



## Glossary

### QAA terms explained

#### 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 Infrastructure**

The core guidance developed and maintained by QAA in partnership with the UK higher education community and used by QAA and higher education providers until 2011-12 for quality assurance of UK higher education. It has since been replaced by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code).

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

## **Access to Higher Education Diploma**

The qualification designed to enable adults in England, Wales and Northern Ireland with broken education histories, 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 process of applying for, and gaining entry to, a course (programme of study). Higher education providers have their own processes in place governing decisions about selection and entry.

**alternative providers**

Independent colleges and universities that offer UK higher education, which may be operating for profit or have charitable status, that do not receive direct recurrent grant funding from one of the higher education funding councils. (Alternative providers may be eligible to apply to have specific courses designated by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills for student support purposes.)

**annual monitoring**

Checking a process or activity every year to see if it meets expectations for standards and quality.

**anonymous marking**

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

**approval**

See 'programme approval'.

**articulation arrangement**

A process whereby all students who satisfy academic criteria on one programme are automatically entitled (on academic grounds) to be admitted with advanced standing to a subsequent part or year of a programme of a degree-awarding body. Arrangements, which are subject to formal agreements between the parties, normally involve credit accumulation and transfer schemes.

**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, the pass mark, the 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).

**audit**

See 'Institutional audit', 'Audit of collaborative provision'.

**audit of collaborative provision**

A process used until 2011 by QAA to assess the academic standards and quality of higher education delivered through a collaborative arrangement between a degree-awarding body in England or Northern Ireland and a partner organisation in the UK or elsewhere (see 'collaborative arrangements'). This process was only used in situations where the collaborative arrangements were too complex to be reviewed by a normal or slightly modified Institutional audit.

**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 the 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.

### **benchmark statement**

See 'subject benchmark statement'.

### **blended learning**

Learning delivered by a number of 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 and is typically smaller.

## **C**

### **career education**

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

### **certificate of higher education**

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

### **Charter**

See 'Royal Charter'.

### **Code of Practice**

The Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education published by QAA: a set of interrelated documents giving guidance for higher education providers, which formed the core element of the Academic Infrastructure (now superseded by the Quality Code).

### **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 that the Expectations of the Quality Code are met.

### **collaborative partner**

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

### **Collaborative Provision Audit**

See 'Audit of Collaborative Provision'.

**concern**

An issue potentially posing a risk to the standards and quality of higher education, requiring evidence-based investigation.

**confidence judgement**

A judgement by a QAA review team that 'confidence can reasonably be placed in the soundness of an institution's current and likely future management of the academic standards of its awards and/or of the quality of the learning opportunities available to students' (two separate judgements for standards and learning opportunities). Alternatively, the team might express limited confidence or no confidence in these issues.

**conservatoire**

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

**continuing professional development (CPD)**

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

**course**

See 'programme' and 'module'.

**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 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 '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 specified credit level, indicating the amount and difficulty of the learning achieved, based on notional hours of learning.

**credit(s)**

A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education programmes of study, expressed as numbers of credits at a specific level. See also 'credit level', 'credit value', 'credit accumulation' and 'transfer schemes'.

**current**

(Referring to information) Up to date.

**current students**

Students enrolled on, and participating in, a programme of study who have not yet completed their studies or been awarded their qualification.

## **D**

### **degree**

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 'foundation degree', 'bachelor's degree', 'master's degree', 'doctoral degree'.

### **degree awarding powers**

The right to confer degrees, which is granted by statute, by Royal Charter or by the Privy Council following a recommendation from QAA. Institutions may apply for the right to award foundation degrees, taught degrees and research degrees, and there is a separate application process for each. See also 'degree-awarding body' and 'university title'.

### **degree-awarding body**

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

### **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.

## **Developmental Engagement**

(DE) A method of review used by QAA to explore and comment on the provision of higher education courses by working closely with staff from the university or college concerned, and focusing on a theme or subject. This method is designed to help higher education providers enhance their management of higher education. It forms the first stage of Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (see also "Summative Review").

## **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, CD-ROM and video, or traditional methods of correspondence - learning 'at a distance'. See also 'blended learning'.

## **doctor of philosophy**

(PhD or DPhil) See 'doctoral degree'.

## **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 at 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 leading to them. 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**

Scrutiny of educational provision by an independent organisation, particularly referring to QAA's scrutiny of colleges wishing to obtain highly trusted sponsor status as defined by UK Visas and Immigration. See also 'Tier 4'.

### **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.

### **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.

### **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 our 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**

The method used by QAA in Scotland to report on quality and academic standards in higher education institutions, and which has much in common with QAA's other review methods. 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.

## **European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System**

(ECTS) A system used across Europe for the transfer and accumulation of academic credit (see '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.

## **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.

**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.

**external examining**

The process by which one or more independent experts (external examiners) comment(s) 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 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, to assist in quality assurance procedures.

## **E**

### **fair**

(Referring to information) Giving a true impression.

### **fit for purpose**

(Referring to information) Appropriate in terms of what the provider wants to communicate and the information needs of the intended audience.

### **fit to practise**

See 'fitness to practise'.

### **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**

Feedback on students' performance, designed to help them learn more effectively and find ways to maintain and improve their progress. 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 in nature and usually completed over a period of 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**

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, the teaching and assessment strategy, the assessment regime and the quality assurance. Students normally have a direct contractual relationship with the degree-awarding body.

**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, 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.

## **G**

### **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.

### **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 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 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 *Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies* (Qualifications Frameworks).

### **higher education institutions**

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

### **higher education providers**

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 one or more degree-awarding bodies.

### **Higher Education Review**

The method used by QAA to review providers of higher education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland against the Expectations of the Quality Code.

### **highly trusted sponsor**

See 'Tier 4'.

### **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 '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.

### **indicative information**

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

### **Indicator**

A statement in the Quality Code that reflects sound practice and through which providers can demonstrate that they are meeting the relevant Expectation.

### **institution**

See 'higher education institution'.

### **Institutional Audit**

(IA) The process used by QAA until 2011 to report on how, and how well, higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland safeguarded quality and standards.

### **Institutional Review**

(IR) A method of review used by QAA to assure the standards and quality of higher education. Institutional Review (Wales) is the quality assurance process applicable to Welsh institutions. Institutional Review (England and Northern Ireland), or IRENI, is the review process used from 2011 to 2013 to review higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland.

### **institution-led review**

In Scotland, one of a series of reviews carried out by the higher education institutions, following guidance from the Scottish Funding Council (SFC) and covering all subject areas, over a maximum of a six-year period. The precise review method used is determined by the individual institutions but certain agreed features are shared across the sector (and are set out in the SFC guidance). These include the use of agreed external reference points, the involvement of students, and the use of review panel members from an institution other than the one being reviewed.

### **Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review**

(IQR) The method used by QAA until 2011-12 to review higher education provision within further education colleges in England (still used in Northern Ireland).

### **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.

### **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.

### **knowledge transfer (or knowledge exchange)**

Applying the results or outcomes of higher education research activities so as 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**

### **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 which 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'.

### **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, 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 the Master of Arts (MA), Master of Science (MSc) and Master of Philosophy (MPhil) degrees.

### **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.

**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.

**no confidence judgement**

See 'confidence judgement'.

**notional hours of learning**

The number of hours that (it is expected) a learner at a particular level will spend, on average, to achieve the specified learning outcomes at that level.

**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'. See also our publications on outcomes from our reviews.

## **P**

### **partner organisation**

A degree-awarding body working with another degree-awarding body where both are exercising their degree awarding powers to offer dual or joint awards.

### **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 to 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', '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 most august 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, statutory and regulatory bodies**

(PSRBs) Organisations that set the standards for, and regulate entry into, particular profession(s) and are authorised to accredit, approve or recognise specific programmes leading to the relevant professional qualification(s) - 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**

Formal progress through an academic programme, meeting key academic requirements.

### **progression arrangements**

Arrangements whereby students who have completed a programme at one organisation successfully 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'.

### **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**

See 'higher education provider', '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, Part A.

### **quality**

See 'academic quality'.

### **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**

Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, the UK-wide set of reference points for higher education providers which states the Expectations that all providers are required to meet. It was developed with the higher education community and is owned, maintained and published by QAA.

## **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.

## **R**

### **recognised bodies**

Institutions that are recognised by the UK government as being entitled to award degrees and other higher education qualifications.

### **recognition of prior learning**

(RPL) Assessing previous learning that has occurred in any of a range of contexts including school, college and university, and/or through life and work experiences. Once recognised through this process, prior learning can be used to gain credit or exemption for qualifications and/or personal and career development. This term is used mainly in relation to the Scottish higher education system, with the term accreditation of prior learning normally being used in the rest of the UK.

### **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.

### **reference points**

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

### **registration**

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'.

### **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**

A thorough evaluation by suitably qualified experts. See 'Higher Education Review', 'Enhancement-led Institutional Review', 'periodic review', 'institution-led review', 'external review'.

## **Review for College Higher Education**

(RCHE) The review method used by QAA to check that higher education provided by colleges of further education meets the UK expectations set out in the Quality Code.

## **Review for Educational Oversight**

(REO) A review conducted by QAA for purposes of educational oversight as required by the UK government, which is concerned with taught higher education programmes of study at levels 4-7 in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and at levels 7-11 in Scotland.

## **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; he/she 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).

## **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**

### **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**

As the name implies, a second stage of marking, which may be for checking, sampling or moderation purposes. See also 'double marking'.

### **self-evaluation document**

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

### **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.

### **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 engagement**

Communicating with students and involving them in how the standards and quality of their higher education are set and maintained.

**student submission**

A report submitted by students at a provider of UK higher education to be used as evidence in a QAA review.

**subject benchmark statement**

A published statement (part of the Quality Code, Part A) that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas, and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity. The statements are consistent with the relevant generic qualification descriptors.

**summative assessment**

Formal assessment of students' work, contributing to the final result. See also 'formative assessment'.

**Summative Review**

A review by QAA of higher education provision delivered within a further education college, with published findings. It normally follows on from an earlier investigation stage known as Developmental Engagement.

**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.

## **I**

### **taught degree awarding powers**

See 'degree awarding powers'.

### **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 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. (See General Introduction to the Quality Code.) Threshold academic standards are set out in the national qualifications frameworks and 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 such migrants are known as highly trusted sponsors. To achieve this status they must successfully undergo a QAA Review for Educational Oversight.

### **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 undergo review by QAA.

**transcript**

A document, but not a formal certificate, that certifies the results achieved in a final examination (usually broken down at least to module/unit level).

**transferable skills**

Skills learned within a particular context that can be applied usefully in another context.

**transnational education**

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

**transparent**

Presented in a way that is open, straightforward, and enlightening.

**trustworthy information**

Information for which the provider has good grounds for claiming that it is dependable and truthful and that confidence can be placed in it.

## **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 qualification's and 'credit and qualifications framework'.

### **undergraduate student**

A student who has not yet gained a first degree.

### **unit**

See 'module'.

### **universities**

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.

**university title**

The entitlement of an institution to call itself a university.

**validation**

A term used by some degree-awarding bodies to mean programme approval.

**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 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'.