

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

Ballet West

December 2013

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Key findings about Ballet West

As a result of its Review for Specific Course Designation, carried out in December 2013, 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 the Northumbria University Newcastle and the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

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 the Northumbria University Newcastle and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

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**:

- student engagement with performing arts practitioners and the Ballet West touring company (paragraphs 1.6 and 2.4)
- the responsiveness to the student voice (paragraph 2.5)
- the accessibility of academic and pastoral support (paragraph 2.8).

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:

- develop formal written policies and procedures to clarify responsibilities for the operational management of academic standards (paragraph 1.3)
- develop a self-contained operations manual to clarify Scottish Qualifications Authority expectations (paragraph 1.4)
- map current practice and future policies and procedures to the Quality Code (paragraph 1.5)
- adopt a more systematic approach to staff development (paragraph 2.10).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Specific Course Designation](#)¹ conducted by [QAA](#) at Ballet West (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 the Northumbria University Newcastle (the University) and the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA). The review was carried out by Ms Ann Kettle and Mr Daniel Morgan (reviewers) and Mr Grant Horsburgh (Coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the School 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 a self-evaluation document and a comprehensive package of supporting documents which included policies, procedures, minutes from meetings where academic standards and quality matters are discussed and a variety of monitoring and review reports and action plans. During the visit, the reviewers met staff, students and University representatives to clarify matters arising from their reading of the evidence base.

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

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)
- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)
- subject benchmark statements
- the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF)
- Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

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 was founded in Taynuilt, near Oban in Argyll, Scotland in 1991. In 1993 the Ballet West Foundation was granted charitable status and in 1997 the School was registered as a company limited by guarantee. In 1995 the School enrolled its first students on the three-year Dancers' and Teachers' course, and became established as a provider of full-time, post-16 dance training. The School started to deliver higher education in partnership with North Highland College in 2007. Between 2009 and 2012 the School delivered the final year of a BA Classical Ballet and Dance Performance validated by the University of the Highlands and Islands. A partnership with the MGA Academy of Performing Arts, an Edinburgh-based SQA Approved Centre, enabled the HND Professional Stage Dance to be delivered in 2012. Having received Approved Centre status from SQA in 2013, the partnership with the MGA Academy of Performing Arts will cease at the end of the 2013-14 academic year. From September 2014 the School will continue to offer HND Professional Stage Dance to existing students and the successor qualification, HND Professional Dance Performance, to new students. In 2013 the School was approved by the University to deliver the BA (Hons) Dance under a franchise agreement. The University has franchised the same programme to be offered by Dundee and Edinburgh Colleges. In addition to its higher education provision, the School offers preparation for Royal Academy of Dance examinations, residential holiday schools, ballet and other dance genre courses at outreach centres throughout Argyll. The School is also an established ballet

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

touring company which, in addition to touring an annual classical ballet throughout Scotland, toured China in 2010 and 2011.

At the time of the review a total of 70 full-time students were enrolled on the following higher education programmes listed under the respective awarding body:

Northumbria University Newcastle

- BA(Hons) Dance

Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA)

- HND Professional Stage Dance.

The provider's stated responsibilities

The School and University have a current franchise agreement which meets the expectations of *Chapter B10: Management of collaborative arrangements* of the Quality Code. The School's stated responsibilities cover: handling potential student enquiries; recruiting, selecting and enrolling students; student induction and publishing information on higher education provision. In addition the School is responsible for: providing academic and pastoral student support; organising and holding awards ceremonies for successful students; maintaining accurate and complete student records; student appeals, complaints and disciplinary matters and the collection of fees. The School is also responsible for: the recruitment, employment and development of staff associated with the delivery and administration of the provision; the production of programme specifications and intended learning outcomes; assessment marking and provision of assessment feedback to students; and monitoring and reviewing the delivery of the provision.

Recent developments

During 2013 the School achieved SQA Approved Centre status and established a new partnership with the University. The School has recently received planning permission to expand its learning facilities through building a second dance studio complex which will include professional-standard practice space, changing and shower facilities and teaching classrooms.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the School were invited to present a submission to the review team. A written submission was received as part of the self-evaluation package. As part of the preparatory meeting the Coordinator presented the standard QAA briefing to all 70 students. During the visit the team met 12 students, four from each year of the HND and four BA (Hons) students. The meeting with students provided the reviewers with a valuable insight into the quality of learning opportunities provided by the School.

Detailed findings about Ballet West

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The School fulfils effectively its responsibilities for the management of academic standards. A Board of Trustees is chaired by the Principal, who also chairs the Higher National Course Committee, and is designated to chair the newly formed BA (Hons) Programme Committee. The standard of student work on each unit is scrutinised through discussion at both committees. The committees provide an effective management mechanism which is proportionate to the size of the School and number of courses on offer.

1.2 The School's relationships with its awarding body and organisation have undergone substantial change in recent years. Current Higher National students are registered through the MGA Academy of Performing Arts but will transfer to the School in September 2014 now that the School has achieved SQA Approved Centre status. A number of students who were formerly registered with the University of Highlands and Islands are now students of the University. The School has managed carefully and effectively the transition of all students affected by the changes. Students confirmed that their learning expectations continue to be met and that their learning experience is unaffected.

1.3 The BA (Hons) Dance is delivered in accordance with the University's operations manual. The operations manual provides a comprehensive and clear resource for staff to ensure compliance with the expectations and regulations of the University. Regular visits by the University's Programme Coordinator to the School and reciprocal visits by School staff and students to the University have helped to build an effective partnership. However, the School has not developed formal written policies or procedures to underpin its responsibilities for the management of academic standards. Currently the School relies upon the considerable expertise of the School Administrator and the close, informal structure within the small staff team to manage operational aspects relating to academic standards. For example, feedback from students on their experience during each unit is gathered through evaluation forms. Student representatives inform the discussion of the effectiveness of delivery of each unit at the programme committee but it is not clear how results from the evaluation forms are collated and used to inform consistently the committee's discussions. As a means of further securing academic standards, it would be **desirable** for the School to develop formal written policies and procedures to clarify responsibilities for the operational management of academic standards.

1.4 SQA provides approved centres with an array of documents to support the delivery of its awards. Staff acknowledged that it would be helpful to contextualise this information to the delivery of the HND Professional Stage Dance. As a means of building staff capacity and knowledge of SQA expectations, it would be **desirable** for the School to develop a self-contained operations manual to clarify SQA expectations.

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

1.5 Through its validation process, the University ensures that Quality Code, FHEQ and subject benchmark statement expectations are met. SQA awards are aligned to, and take account of, SQA Framework requirements. Staff have been involved in SQA working groups to develop the higher national curriculum, and have given careful consideration to relevant subject benchmark statements, to ensure an effective relationship between dance practice and academic objectives. Knowledge of the Quality Code expectations, and embedding and

aligning expectations with current practice, is a work in progress. Staff acknowledge the potential benefit to be gained in undertaking a mapping exercise of the Quality Code expectations and indicators to current practice and future policies and procedures. It would be **desirable** that such a mapping is undertaken as a means of helping to develop a stronger understanding of the key elements of the Quality Code among all staff.

1.6 Implementation of the School's mission to engage with the professional dance world is facilitated through encouraging students to enrol for Royal Academy of Dance qualifications and through students' participation as part of the Ballet West touring company. The School offers students the opportunity to prepare for Royal Academy of Dance qualifications which are aligned to QCF and SQA level descriptors. Such qualifications are internationally recognised as providing an in-depth study of ballet and as a means of preparing students for a career in dance. Students indicated that, while participation in Royal Academy of Dance qualifications is voluntary, all students take advantage of this opportunity. They do this in parallel with their higher education courses as the practical dance elements in particular are integral to both. In recent years students have achieved considerable success in Royal Academy of Dance national competitions, which has enhanced the School's professional reputation. Participation in live performances as part of the Ballet West touring company provides students with valuable experience as full-time dancers and encourages them to achieve the highest possible standards in their chosen career.

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

1.7 The School has experience in delivering higher education courses in partnership with a number of awarding bodies and organisations since 2005. As a result, the School has established effective evidence-based mechanisms for ensuring that expectations of the awarding body and organisation are met. There is evidence of systematic and documented internal and external verification, examination processes and of careful consideration during assessment boards. Assessment methods are documented in the course handbooks and all BA (Hons) Dance assessments are approved by the University. The School implements a sampled marking procedure during practical performances for moderation purposes and, although this is not formally documented, staff are confident in its application. Students are fully aware of the assessment process and the standard required to gain a given mark or grade.

1.8 External examiners and verifiers are appointed by the University and SQA respectively. Reports provide evidence of positive interaction with the School. All reports are responded to and used to inform the annual monitoring process. However, there is no formal record of external examiner or verifier reports being discussed at previous course committees nor of these being made available to students. Staff indicated that this omission would be addressed at future committee meetings in accordance with University expectations.

1.9 Due to the timing of the visit, there was no evidence available to indicate that the University's expectations regarding the conduct of external moderation, verification and examining are being met. However, the close liaison between School staff and the University's Programme Coordinator, and evidence of considerable staff and student interaction and facilitation with the University and its other partner colleges, demonstrates the School's commitment to ensuring that academic standards are maintained.

The review team has **confidence** in the School's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of its awarding body and organisation.

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 coherent structure for the management of academic standards (paragraphs 1.1 to 1.4) applies equally to managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. Staff have a clear understanding of the management structure.

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

2.2 The School's use of external reference points to manage and enhance learning opportunities is covered in paragraphs 1.5 and 1.6.

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

2.3 The School assures itself that the quality of learning and teaching is being maintained and enhanced by the careful selection and management of teaching staff, and by seeking feedback from students. The staffing structure consists of a core of full-time staff supported by a group of freelance professionals who teach part-time at the School on a regular basis; in addition, guest teachers visit the School on an occasional basis. New staff are interviewed before appointment to ensure that they will fit in with the ethos of the School, and are mentored and guided by more experienced colleagues. There is a system in place for peer observation of teaching.

2.4 The mix of resident and visiting staff, almost all industry professionals, provides a breadth of experience and serves to enhance the learning experience of students. Students are appreciative of the expertise and experience of their talented teachers and the contact that this gives them with performing arts professionals. As noted earlier, in addition to their academic studies, students are members of the Ballet West touring company, which provides them with the opportunity of preparing for and performing in full-length ballets in venues at home and abroad. The opportunity for student engagement with performing arts practitioners and the Ballet West touring company is **good practice**.

2.5 Feedback from students on the quality of their learning experience is sought in a variety of ways. Students complete unit evaluation forms and the results are reported to programme committees. Elected student representatives attend the meetings to discuss matters raised by their colleagues. Students also raise matters of concern directly with School staff. The School intends to take advantage of an opportunity to involve student representatives in comparing and enhancing the student experience across the three institutions delivering the degree. The size of the School means that much feedback is immediate and matters arising are dealt with informally. However, there is a formal complaints policy. Students provided examples of prompt action by the School on suggestions for improving their learning experience. The responsiveness of the School to the student voice is **good practice**.

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

2.6 A small, close-knit community and the School's family ambience ensure that effective academic and personal support is an integral part of the student learning experience. The School aims to provide a tailored learning experience for each of its students. In view of the small size of the School, its remote location and the collaborative nature of dance training, all applicants are invited to an individual audition and are

interviewed by the Principal in order to assess their suitability for study at the School. As part of the induction process, students are introduced to the ethos of the School and the standards of behaviour expected in the School and the wider community. A personal learning support plan is prepared and kept under review for any student identified during the application process as requiring additional learning support. Students progressing to degree-level study are given a separate induction, which involves an introduction to the academic requirements of the programme and to assessment and study skills at level 6. Students indicated that they had also visited the University during their induction.

2.7 All students are allocated a personal tutor, distinct from module and unit tutors and mentors, to provide academic and personal support. A dedicated student support tutor provides one-to-one help with study skills for students referred by their personal tutors. Students feel that they can approach any member of staff for advice and support. When they are not teaching at the School, part-time tutors are available to be consulted electronically.

2.8 The School has arranged for the local medical practice to hold regular clinics at the School and the local minister offers confidential counselling to all students. The School provides a range of activities that increases students' employability and develops links with the dance industry. Well-connected tutors, guest teachers and alumni provide students with contacts to potential employers. The accessibility of academic and pastoral support is **good practice**.

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

2.9 The School is in the process of improving the pedagogical effectiveness of its teaching staff. The partnership with the University has presented the School with both opportunities and challenges in the area of staff development. In order to achieve its strategic aim to create excellence in learning and teaching, the School has adopted a fluid approach to staff development and encouraged staff to take advantage of professional development opportunities as they arise. Following the partnership with the University, the School has developed a staff development policy intended to meet the needs of staff delivering and supporting degree-level education. This policy is supplemented by a staff development plan for 2013-14 to ensure the induction of the School's staff to the University's learning facilities. The plan will facilitate individual staff development to support the academic requirements of a level 6 programme, including continuing professional development activities and pedagogical research.

2.10 The School has begun to implement the staff development plan with the help of the University's Programme Coordinator and an experienced part-time member of staff. The latter has mentored colleagues in making applications for membership of the Higher Education Academy and will continue to do so. This member of staff is also developing joint research projects. Core teaching staff have visited the University and attended a good practice sharing day with staff from Edinburgh College and Dundee College. The University's Programme Coordinator has also held a workshop at the School on learning and teaching issues. The emerging benefits of the new partnership with the University in terms of pedagogic development have the potential to become good staff development practice. However, staff acknowledged that a more systematic approach to the development of all staff teaching higher education students would need to be adopted to achieve this. It would be **desirable** for the School to adopt a more systematic approach to staff development.

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

2.11 Students have access to industry-standard dance studios. Plans are well advanced to supplement the existing studios and changing rooms with a studio that will be the largest in Scotland, and will provide a rehearsal space equivalent to the size of international theatre stages. The School's size and location makes possible open access to all learning and teaching facilities at all times. Library resources have been expanded following the partnership with the University and students are satisfied that they have access to the learning resources they need to complete assignments. While classroom space is accessible and sufficient to enable students to achieve the learning outcomes, students indicated that they would appreciate more individual desk space in classrooms and up-to-date technology to support the delivery of teaching.

2.12 Third-year students also have access to the learning facilities of the University. As noted earlier, the induction programme includes a visit to the University and an introduction to its electronic resources such as the virtual learning environment and the electronic book collection. Students were enthusiastic about taking advantage of the University's photographic and other fine arts facilities through reciprocal working with undergraduate students studying on other programmes at the University. Staff indicated that plans are being explored to enable interdisciplinary working between student groups in arts-related projects.

The review team has **confidence** that the School 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 effectively communicates its higher education provision to students and other stakeholders. The principal document is the Prospectus and, although this contains limited academic information, it is supplemented with course handbooks for all students which contain detailed information. To attract students, the School places advertisements in professional magazines. The partnership with the University requires that all public information is sanctioned by the University in advance of distribution. There is evidence of this working in practice. The School operates a website and two social media sites. These are regularly reviewed to ensure accuracy and probity by School staff.

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

3.2 The School's arrangements for assuring that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy are informal, but effective. The ultimate responsibility for the accuracy of information lies with the Principal, but the day-to-day control of arrangements for checking and reviewing such information is in the hands of administrative staff. The School is aware of its responsibilities towards the University and information featuring the use of the University's logo is sent to the University's Partnerships Coordinator for approval. The School has recently changed its arrangements with the company managing its website to make it easier to align online information more closely with that presented in the new, high-quality prospectus. Information about learning

opportunities, including press advertisements, is reviewed when considered necessary on an informal basis to ensure its currency and accuracy. Informal feedback from staff, students and the ballet community is taken into account during such reviews. Social media is used by the School to communicate urgent information to students and administrators control access to, and the content of, such information.

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

Action plan³

Ballet West's action plan relating to the Review of Specific Course Designation, December 2013						
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"> student engagement with performing arts practitioners and the Ballet West touring company (paragraphs 1.6 and 2.4) 	A wider breadth of guest teachers at the school	Monitor number of teachers and days taught by guest teachers	Review at course committee meetings (September and January annually)	Vice Principal	Course committee	Committee minutes
	Students entered for Royal Academy of Dance examinations	Monitor student feedback to guest teachers	Review every September	Student representatives	Principal	Module evaluation and minutes
	Students entered for national and international competitions	Monitor student entries and results	Review every September	Principal		Monitoring report
	Performances given by Ballet West company	Encourage and support students entering competitions	Staff review every September	All Staff		Monitoring report

³ The Institute 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 and organisation.

		Monitor number of performances		Principal		Committee minutes
		Monitor student feedback		Student representatives		Committee minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the responsiveness to the student voice (paragraph 2.5) 	<p>A student body who feel their voice is listened to and responded to</p>	Regular meetings between student body and their representatives	Bimonthly meetings September to June	Student body	Student representatives	Meeting minutes
		Regular attendance of student representatives at course committee meetings	Course committee meetings (September and January annually)	Student representatives	Course Committee	Committee minutes
		Annual meetings between Student representatives at Ballet West, Edinburgh College and Dundee College	May 2014 and annually thereafter	Student representatives and Northumbria University Newcastle Coordinator	Course Committee	Committee minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the accessibility of academic and pastoral support (paragraph 2.8). 	<p>A student body well supported in their academic studies and personal well-being</p>	Identification of specific needs of individual students and support provided as required	September 2014 and annually thereafter	Student support	Programme Manager	Personal Learning plans
		Open door policy for access to pastoral care from Principal		All staff	Principal	Records of meetings
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 provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop formal written policies and procedures to clarify responsibilities for the operational management of academic standards (paragraph 1.3) 	<p>Established responsibilities for operational management of academic standards</p> <p>Formal written policies and procedures written</p> <p>Annual review of documents</p>	<p>Senior staff meet to discuss management of academic standards</p> <p>Document stating responsibilities of key staff and student representatives drafted</p> <p>Policies and procedures drafted</p> <p>All documents agreed</p> <p>Review meeting</p>	<p>30 April 2014</p> <p>30 May 2014</p> <p>30 May 2014</p> <p>1 September 2014</p> <p>June 2015 and annually thereafter</p>	<p>Programme Manager</p> <p>Programme Manager</p> <p>Programme Manager</p> <p>Course Committee</p> <p>Senior staff</p>	<p>Principal</p> <p>Principal</p> <p>Principal</p> <p>Course Committee</p> <p>Course Committee</p>	<p>Minutes of meetings</p> <p>Draft documents produced</p> <p>Draft documents produced</p> <p>Committee minutes and final documents</p> <p>Minutes of meetings</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a self-contained operations manual to clarify Scottish Qualifications Authority expectations (paragraph 1.4) 	<p>Approved Operations manual for staff delivering Scottish Qualifications Authority courses</p>	<p>Compile existing policies and procedures into single manual</p> <p>Map against the Quality Code</p> <p>Approve through Course Committee</p>	<p>30 May 2014</p> <p>1 September 2014</p>	<p>Programme Manager</p>	<p>Principal</p> <p>Course Committee</p>	<p>Draft documents produced</p> <p>Committee minutes and final documents</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> map current practice and future policies and procedures to the Quality Code (paragraph 1.5) 	<p>Staff have awareness of the Quality Code in relation to the delivery of higher education and practice at Ballet West</p>	<p>Revise current policies and procedures at Ballet West, showing mapping against the Quality Code</p>	<p>30 May 2014</p>	<p>Programme Manager</p>	<p>Principal</p>	<p>Revised documentation</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adopt a more systematic approach to staff development (paragraph 2.10). 	<p>Staff engaged with professional and pedagogic development in the context of delivering higher education</p>	<p>Individual staff development plans produced for all members of staff delivering higher education</p> <p>Regular engagement with Northumbria University</p> <p>Regular engagement with Dundee and Edinburgh colleges</p>	<p>30 May 2014 annual review thereafter</p> <p>Two meetings annually - at the end of each semester</p> <p>Two meetings annually - at the end of each semester</p>	<p>Staff and staff development mentor</p> <p>Northumbria University Programme Coordinator</p> <p>Northumbria University Programme Coordinator</p>	<p>Principal</p>	<p>Development plans for all staff</p> <p>Meeting notes and action points</p> <p>Meeting notes and action point</p>

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 of Courses Specifically Designated for Student Support 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 (in response to applications for taught degree-awarding powers, research degree-awarding powers or university title).

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.

⁴ www.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**.

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

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