

# QAA Glossary

## QAA Terms Explained

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### [A](#)

#### **academic award**

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

#### **academic credit**

See 'credit'.

#### **academic integrity**

A commitment, even in the face of adversity, to six fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect, responsibility and courage. It implies compliance with ethical and professional principles, standards and practices by individuals or institutions in education, research and scholarship. The opposite of academic integrity is unethical practices such as plagiarism, collusion, contract cheating or academic misconduct.

#### **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**

These are the standards that providers set and maintain for the award of their academic credit or qualifications, which may exceed the threshold standards. Individual providers are responsible for defining their own academic standards by setting the pass marks and determining the grading/marking schemes and any criteria for classification of qualifications that differentiate between levels of student achievement above and below the threshold academic standards. Providers use national reference points, such as the UK Quality Code, the threshold standards within the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications, and relevant Subject Benchmark Statements, to set their academic standards. Degree-awarding bodies are always responsible for the academic standards of their courses, which may exceed the threshold needed for a qualification. (See also 'threshold academic standard'.)

#### **academic governance**

The term referring to the process and systems in place at a higher education institution that define and govern decision making on academic matters, such as admissions, academic standards and quality.

#### **accelerated degrees**

These are full degrees, taught in a condensed time period and usually offering three semesters over a calendar year. Can also be referred to as 'fast track', 'compressed' 'condensed' or 'intensive'.

## **Access to Higher Education Diploma**

The qualification designed to enable adults in England, Wales and Northern Ireland without traditional qualifications to enter higher education.

### **accessible information**

Information presented or made available in appropriate formats so that it can be found and understood by all intended audiences.

### **accreditation**

A process for verifying or approving a higher education programme, or provider, by an authorised external organisation. Programmes can be accredited by a professional or regulatory body such as the General Medical Council.

### **accreditation of prior certificated learning (APCL)**

The identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of learning and achievement that occurred at some time in the past prior to entry to a course of study, and for which the learner was awarded some form of official recognition.

### **accreditation of prior experiential learning (APEL)**

The identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of learning and achievement that occurred at some time in the past prior to entry to a course of study, but not in the context of formal education or training.

### **accreditation of prior learning (APL)**

The identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of learning and achievement that occurred at some time in the past (perhaps as the result of a previous course, self-directed study, or active experience), which is taken into account when admitting a student to a course of study. (See also 'recognition of prior learning'.)

### **admission with advanced standing**

Admission to a programme at a stage other than the initial stage, on the basis that the student admitted is exempt from part of the programme, owing to equivalent prior learning that can be certified or evidenced.

### **admission(s)**

The practices and processes of applying for, and gaining entry to, a course up to the point of enrolment through application and selection. Higher education providers have their own processes in place governing admission decisions.

### **advanced standing**

The recognition of previous successful study, reducing the number of modules needed to complete the course

### **alternative provider**

A provider of higher education courses that does not receive direct annual public funding from the Office for Students or higher education funding bodies in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and is not a further education college.

### **anonymous marking**

The marking of students' submitted work without their identity being revealed to the person carrying out the marking, so that the assessment is unbiased.

**appeal**

A request for a review of a decision of an academic body around a mark, outcome or decision. Students may appeal an outcome on the basis of evidence or procedure, but not disagreement with academic judgement.

In QAA review, a formal request for a review of a decision arising from a QAA review method (see also 'representations').

**apprenticeship**

A job with training to industry and/or professional standards, which may or may not include a mandatory qualification. (See also 'Higher and degree apprenticeships'.)

**apprenticeship standard**

The standard for an apprenticeship as determined by the Trailblazer group, which includes the knowledge, skills and behaviours for the apprentice to achieve in order to complete the apprenticeship.

**approval**

The formal endorsement of a pathway of study by a UK degree-awarding body. This may also be referred to as 'validation'. (See also 'programme approval'.)

**articulation**

An arrangement where learners enrolled on a designated course at a partner provider are automatically entitled (subject to academic criteria) to be admitted with advanced standing to a subsequent part or year of a degree-awarding body's course. (See also 'advanced standing'.)

**assessment criteria**

The knowledge, understanding and skills that markers expect a student to display in an assessment task, and which are taken into account in marking the work. These criteria are based on the intended learning outcomes.

**assessment regulations**

The rules governing assessment of a programme of study including the marking scheme, pass mark, requirements for progression to subsequent levels or stages of a programme, and the award and classification requirements (for instance, credits to be achieved and specific marks to be attained).

**award**

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

**awarding body**

See 'degree-awarding body'.

**awarding organisation**

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

## **B**

### **bachelor of arts (BA)**

See 'bachelor's degree'.

### **bachelor of science (BSc)**

See 'bachelor's degree'.

### **bachelor's degree**

A course of academic study leading to a qualification usually over a period of three or four full-time academic years that requires a significant amount of independent study to develop a thorough understanding of a subject.

Located at level 6 in The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, at level 6 in the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales and at levels 9-10 in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (9 for ordinary bachelor's degrees, 10 for bachelor's degrees with honours).

Examples include Bachelor of Arts (BA) and Bachelor of Science (BSc) degrees. To be awarded a bachelor's degree 'with honours', a student achieves the learning outcomes of a larger volume of study.

### **bachelor's degree awarding powers**

See 'degree awarding powers'.

### **benchmark statement**

See 'Subject Benchmark Statement'.

### **blended learning**

Learning delivered by several different methods, usually including face-to-face and e-learning (see 'technology enhanced' or 'enabled learning').

### **Bologna Process**

An initiative to strengthen and develop the European Higher Education Area as a means of ensuring that qualifications are mutually recognised, systems are transparent, and staff and students can transfer easily between higher education institutions in Europe.

### **branch campus**

A campus of a college or university that is located separately from the main or 'home' campus.

## **C**

### **career education**

Information, advice and guidance (IAG) aimed at helping students with career choices and to plan and prepare for future employment, education or training.

### **certificate of higher education**

See 'undergraduate certificate', 'graduate certificate' and 'postgraduate certificate'.

## **Characteristics Statement**

Characteristics Statements describe the distinctive features of qualifications at particular levels within the Qualifications Frameworks. They describe the qualifications in terms of their purpose, general characteristics and generic outcomes, but do not include subject-level detail.

## **Charter**

See 'Royal Charter'.

## **cohort**

A group of students who share the same learning experience, for example, because they entered the same programme of study at the same university in the same year.

## **collaborative arrangement**

A formal arrangement between a degree-awarding body and another higher education provider, allowing for the latter to provide higher education on behalf of the former, typically leading to an award of credit, or a qualification, from the degree-awarding body. In all such cases, the degree-awarding body remains responsible for ensuring the quality of the provision.

## **collaborative partner**

See 'delivery organisation', 'support provider' and 'partner organisation'.

## **Common practices**

Statements in the UK Quality Code which focus on enhancement. (See also 'Quality Code'.)

## **complaint**

A specific query about the quality of a student's learning opportunities at a higher education provider. Complaints are distinct from appeals, but providers' policies may cover both. (See also 'appeals'.)

## **concern**

A serious issue about how higher education institutions manage their academic standards, the quality of learning opportunities and/or the information that they make available about their provision. QAA has a Concerns Scheme in Scotland; the Office for Students has a Notifications and Concerns Process in England.

## **conservatoire**

A specialist institution for training in the performing arts (dance, drama and music).

## **contextual data and information**

Data and information that enable higher education providers to put attainment in the context of the circumstances in which it was obtained, for example, educational, geo-demographic and socio-economic background data.

## **continuing professional development (CPD)**

Training programmes, some leading to formal awards, to extend a person's employment-related knowledge, skills and understanding.

### **contract cheating**

A form of cheating where a student outsources their learning, by submitting work for assessment which has been produced using the services of a third party. The third party could be a professional cheating company such as an essay mill, or an individual such as a friend or relative. The contract with the student could include payment or other favours. It also may be referred to as 'commissioning'.

### **Core practices**

Statements in the UK Quality Code which represent effective ways of working that underpin the delivery of the Expectations and will deliver positive outcomes for students. (See also 'Quality Code').

### **course**

An approved pathway of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads towards a qualification. UK higher education courses must be approved or validated by UK degree-awarding bodies. Depending on the provider, courses are also referred to as programmes, units or modules.

### **credit accumulation**

Achieving academic credit over time, by successful completion of units of study, or by 'accreditation of prior learning' or 'recognition of prior learning'.

### **credit bearing**

Refers to a course and/or award made by a provider that comprises a stipulated number of credits.

### **credit accumulation and transfer schemes**

Arrangements within and between higher education providers enabling academic credit to be accumulated over time and transferred between programmes and/or providers.

### **credit and qualifications framework**

A credit framework combined with a qualifications framework, for example, the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW) and the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF).

### **credit framework**

A published formal structure that states the credit value typically associated with programmes and qualifications, and that generally includes credit level descriptors.

### **credit level**

An indicator of the relative complexity, depth and autonomy of learning associated with a particular module, used in credit frameworks. (See also 'credit value' and 'credit level descriptor'.)

### **credit level descriptor**

A statement of the generic characteristics of learning at a specific credit level, used as a reference point for those designing programmes of study. (See also 'credit framework'.)

**credit transfer**

A system that allows credit awarded by one higher education awarding body to be recognised and included towards the requirements for a programme at another higher education provider; or that allows credit gained on a particular programme to contribute towards the requirements of a different one. (See also 'credit accumulation' and 'transfer schemes'.)

**credit value**

The number of credits at a particular level, assigned to a body of learning. The number of credits is based on the estimated learning hours (where one credit typically represents 10 notional hours of learning).

**credit(s)**

A means of quantifying and recognising learning whenever and wherever it is achieved, awarded in recognition of achievement of learning outcomes at a specified level and used for the purposes of certification. (See also 'credit level', 'credit value', 'credit accumulation and transfer schemes'.)

**current students**

Students registered/enrolled on, and participating in, a programme of study who have not yet completed their studies or been awarded their qualification. An individual becomes a 'current student' at the point of registration/enrolment.

**D****degree**

A protected term for a higher education qualification at one of several levels, determined by the depth and breadth of study and awarded only for achievement in full of the outcomes set out in the appropriate qualification descriptor in the relevant qualifications framework. (See 'bachelor's degree', 'doctoral degree', 'foundation degree' and 'master's degree'.)

**degree apprenticeship**

See 'higher and degree apprenticeships'.

**degree awarding powers**

The right to confer degrees, which is granted by statute, by Royal Charter, by the Privy Council or by the Office for Students. Institutions may apply for the right to award bachelor's degrees, foundation degrees, research degrees and taught degrees. Powers may be authorised on an indefinite, time-limited or renewable basis. The types of degree awarding powers that can be held by higher education institutions are:

- Bachelor's degree awarding powers
- Foundation degree awarding powers
- Research degree awarding powers
- Taught degree awarding powers

See also 'degree-awarding body', 'Royal Charter' and 'university title'.



**degree-awarding body**

Higher education providers authorised to award higher education degrees under relevant UK statutes. A degree-awarding body has overall responsibility for the standard and quality of its awards even if all or part of the award is provided by a separate delivery organisation. (See also 'degree awarding powers').

**delivery organisation**

An organisation that delivers learning opportunities on behalf of a degree-awarding body. This may be a higher education provider without degree awarding powers, a degree-awarding body other than that granting the award, an employer or another organisation approved by the degree-awarding body.

**descriptor**

See 'credit level descriptor' and 'qualification descriptor'.

**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 and by the Secretary of State as the Designated Quality Body for England as defined in the Higher Education and Research Act 2017.

**Designated Quality Body (DQB)**

See 'designated body'.

**diagnostic assessment**

Evaluation of how well a learner is prepared for a given programme or unit of study within it, identifying any strengths, gaps in knowledge, or shortfall in necessary understanding and skills.

**differentiated judgements**

(In a QAA review) Separate judgements respectively for the provision validated by separate degree-awarding bodies.

**diploma of higher education**

See 'undergraduate diploma', 'graduate diploma', and 'postgraduate diploma'.

**discipline**

A defined area of academic study.

**distance learning**

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

**doctor of philosophy (PhD or DPhil)**

See 'doctoral degree or doctorate'.

### **doctoral degree or doctorate**

A higher education qualification awarded for a programme of original and largely independent study and research (typically lasting at least three years), located at level 8 in The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and level 12 in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

### **double marking**

Assessment of students' work by two or more independent markers as a means of safeguarding or assuring academic standards by controlling for individual bias.

### **dual award or double award**

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

### **due diligence**

Enquiries relating to the governance, ethos, status, capacity, reputation and general suitability of a potential delivery organisation or support provider to satisfy the requirements of a degree-awarding body for an arrangement to deliver learning opportunities.

## **E**

### **educational oversight**

Higher education providers wishing to obtain a student sponsor license must demonstrate that all of their provision meets acceptable educational quality standards. An educational oversight body makes this assessment.

In England, the Office for Students (OfS) is the educational oversight body for providers eligible to register with them. Eligible providers wishing to apply for, or maintain, Tier 4 sponsor status must register with the OfS. QAA is the educational oversight body only for those providers not eligible to register with the OfS.

### **Educational Oversight: Exceptional Arrangements (EOEA)**

A QAA process used to review and report on providers recognised by UKVI as exceptional arrangements that require educational oversight by QAA, and which are not covered by other methods such as Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers). Exceptional arrangements include colleges operating as autonomous institutions with close links to a higher education institution.

### **educational village**

A group of education providers occupying a shared campus and ethos, and forming a pedagogic community, despite not necessarily providing education of the same type or at the same level.

### **e-learning**

See 'technology enhanced' or 'enabled learning'.

### **embedded college**

A private organisation, usually part of a network, operating within or near to the premises of a degree-awarding body, usually engaged in the preparation of students for entry to higher education programmes. QAA operates a review method for embedded colleges that do not operate as part of a network, called 'Educational Oversight: Exceptional Arrangements'.

### **employability**

A set of achievements, skills, understanding and personal attributes that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations.

### **end-point assessment (EPA)**

The name given to a series of assessments that an apprentice must undertake at the end of their apprenticeship, proving their ability to do the job they have been training for.

### **end-point assessment organisation (EPAO)**

An awarding body that is approved by the Education and Skills Funding Agency to deliver end-point assessment (EPA) services for apprenticeships. (See also 'end-point assessment'.)

### **engagement**

Interacting and communicating with a particular group or organisation leading to improved understanding, especially on issues of shared concern.

### **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 review processes.

### **Enhancement Theme**

A specific area or aspect of provision or practice, agreed and planned by the higher education sector in Scotland and managed by QAA, with the aim of enhancing the student learning experience. The Themes encourage academic staff, support staff and students to share good practice (from the UK and internationally) and collectively generate ideas and models for innovation in learning and teaching.

### **Enhancement-led Institutional Review (ELIR)**

The QAA process used in Scotland to review and report on quality and academic standards in higher education institutions. In particular, ELIR explores the ways Scottish institutions seek to improve the learning experiences they provide for students.

### **enrolment**

The formal procedures that a student must complete or pass through during the admissions stage, after being accepted onto a course and before starting it.

### **essay mills**

Online organisations and individuals that contract with students to complete assignments for a fee.

## **European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS)**

A system used across Europe for the transfer and accumulation of academic credit. It is intended to make studies and courses more transparent. It helps students to move between countries and to have their academic qualifications and study periods abroad recognised. (See also 'credit accumulation' and 'transfer schemes'.)

## **European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)**

The expectations developed by the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) for quality assurance in higher education across the European Higher Education Area.

### **evaluation**

The periodic, retrospective assessment of an organisation, an area of work, project or course, that might be conducted internally or by external independent evaluators. Evaluation uses information from monitoring - current and historic - to develop an understanding and inform planning.

### **executive structures**

The infrastructure within an organisation for decisions and action to be taken by a hierarchy of individual officers.

### **Expectations**

Statements in the Quality Code that set out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and each other and what the general public can therefore expect of them. (See also 'Quality Code'.)

### **external advisers**

External advisers are used to provide academic and professional expertise during the development and validation of new courses and at other relevant times. They can be called upon to provide academic, professional and industry/employer/business expertise to inform course design and to contribute to lecturing or teaching at the provider or in a professional setting. For example, workplace supervisors/mentors for education, nursing, apprenticeships, and students on placement.

### **external examiner**

An independent expert appointed by a degree-awarding body to provide impartial and independent advice, as well as informative comment on the degree-awarding body's standards and on student achievement in relation to those standards. External examiners confirm that the provider consistently and fairly implements their own policies and procedures. They also comment on the quality and standards of the courses in relation to national standards and frameworks, the reasonable comparability of standards at other UK providers, good practice, and make recommendations for enhancement.

### **external examining**

The process by which one or more independent experts ('external examiners') comment on student achievement in relation to established academic standards and on the higher education provider's approach to assessment, thus helping to ensure consistent standards and fair assessment procedures across the UK.

### **external review**

A review conducted at a higher education provider by a suitably qualified team of people not normally employed there. (See also 'institution-led review'.)

**externality**

The use of experts from outside a higher education provider, such as external examiners or external advisers, to assist in quality assurance procedures.

**external quality assurer (EQA)**

A body contracted by the Institute for Apprenticeships and Technical Education (IfATE) to ensure that End-point Assessment Organisations (EPAO) for apprenticeships are maintaining the apprenticeship standard.

**F****fitness to practise**

Being suitably qualified and prepared, and demonstrating appropriate skills, conduct, values and attributes, to perform a particular professional role as recognised by the relevant professional body.

**flexible and distributed learning**

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

**flying faculty (or 'fly-in, fly-out faculty')**

An arrangement whereby a programme is delivered in a location away from the main campus (usually overseas) by staff from the degree-awarding body. Support for students may be provided by local staff.

**formative assessment**

Assessment with a developmental purpose, designed to help students learn more effectively by giving them feedback on their performance and how it can be improved and/or maintained. Reflective practice by students sometimes contributes to formative assessment. It does not contribute to the final mark, grade or class of degree awarded to the student. (See also 'summative assessment'.)

**foundation course**

A higher education programme of study designed to prepare students for a further course for which they do not have the usual entry qualifications. Foundation courses sometimes constitute a preparatory 'Year 0' of a degree course. They are not the same as foundation degrees.

**foundation degree**

A course of academic study leading to a higher education qualification, typically vocational and usually completed over two years. It is located at level 5 in The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and at level 5 in the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales.

**Foundation degree awarding powers (FDAP)**

See 'degree awarding powers'.

**framework**

A published formal structure.

## **Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ)**

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 maintains the Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies (Qualifications Frameworks), formerly published separately as The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ), and The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland (FQHEIS).

### **franchising**

A process by which a degree-awarding body agrees to authorise another organisation to deliver (and sometimes assess) part or all of one (or more) of its own approved programmes. Often, the degree-awarding body retains direct responsibility for the programme content, teaching and assessment strategy, assessment regime and quality assurance. Students normally have a direct contractual relationship with the degree-awarding body.

### **full degree awarding powers (DAPs)**

A type of degree awarding power introduced through the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 that can be applied for by higher education providers in England and authorised by the Office for Students. (See also 'degree awarding powers').

### **full-time equivalent**

A measure where each part-time staff member or student is expressed as a fraction (or decimal) of a full-time staff member or student, the total being considered collectively for comparison and funding purposes.

### **further education**

Formal learning that follows compulsory education, such as A-levels, T-levels, NVQs and Access to Higher Education courses. Some form of further education is normally required to qualify for entry to higher education.

### **further education colleges**

Colleges including sixth-form colleges and specialist colleges that provide further education and training for school leavers and adults (also known as 'further education institutions' in Wales and Northern Ireland). Some such colleges also deliver higher education programmes leading to qualifications from other degree-awarding bodies and/or may have powers to award foundation degrees themselves.

## **G**

### **Gateway Quality Review Wales**

A QAA process used to review and report on higher education providers in Wales against the baseline quality regulatory requirements.

### **good academic practice**

Working with integrity, avoiding plagiarism and other forms of cheating.

**good practice**

A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to academic standards and quality and is worthy of being emulated and disseminated more widely.

**governing body**

The formal, controlling body that has responsibility for the management of a provider, often referred to as the board of governors/trustees.

**grade descriptors**

Statements that define a level of achievement within a certain band of marks.

**graduate**

A person who has attained a bachelor's or higher degree.

**graduate attributes**

Skills and qualities which higher education providers have identified that their graduates will have developed during their studies and through participation in student life. Listed attributes might include descriptions such as critical and reflective thinker, effective communicator, resilient and self-reliant.

**graduate certificate**

A higher education qualification at level 6 in The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, at level 6 in the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, and at levels 9-10 in the Scottish credit and qualifications framework (9 for ordinary, 10 with honours).

**graduate destinations**

The employment, continuing education or other occupations that graduates are pursuing after a certain time interval following the successful completion of their studies. Data is collected through the Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education Survey.

**graduate diploma**

A higher education qualification at level 6 in The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and at levels 9-10 in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (9 for ordinary, 10 with honours).

**graduation**

The process of formally receiving a degree at a ceremony, not necessarily in person.

**H****Higher and degree apprenticeships**

Higher apprenticeships are apprenticeships at levels 4-7 that do not include a mandatory degree qualification but may or may not include another qualification. Degree apprenticeships are apprenticeships at levels 6 or 7 that must include a bachelor's with honours or master's degree as a mandatory qualification.

## **higher education**

Education that comes after secondary and further education, leading to a qualification or credit awarded by a degree-awarding body. Typically, it involves working towards a degree, but some programmes may lead to a diploma, certificate or other award or qualification on the national Qualifications Frameworks.

## **higher education institution**

Universities, colleges or other organisations that primarily deliver programmes of higher education. (See also 'higher education providers'.)

## **higher education provider**

An institution 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, or, in England, granted by the OfS on advice from the QAA under section 42 of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017.

## **Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers)**

A QAA process used to review and report on alternative providers that are not eligible to be on the Office for Students (OfS) register and require educational oversight for Tier 4 Sponsorship purposes and/or specific course designation.

## **Higher Education Review (Foreign Providers)**

A QAA process used to review and report on recognised overseas providers offering full courses in the UK and require educational oversight for Tier 4 Sponsorship purposes.

## **honorary degree**

An award that is not an academic qualification but which is used by a degree-awarding body to recognise the achievements or status of a particular individual. The term should not be confused with 'honours degree'. (See also 'bachelor's degree').

## **honours degree**

The type of bachelor's degree that is generally awarded in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and is also awarded in Scotland as distinct from ordinary bachelor's degrees. An honours degree requires more extensive study and achievement than an ordinary degree.

## **I-K**

### **in the public domain**

Referring to information, placed where it is readily available to everyone.

### **inclusive admissions**

An admissions system which seeks to minimise any unnecessary barriers in the process which may prevent some groups of applicants from making a successful application.

### **indicative information**

Information that provides an overview or outline of a topic but makes no claim to be fully comprehensive.



**institution**

See 'higher education institution'.

**Institutional Facilitator**

(In a QAA review) The role undertaken by a member of the provider who is responsible for coordinating the provider's engagement with the review.

**intercalated degree**

An optional, additional undergraduate degree (BSc or BA) or master's level programme taken to study a particular area or specialism further. Typically, a student on a traditionally non-credit rated course - for example, medicine or dentistry - completes the third or fourth year of a credit-rated undergraduate course and receives an intercalated BSc or MSc award. Programmes allow for RPL for the first two years (i.e. 240 academic credit points) and the intercalated year does not count towards the academic credit requirement.

**international benchmarking**

The activity of identifying, considering, comparing and learning from developing practice internationally and aiming to share and learn from it in a series of themes relevant to higher education in Scotland.

**International Programme Accreditation**

International Programme Accreditation offers institutions outside the UK the opportunity for their programmes of study to be accredited by independent peer review by QAA against the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

**International Quality Review (IQR)**

International Quality Review offers institutions outside the UK the opportunity to undertake an independent peer review by QAA against the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).

**joint award**

An arrangement under which two or more degree-awarding bodies together provide a programme leading to a single award made jointly by both, or all, participants. A single certificate or document (signed by the competent authorities) attests to successful completion of this jointly delivered programme, replacing the separate institutional or national qualifications.

**judgements**

In QAA review, the formal specified outcomes reached by a team of reviewers. The nature of the judgements depends on the review method.

**knowledge transfer (or knowledge exchange)**

Applying the results or outcomes of higher education research activities to benefit wider society and the economy. This could be through the development of commercial applications or by contributing to the effectiveness of public services, for example. These activities may be undertaken through 'knowledge transfer partnerships' (KTPs).

## **L**

### **lead apprenticeship representative (LAR)**

A role specified in some QAA reviews which allows an apprentice at the provider under review to engage in the review process on behalf of the student body.

### **lead student representative (LSR)**

A role specified in some QAA reviews which allows a student at the provider under review to engage in the review process on behalf of the student body.

### **learning opportunities**

The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, 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.

### **level (qualification level)**

See 'qualification level' and 'credit level'.

### **level descriptor**

See 'credit level descriptor'.

### **limited confidence judgement**

See 'confidence judgement'.

### **listed bodies**

UK organisations that do not have the power to award their own degrees but provide full courses leading to a degree of a recognised body.

## **M-O**

### **management information**

Information collected for purposes of monitoring and reviewing academic standards and quality, which is used to inform management decision-making.

### **marking scheme**

A detailed framework for assigning marks, where a specific number of marks is given to individual components of the answer.

### **master of arts/master of science**

See 'master's degree'.

### **Massive Open Online Course (MOOC)**

A free, open, online course designed in part to introduce higher education to learners.

**master's degree**

A higher education qualification, typically lasting at least one year, characterised by a greater depth of study and specialisation than a bachelor's programme. It is located at level 7 in The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, at level 7 in the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, and at level 11 in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. Examples include Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MSc) and Master of Philosophy (MPhil) degrees.

**micro-credentials**

Credit-bearing courses or modules designed to be self-standing and not studied as a component part of a larger award. Micro-credentials are awarded by a body with the powers to award academic credit, are subject to proportionate quality assurance mechanisms, and are mapped against the levels of the Qualifications Frameworks.

**moderation**

A process intended to assure that an assessment outcome is fair and reliable and that assessment criteria have been applied consistently. (See also 'double marking'.)

**modes of study**

Different ways of studying, such as full-time, part-time, e-learning or work-based learning.

**modular**

Made up of modules.

**module**

A self-contained, formally structured unit of study, with a coherent and explicit set of learning outcomes and assessment criteria. Some institutions use the word 'course' to refer to individual modules.

**monitoring**

The routine collection and analysis of information that focuses on an area of work, project or programme/course, undertaken while the area of work, project or programme/course is ongoing.

**multiple awards**

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

**New DAPs**

A type of degree awarding power introduced through the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 that can be applied for by higher education providers in England and authorised by the Office for Students. (See also 'degree awarding powers'.)

**no confidence judgement**

See 'confidence judgement'.

### **no detriment**

A policy that seeks to mitigate against the impact of a set of circumstances, by ensuring that an individual is not unfairly disadvantaged by a requirement to change rules or regulations, in session. Most commonly this translates into calculating and evaluating:

- the outcome as it would have been if the changes had not been implemented
- the outcome after implementation of the changes.

Also referred to as 'safety net' policies, temporary no detriment policies were a common response among providers to the COVID-19 disruptions.

### **notional learning hours**

The number of hours that a learner (at a particular level) is expected to spend, on average, to achieve the specified learning outcomes at that level. This may include time spent in class, directed learning, independent study and assessment. One credit is typically described as being equal to 10 hours of notional learning.

### **Office for Students (OfS)**

The independent regulator for higher education in England established by the Higher Education and Research Act 2017.

### **OfS Regulatory Framework**

The OfS Regulatory Framework states how the Office for Students intends to perform its various functions, and provides guidance for registered higher education providers on the ongoing conditions of registration.

### **online visit**

(In a QAA review) Where a review visit to a higher education provider is conducted online with all engagements being conducted by the team of reviewers through online meetings, video links and/or video tours.

### **on-site visit**

(In a QAA review) Where a review visit to a higher education provider is conducted by the team of reviewers being physically present at one or more of the provider's premises.

### **operational definition**

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

### **operational description**

A detailed explanation of how a review method works.

### **ordinary degree**

A bachelor's degree located at level 6 of The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and level 9 of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework, which typically requires a student to achieve the learning outcomes of a smaller volume of study than that expected for a bachelor's degree with honours.

### **outcomes**

See 'learning outcomes'.

## **P**

### **partner organisation**

A degree-awarding body working with another body to offer higher education, under a formal partnership agreement. Degree-awarding bodies can also work with each other in order to offer dual or joint awards, where both are exercising their degree awarding powers.

### **partnership arrangement**

Arrangements whereby students who have successfully completed a programme at one organisation may be considered on an individual basis for progression either to the beginning or to a more advanced stage of a programme of the degree-awarding body. (See also 'articulation arrangement'.)

### **pastoral support**

Help or guidance, usually given on a one-to-one basis, that relates not to academic matters but to the personal and emotional issues that may arise during a student's higher education experience. (See also 'learning support'.)

### **peer review**

A process of review conducted by people with current or very recent experience of the activity being reviewed (in this case, providing or assessing higher education).

### **periodic review**

An internal review of one or more programmes of study, undertaken by institutions periodically (typically once every five years), using nationally agreed reference points, to confirm that the programmes are of an appropriate academic standard and quality. The process typically involves experts from other higher education providers.

### **personal development planning**

A structured and supported process undertaken by a learner to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement, and to plan for their personal, educational and career development.

### **placement**

A planned period of experience outside the institution (for example, in a workplace) to help students develop particular skills, knowledge or understanding as part of their programme.

### **postgraduate certificate**

A higher education qualification at level 7 in The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, at level 7 in the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, and at level 11 in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

### **postgraduate diploma**

A higher education qualification at level 7 in The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, at level 7 in the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, and at level 11 in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. See also 'framework for higher education qualifications' and 'credit and qualifications framework'.

**postgraduate student**

A student who has attained a bachelor's degree or equivalent and is now studying for a qualification at a higher level.

**Primary Medical Qualification (PMQ)**

A first medical degree awarded by a body or combination of bodies that is recognised by the General Medical Council for this purpose, or that was empowered to issue PMQs at the time the degree was awarded.

**prior learning**

See 'accreditation of prior learning' and 'recognition of prior learning'.

**private provider**

An independent college that offers UK higher education but is not in receipt of public funding from the higher education funding councils and may be operating for profit or have charitable status. (See also 'alternative provider'.)

**Privy Council**

The government body which formally advises the monarch on specified matters, including decisions about which institutions shall be awarded the title and status of university, and/or be allowed to award degrees.

**professional body**

An organisation that oversees the activities of a particular profession and represents the interests of its members.

**professional doctorate programmes**

Programmes leading to a doctorate in a particular professional context, which typically include some taught elements in addition to the research dissertation. Credit practice varies but typically professional doctorates include a minimum of three calendar years' postgraduate study with level 7 study representing less than one third of this.

**professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs)**

Organisations that set the standards for, and regulate entry into, particular professions and are authorised to accredit, approve or recognise specific programmes leading to the relevant professional qualifications - for which they may have a statutory or regulatory responsibility.

**programme (of study)**

An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification. UK higher education programmes must be approved and validated by UK degree-awarding bodies.

**programme approval**

A formal process through which a degree-awarding body decides that a programme of study (content, teaching/learning and assessment) is of appropriate standard and quality to lead to one of its qualifications. This applies both to programmes delivered directly by the degree-awarding body and to programmes delivered at delivery organisations.

**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.

**programme validation**

See 'programme approval'.

**progression**

The formal journey that students take through a course, or from one course to another, requiring study at a particular level as well as achieving a minimum number of credits in order to move to the next stage.

**progression arrangements**

Arrangements whereby students who have successfully completed a programme at one organisation may be considered on an individual basis for progression either to the beginning or to a more advanced stage of a programme of the degree-awarding body. (See also 'articulation arrangement'.)

**prospective students**

Individuals who are applying or considering applying for any course, at any level and employing any mode of study, with a higher education provider.

**protected characteristics**

Certain characteristics - age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy and maternity, race (ethnic origin or national identity), religion or belief (including lack of belief), sex, and sexual orientation - which, in the context of the Quality Code, may require particular consideration in ensuring equal access to educational opportunities for all.

**provider**

Any organisation involved in the provision of higher education to students and apprentices. (See also 'higher education provider' and 'private provider'.)

**provision**

In the context of higher education, making courses available to students and supplying them with learning opportunities accordingly.

**public**

Anyone who may obtain, or want access to, information about higher education provision.

**public domain**

Any location where members of the public can expect to find unrestricted access to information. (See also 'in the public domain'.)

**public information**

Information that is freely available to the public, sometimes referred to as being in the public domain.

**publish**

To place information in the public domain, issuing it either as traditional printed matter or electronically - for example, on a website.

## **Q**

### **qualification**

A formally recognised academic award, such as a degree, diploma or certificate, granted on successful completion of a programme of study.

### **qualification descriptors**

Generic statements about the main qualifications at each level of a qualifications framework (for example, bachelor's degree with honours, master's degree), specifying what students should know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate on being awarded that qualification, and exemplifying its characteristics.

### **qualification level**

One of a series of defined points in a qualifications framework that are numbered in ascending order. Qualifications within the same level share characteristics and require similar achievement. Qualification levels in different frameworks can be compared. Qualification levels are distinct from credit levels.

### **qualifications framework**

A formal structure identifying qualification levels in ascending order and stating the requirements for qualifications to be awarded at each one. In UK higher education 'the Qualifications Frameworks' refers specifically to the Frameworks for Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies, which form part of the Quality Code. (See 'academic quality'.)

### **Quality and Standards Review**

A QAA process used to review and report on the quality and standards of higher education providers in England that are registered, or applying to register, with the Office for Students.

### **quality assurance**

The systematic monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching, and the processes that support them, to make sure that the standards of academic awards meet the Expectations set out in the Quality Code, and that the quality of the student learning experience is being safeguarded and improved.

### **Quality Code**

A key reference point for UK higher education, protecting the public and student interest, and championing UK higher education's world-leading reputation for quality. It enables providers to understand what is expected of them and what to expect from each other. It has been developed by QAA on behalf of the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment, in consultation with the higher education sector.

### **Quality Enhancement Framework**

A formal structure for enhancing the quality of higher education in Scotland, jointly developed and maintained by a partnership between the Scottish Funding Council, Universities Scotland, QAA Scotland, the National Union of Students (Scotland) and the Higher Education Academy. The Framework comprises five main elements: institution-led reviews, Enhancement-led Institutional Review, public information, student engagement and a programme of Enhancement Themes.

### **Quality Enhancement Standard Review**

Part one of a two phase approach to quality and enhancement in Scotland 2022-24.



## **Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK TNE**

The QE-TNE Scheme applies to all UK degree-awarding bodies on a voluntary basis and operates over the academic years 2021-22 to 2025-26. It is enhancement-led, informed by robust metrics, and has the student experience at its heart.

## **Quality Enhancement Review Wales**

A QAA process to review and report on the quality and standards of Welsh higher education providers, as part of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales.

## **R**

### **recognised bodies**

Institutions that are recognised by the UK government as being entitled to award degrees and other higher education qualifications. (See also 'degree awarding bodies'.)

### **Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight (RSEO)**

A QAA review process for providers that offer short-term study abroad programmes. RSEO covers 'third-party' providers of short-term study abroad programmes in the UK, which form part of degree courses offered by overseas providers in their home country (study abroad providers).

### **recognition of prior learning (RPL)**

The identification, assessment and formal acknowledgement of prior learning and achievement, which can also be referred to as accreditation of prior learning (APL). This may either be certificated learning (RPCL/APCL) or prior experiential learning (RPEL/APEL), where learning achieved outside education or training systems is assessed and recognised for academic purposes. These terms may be used differently in specific regulated disciplines, such as nursing and other healthcare professions.

### **record of study**

A detailed record of a student's studies, provided to them when they complete (or leave) a programme, which provides evidence of their achievement including credit awarded and modules successfully completed. (See also 'Transcript'.)

### **recruitment**

The broad range of activities and initiatives undertaken by providers or their representatives prior to the point of admission. This includes outreach, events and various marketing activities which ultimately encourage prospective students to either apply to, or start a course with, that provider. Within the Quality Code, recruitment specifically refers to the process by which providers share information and advice with prospective students.

### **reference points**

Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

### **Reflective analysis**

See 'self-evaluation document'.

### **registration**

The process through which a higher education provider in England is accepted onto the OfS Register. (For 'registration' in reference to students, see 'enrolment'.)

**regulatory body**

An organisation recognised by government as being responsible for the regulation or approval of a particular range of issues. (See also 'statutory body'.)

**representations**

(In QAA review) A formal request for a review of a decision arising from a QAA review method. (See also 'appeal'.)

**research clusters**

Communities of academic researchers grouped together to facilitate the sharing of resources and ideas. The arrangements may operate within a single higher education provider or may bring together researchers from a number of providers in geographical proximity.

**research councils**

The seven organisations funded by government to support research in different disciplines and to fund studentships for successful applicants wishing to undertake formal academic research.

**research degree**

A higher education qualification at level 7 or 8 in The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, at level 7 or 8 in the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, and at level 11 or 12 in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

**research degree awarding powers**

See 'degree awarding powers'.

**review**

(In QAA review) A thorough evaluation by suitably qualified experts of a higher education provider, typically focusing on the academic standards and quality of its higher education provision. (See also 'periodic review', 'institution-led review' and 'external review'.)

**review report**

A document reporting in detail on a review.

**reviewer**

An individual employed by QAA to be part of the team that reviews a higher education provider. They will be a professional with current or recent experience in the higher education sector, or a current or recent student (having completed a course within the last two years). Such individuals may also be referred to as 'assessors' in some QAA review methods.

**Royal Charter**

A grant by the monarch, on the advice of the Privy Council, by which most older universities (established before 1992) attained their university status, which sets out the constitution and statutes - the general regulations under which the university should operate.

## **S**

### **safeguarding**

The processes that higher education providers implement and adhere to which ensure that their students are able to study and participate in student life in a safe and supportive environment.

### **sandwich course**

A programme of study that includes a significant time - normally a year - spent studying away from the university or college (typically in a work-based setting).

### **second marking**

A second stage of marking, which may be for checking, sampling or moderation purposes. (See also 'double marking'.)

### **self-assessment document (SAD)/self-evaluation document (SED)**

A report submitted by a higher education provider, assessing its own performance, used as evidence in a QAA review. This is referred to in some QAA methods as a 'reflective analysis'.

### **semester**

Either of the parts of an academic year that is divided into two for purposes of teaching and assessment (in contrast to division into terms).

### **serial arrangement**

The situation arising when a delivery organisation that is responsible for programmes franchised to it (or validated) by a degree-awarding body enters into a separate arrangement with a third party to deliver those entire programmes.

### **shell module/qualification**

Pre-validated template modules that enable workplace learning to be built into a learner's studies

### **standard**

See 'academic standards'.

### **statutory body**

An organisation set up through Act of Parliament that has a legal requirement to oversee a particular profession (for example, the General Medical Council). (See also 'regulatory body'.)

### **student**

All individuals studying a higher education course regardless of demographic, mode or level of study, subject area or geographic location. This includes current students on a course of study, recent former students and graduates (as defined by the provider's regulations), and people applying for a place at a higher education provider, as well as those students who are also 'apprentices'.

### **student engagement**

The meaningful participation of students, both individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience. Student engagement results in the improvement of their educational experience as well as benefiting the wider student body, institution and sector.

**student experience**

A term that encompasses students' experiences of their course or programme and of the resources, support, facilities and opportunities that a provider makes available to support their learning.

**student submission**

(In a QAA review) A report submitted by students at a provider to be used as evidence in a QAA review.

**Subject Benchmark Statement**

Facilitated by QAA, Subject Benchmark Statements set out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in a range of subject areas, and explain what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity. They are written by subject experts drawn from higher education and industry and used as reference points in the design, delivery and review of academic programmes.

**submission**

(In a QAA review) The initial documentation submitted by a provider to be used as evidence in a QAA review.

**summative assessment**

Formal assessment of students' work, used to indicate the extent of a learner's success in meeting the assessment criteria to gauge the intended learning outcomes of a module or course. Typically, within summative assessment, the marks awarded count towards the final mark of the course/module/award. (See also 'formative assessment'.)

**support provider**

An organisation, other than the degree-awarding body, that supplies resources or facilities to support student learning. This may be a higher education provider without degree awarding powers, a degree-awarding body other than that granting the award (for example in the context of some federal structures), an employer or another organisation approved by the degree-awarding body.

**synoptic assessment**

Assessment through a task that requires students to draw on different elements of their learning and show their accumulated knowledge and breadth and depth of understanding, as well as the ability to integrate and apply their learning.

**T****taught degree awarding powers**

See 'degree awarding powers'.

**teach out**

A term used when a provider continues to teach existing students until the completion of their studies when the programme or course on which they are studying is being discontinued.

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

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

**term**

Any of the parts of an academic year that is divided into three or more for purposes of teaching and assessment (in contrast to division into semesters).

**theme**

In the context of a QAA review, a topic selected for particular attention for quality purposes. See also 'Enhancement Theme'.

**threshold academic standard**

The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national Qualifications Frameworks. Providers may also refer to national reference points such as Subject Benchmark Statements.

**Tier 4**

The part of the UK government's points-based immigration system that is concerned with individuals who want to come to the UK to undertake a course of study at an educational establishment. Higher education institutions permitted to recruit international students are known as highly trusted sponsors. To achieve this status, higher education providers must be on the OfS Register. QAA is the educational oversight body only for those providers not eligible to register with the OfS.

**Tier 4 sponsor**

An organisation that the UK government trusts to admit migrant students from overseas, according to Tier 4 of UK Visas and Immigration's points-based immigration system. Higher education providers wishing to obtain this status must be on the OfS Register. QAA is the educational oversight body only for those providers not eligible to register with the OfS.

**trailblazers**

A group of employers who work together to develop standards for apprenticeships.

**transcript**

An academic record of a learner's name, the institution they studied at, and a list of all courses taken, grades received in each unit or module and the degree conferred, as well as the classification, provided by the awarding body. The 'diploma supplement' is similar to a transcript but carries more information to make it compliant with the European Higher Education Area. The Higher Education Achievement Record (HEAR) is a formal degree transcript that provides a full record of achievements, including both academic and extra-curricular learning and experience.

**transferable skills**

Core skills and attributes developed from a range of experiences including education, the workplace, leisure activities, and personal and social situations, which can be applied to different settings. Descriptions of transferable skills that can be applied in a range of jobs and careers might include words such as teamwork, problem identification and problem solving, and leadership.

**transnational education (TNE)**

Higher education learning opportunities that are provided outside the UK but lead to an award of a UK degree-awarding body.

## **U-Z**

### **UK Quality Code for Higher Education**

See 'Quality Code'.

#### **undergraduate certificate**

A higher education qualification at level 4 in The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, at level 4 in the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, and at level 7 in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework.

#### **undergraduate degree**

See 'bachelor's degree'.

#### **undergraduate diploma**

A higher education qualification at level 5 in The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, at level 5 in the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales, and at level 8 in the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework. (See also 'framework for higher education qualifications' and 'credit and qualifications framework'.)

#### **undergraduate student**

A student who has not yet gained a first degree.

#### **unit**

See 'module'.

### **UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA)**

This Committee provides sector-led oversight of higher education quality assessment arrangements that continue to be shared across the UK. QAA, on behalf of the UKSCQA, works with the higher education sector to develop and maintain a full set of advice and guidance designed to support providers in developing and maintaining effective quality assurance practices.

#### **university**

Independent, self-governing organisations that undertake research and teaching and are diverse in size, mission, history, and the range of subjects on offer. The first universities arose from colleges or institutions founded by groups of scholars, often with monastic connections and/or noble or royal patrons. Subsequently, universities have been established by a Royal Charter, Act of Parliament, Papal Bull or by Order of the Privy Council enabling them to develop their own programmes of study and award their own degrees. See also 'degree-awarding powers'.

#### **university college**

A college attached to, or affiliated with, a university that lacks the right to award its own degrees or in some instances a university in its own right with degree awarding powers.

#### **university title**

The entitlement of an institution to call itself a university. To do this it must meet certain criteria, including holding degree awarding powers.

**validation**

A process where a module or programme is approved by a degree-awarding body in order to contribute, or lead, to one of its awards. The validated course is delivered by the provider that designed it and students on the course normally have a direct contractual relationship with that provider and not the validating provider. The validating provider remains responsible for the academic standards of the award granted in its name. (See also 'franchising'.)

**virtual learning environment (VLE)**

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

**widening access**

The process by which providers vary their admission or selection processes according to local or national policy guidelines and expectations.

**widening participation**

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

**work-based learning or workplace learning**

Learning that takes place, in part or as a whole, in the context of employment. (See also 'placement'.)

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