionals. The provision of thorough, constructive and effective feedback to students is **good practice**.

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

2.12 Staff development is effective at an individual level. There is a comprehensive staff development policy that sets out how continuing professional development is facilitated and covers teaching and professional creative practice. Staff development activities are published in the annual programme evaluations and in the annual self-assessment report. The School has recently moved the staff development function into the Human Resources department to ensure a more consistent and strategic approach. It would be **desirable** for the School to continue with the centralisation of staff development activities to better inform strategic planning.

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

2.13 There is a five-year estates plan which details a schedule of continuing improvements to the building and its facilities. This is overseen by the Facilities Subcommittee chaired by one of the trustees. The current physical resources have been further enhanced by the addition of the new performing arts theatre. This has enhanced learning opportunities by providing a professional environment in which students can practice and demonstrate their learning.

2.14 Resources are discussed and identified at formal, regular one-to-one meetings between academic staff and heads of year. Requests are then presented to the executive

teams, who annually have an overview of resource priorities. Minutes of executive team meetings are copied to the Principal so that enhancements that require additional resources can be planned for.

2.15 Students confirmed that the specialist library meets their needs. Students also have access to all library resources at the University and these are used primarily by master's degree students.

2.16 The strategic plan 2010-14 identified computing resources as a weakness, which was confirmed by students. The School has made some improvements, for example by updating computers in the library and a three-year plan for information technology development is being implemented. This was delayed while the major building project took place. It would be **desirable** for the School to continue to implement the information technology plan to meet the needs of students and staff.

2.17 The School has a very positive and reciprocal relationship with the industry. This enables a range of excellent learning and development experiences for students and enhances career opportunities, as demonstrated by the 90 per cent graduate employment rate that the School achieves. The relationship with industry includes the involvement and patronage of high calibre and high profile professionals, who advise and support the School and offer master classes to students. Agents and casting directors visit the School regularly to meet with students and offer their expertise. The development and maintenance of industry links that lead to valuable opportunities for student learning is **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 School communicate information about learning opportunities to students and other stakeholders?

3.1 The School has several routes for ensuring the effective distribution of information about learning opportunities to students and other stakeholders. The primary means for those who are not studying at the School is through the website. This provides information about the School, its programmes, its admissions and fee arrangements, and programme validation. The School no longer produces a hardcopy prospectus since the recent relaunch of its website. In the last two years it has only had two requests for hardcopy information, which were dealt with to the satisfaction of the enquirers. An online prospectus is provided that is easily updated and current.

3.2 Information for current students is easily accessible from the website and students commented positively on its quality and accuracy. In addition, most of the important programme information is provided in dedicated handbooks, which have recently been updated to conform to British Dyslexia Association guidelines. These comprehensive student handbooks cover all aspects of studying at the School, including information and signposting on good academic practice, appeals and complaints, and student regulations. Students confirmed the usefulness of the handbooks and stated that they are an integral part of how they approach their learning. Tutors refer regularly to handbooks in teaching sessions and in some cases take groups of students through the handbooks in a structured way as part of their module. External examiners commented positively on the clarity of information in

handbooks. The consistency and high quality of student handbooks, which are comprehensive and easily accessible, is **good practice**.

3.3 Urgent notifications are posted on noticeboards in curriculum areas and students check these regularly, reflecting the expectation on performing arts professionals in the workplace. Student feedback about the effectiveness of communication is positive, with high internal satisfaction feedback scores in November/December 2013.

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

3.4 The School has effective processes to ensure the information that they provide is fit for purpose, accessible, and trustworthy. All published information is first validated by a process overseen by the Director of External Relations. This ensures that the information is approved by the relevant head of department within each school. Online prospectus entries are signed off by the Deputy Principal. Rapid adjustments to published information on the website are possible. This allows the School to ensure online information is of high quality and up to date.

3.5 Programme directors are responsible for the development and maintenance of student handbooks, according to annually updated guidelines that are provided by the University Student and Academic Services department.

3.6 The University considered the quality of the programme and module specifications in addition to the student handbooks as part of the revalidation process in October 2013. This ensured further external oversight of the information provided by the School.

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

Action plan³

The Arts Educational Schools action plan relating to the Review for Specific Course Designation, January 2014						
Good practice	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the School:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the School's commitment to reflection and self-evaluation through regular external monitoring and quality assurance (paragraphs 1.7, 1.8 and 2.3) 	Maintenance and enhancement of high quality provision	Ensure provision meets and exceeds quality assurance requirements of all external bodies	Every four years: dates to be confirmed by external bodies	Academic Manager and executive teams	Deputy Principal, Principal	Inspection, validation and/or accreditation reports
		Ensure detailed and reflective annual reporting to external bodies	September each year	Academic Manager and executive teams	As above	Annual Programme evaluations, Self-Assessment reports
		Provide regular opportunities for student to feed back and raise any issues	At least three times per year	Academic Manager	Deputy Principal	Board of Studies minutes, notes of annual evaluation meetings,

³The School 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 School's awarding body.

						student evaluation forms and student feedback questionnaires
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the nurturing and supportive environment that facilitates student achievement and progression (paragraphs 2.8 and 2.9) 	Maintenance and enhancement of student support mechanisms	Heads of Year to meet at least once a term to share good practice	June and September 2014 and February 2015	Heads of Year	Deputy Principal	Appraisal forms and Annual Programme evaluations
		A student forum to be set up to enable students to initiate ideas for improvements to student facilities and support services	February 2014	Deputy Principal	Principal	Forum minutes
		Provide regular one-to-one tutorial support	September 2014	Heads of Year	Deputy Principal	Student feedback questionnaires
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the provision of thorough, constructive and effective feedback to students (paragraph 2.11) 	Maintenance and enhancement of effective feedback to students	Students receive written feedback after each project/production and all written assignments	October, December, February, March, May and July each year	Creative teams markers	Heads of Year	Scrutiny of student achievement data
		Students receive verbal feedback on their rehearsal process from tutors and creative teams	Continuous	Staff and creative teams	Heads of Year	Class observations

		Students receive verbal feedback on class work at appropriate points in the academic year	February and June each year	Heads of year and core teaching staff	Deputy Principal	Scrutiny of student achievement data
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the development and maintenance of industry links (paragraph 2.17) 	Maintenance and enhancement of industry links	Engage high profile industry creatives and professional practitioners for professional practice modules	September 2014	Heads of department	Deputy Principal	Self-Assessment reports and Annual Programme evaluations
		Engage high profile industry creatives to direct/choreograph/third year productions	September 2014	Deputy Principal and heads of department	Principal	As above
		Year 3 Musical Theatre mock West End auditions for the creative teams of Les Miserables and Mamma Mia	September 2014	Deputy Principal	Principal	As above
		Professional auditions for creative teams of Les Miserables and Mamma Mia	March 2015	Deputy Principal	Principal	As above
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the consistent and high quality student handbooks, (paragraph 3.2) 	Maintenance and enhancement of high quality student handbooks	Review and revise student handbooks each year	June/July 2014	Academic Manager	Executive teams	Course Board minutes
		Annual meeting with students to canvas views on any areas of the handbook which may need improving	May 2014	Academic Manager	Principal and Deputy Principal	Minutes of annual student meeting

Desirable	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date/s	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The team considers that it would be desirable for the School to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue with the centralisation of staff development activities (paragraph 2.12) 	Make staff development more efficient and cost effective to inform strategic planning	<p>Staff development budget to be centralised within the Human Resources budget</p> <p>Regular reporting of staff development activities</p> <p>Line managers apply to Human Resources on a staff member's behalf for training</p> <p>Requests to be considered with reference to the School's Strategic Plan to ensure relevance</p>	<p>September 2014</p> <p>September each year</p> <p>As required</p>	<p>Finance Director and Human Resources Manager</p> <p>Human Resources Manager</p> <p>Heads of department, Human Resources manager</p>	<p>Principal, Finance Committee</p> <p>Principal, Senior Strategy Team</p> <p>Principal</p>	<p>Finance Committee minutes</p> <p>Staff Development Progress report</p> <p>Annual Programme evaluations and Self-Assessment reports</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue to implement the information technology plan (paragraph 2.16) 	Improve information technology throughout the institution	<p>Implement updated three year information technology plan as follows:</p> <p>Second Information and Communications Technology technician</p>	December 2013	Facilities Manager	Principal	Facilities Committee minutes

		employed to provide additional support				
		Fibre optic broadband to be installed	March 2014	Information Technology Manager	Facilities Manager	Facilities Committee minutes
		Review contract with external consultants	December 2014	Facilities Manager	Principal	Senior Strategy Team minutes
		Upgrade outdated desktop computers	July 2014	Information Technology Manager and assistant	Facilities Manager	Executive team minutes
		Upgrade software packages on desktop machines to latest versions	September 2014	Information Technology Manager	Facilities Manager	Executive team minutes
		Annual review of information technology strategic plan	October 2014	Information Technology Manager, Facilities Manager and Facilities Committee	Board of Trustees	Facilities Committee minutes and Trustees meeting minutes

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 Specific Course Designation can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx.

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 \(and for specific course designation\): Handbook, April 2013*](#).⁴

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

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

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

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

differentiated judgements In a Review for Specific Courses Designation, 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.

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.

⁴www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

operational definition A formal definition of a term, which establishes 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.

provider(s) (of higher education) Organisations that deliver higher education. In the UK they may be a degree-awarding body or another organisation that offers programmes of higher education on behalf of degree-awarding bodies or awarding organisations. In the context of Review for Specific Course Designation the term means an independent college.

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

quality See **academic quality**.

Quality Code Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of reference points for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the Expectations that all providers are required to meet.

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

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

threshold academic standards The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national **frameworks for higher education qualifications** and **subject benchmark statements**. See also **academic standards**.

QAA681 - R3673 - Apr 14

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Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786