Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (University of Strathclyde International Study Centre)

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

November 2014

Key findings

The QAA review team (the team) formed the following judgements about Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (University of Strathclyde International Study Centre).

- There can be **confidence** that academic standards at the embedded college are managed appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (and of the University where appropriate).
- There can be **confidence** that the quality of learning opportunities at the embedded college is assured and enhanced appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (and of the University where appropriate).
- **Reliance can** be placed on the information that the embedded college produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Good practice

The review team noted the following features of **good practice** at UoSISC:

- the effective use of shared external examiners for both the University programmes and UoSISC (paragraph 11)
- the comprehensive engagement of students as partners in the quality assurance of their learning opportunities (paragraph 22)
- the quality of academic and pastoral support (paragraph 26).

Recommendations

The review team makes the following recommendations in relation to this College.

The team considers that it is **advisable** for UoSISC to:

- make full and effective use of the Quality Code in the management of academic standards and the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 9).

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

- further develop the approach to learning and teaching so that it sufficiently challenges all learners, taking into account their prior knowledge or skills (paragraph 27)
- maintain the priority being given to the development and implementation of the virtual learning environment to further enhance the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 31).

Introduction and background

University of Strathclyde International Study Centre (UoSISC) was created through a contractual agreement between Bellerbys Educational Services Ltd (BES) and the University of Strathclyde in April 2013, and the first students were recruited in the academic year 2013-14. BES formally approves and is ultimately responsible for academic standards on UoSISC programmes, with the University endorsing the programmes.

UoSISC delivers the following programmes:

- Advanced Foundation Programme in Business Administration
- Business and Social Studies Pre-Master's
- Business and Social Studies Undergraduate Foundation Programme
- Engineering and Sciences Pre-Master's
- Engineering and Sciences Undergraduate Foundation Programme
- English for Pre-Master's.

In 2013-14, UoSISC enrolled 83 students: 36 Pre-Master's and 47 undergraduate-level students. In September 2014, the Centre had enrolled 55 students, with 95 expected in January 2015.

UoSISC submitted a student submission as the result of a focus group undertaken with current students and the review team met students during the review visit.

Detailed findings

How effectively do BES and UoSISC fulfil responsibilities for the management of academic standards at this college?

1   BES approves through a formal process and is ultimately responsible for academic standards on UoSISC programmes, with the University endorsing the programmes. Current programmes at UoSISC were validated by BES in 2013, ready for the first cohort of students in 2013-14. The validation process included external academic advisers, some of which came from another university which also has a Bellerbys ISC. Both staff came from an area of the other university which had no relationship with Bellerbys, so there was no conflict of interest. However, in future, BES intends to recruit external advisers for programme approval and periodic review from universities which have no other relationship with Bellerbys.

2   UoSISC has procedures for periodic review and for annual monitoring of its programme provision laid down in its Centre Handbook. UoSISC is on schedule to report the findings of its annual monitoring to BES in January 2015.

3   BES undertook an exceptional internal review of UoSISC in March 2013. An outcome of this review was the development of an action plan and the identification of a number of activities designed to correct the perceived areas of weakness. UoSISC introduced a revised quality assurance, enhancement and governance committee structure. UoSISC has also enhanced its external examiner arrangements with the formal appointment of existing external examiners and plans to appoint two additional external examiners for 2014-15. It has also introduced a risk-based Centre Review procedure. BES undertook a further extraordinary review of UoSISC in autumn 2014, which included reviewers external to UoSISC and BES.

4   Senior staff acknowledged that, while there had been a process for dealing with the issues which had arisen at UoSISC, there had been a lack of a policy framework with formal reporting lines through the Study Group committee structure. However, there had been BES

oversight with the UoSISC Action Plan led by the head office operations team. This led to the development of a more robust framework and audit trail methodology. External examiner reports for 2013-14 state that academic standards are comparable with those on similar programmes in other institutions.

5   As a result of the internal reviews, BES put in place structures and systems designed to give timely warning of any future problems. At the end of 2014-15 the Head of Quality will report to BES's Academic Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee on the effectiveness of the enhanced structure and Centre Review process. These BES-led initiatives are designed to strengthen the relationship between BES and UoSISC, facilitate timely and clear reporting lines, and give BES robust oversight of quality-related matters at UoSISC. UoSISC's revised arrangements for oversight of academc standards and the quality of learning opportunies appear sound.

How effective is the management of student assessment?

6   The Assessment Regulations provide a comprehensive framework for the management of assessment standards, including arrangements for setting and marking assessments, for external examiners and for module and programme assessment boards. The pass mark is 40 per cent but progression to the University requires a higher grade and the Regulations permit students to resit any assessment once in order to raise their mark to the progression grade. Provision for academic appeals and extenuating circumstances are considered through the Personal Circumstances Board. Guidance on cheating and plagiarism are dealt with by the Academic Impropriety Board. The Regulations are published in full to students as part of the Student Handbook and to staff as part of the Centre Handbook. For English and Skills for University Study (ESUS), which is common to all ISCs, the Assessment Regulations are supplemented by the ESUS framework.

7   Academic module assessments are set by UoSISC staff. All assessments are commented on by the University link tutors and sent to the relevant external examiner for approval prior to them being taken by students. Assessments for ESUS are written by the Heads of English, and managed in UoSISC by the English Language Co-ordinator. Arrangements are in place for internal moderation of assessment standards and for external examiners to comment on academic standards. Although there is no formal statement of policy by UoSISC, students and staff concurred that the normal turn-around time for marking and giving of feedback on coursework assessments was one week. Students indicated they found feedback helpful in enabling them to identify how their work might be improved.

8   Procedures in place for assessment boards are fit for purpose. The Module Assessment Board confirms marking standards and individual marks for each module, while maintaining candidate anonymity. In doing so, it considers reports from the Personal Circumstances Board and the Academic Impropriety Board. Membership includes tutorial staff from UoSISC and University link tutors, and it is chaired by the UoSISC Head of Centre. The Programme Assessment Board (PAB) confirms the overall mark profile for each student and whether they have met the progression requirements. PAB is chaired by a senior member of University staff, and is attended by the external examiners as well as University link tutors and UoSISC staff. BES has undertaken a review of assessment board practices in all ISCs. A new template and guidance for minute taking will be introduced for the December 2014 Boards. After each Board, students receive a record of results and, on completion of their programme, receive a 'Final Record of Results'.

Where appropriate, how effectively are UK external reference points used in the management of academic standards?

9   UoSISC is taking steps to engage with relevant external reference points used in the management of academic standards. The programmes at UoSISC have been approved at the appropriate levels on the Scottish Qualifications Framework (SQF). The programme specifications make reference to Subject Benchmark Statements, and there are brief references to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) in the Centre Handbook. Teaching and support staff see the University and the link tutors as the crucial reference points rather than the Centre Handbook. UoSISC are currently mapping selected sections of the Quality Code against its quality assurance mechanisms in order to increase the level of staff engagement with the Quality Code. It is **advisable** that BES and UoSISC make full and effective use of the Quality Code in the management of academic standards and the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.

How effectively are external examining, moderation, or verification used to assure academic standards?

10   Staff operate the systems relating to marking and moderation of assessment standards conscientiously, and the administrative systems used by UoSISC provide a robust check that these systems are being properly implemented. The Assessment Regulations lay down the procedures to be followed for marking and internal moderation, including sample sizes, protocols and tracking documents, and procedures to be followed where moderation throws up discrepancies with initial marking standards. There are also arrangements for standardisation of marking where several staff mark the same assessment. Staff have a clear understanding of the requirements relating to marking and moderation laid out in the Assessment Regulations. There is provision for the link tutors to have an involvement in moderation of assessment outcomes. In practice this had not been implemented across the board, although one link tutor had been involved in internal moderation in their subject area.

11   UoSISC makes effective use of external examiners. All external examiners at UoSISC are formally approved by the University. At BES level, a database is being prepared for all programmes across the ISC network recording registered externals, and is to be updated annually. Currently, there are two subject externals appointed, with two other externals for Business and Accountancy and Finance scheduled to be appointed, and a recently appointed UoSISC-specific external examiner for English. The subject external examiners at UoSISC are also external examiners for the cognate subject area at the University. This has the potential to provide UoSISC with guidance from external examiners who are conversant with the academic requirements of the degree programmes to which students will progress. The effective use of shared external examiners for both the University and UoSISC is **good practice**.

12   A clear set of responsibilities for external examiners is provided, and they are expected to attend PABs. External examiners receive all coursework and examination assessments for the modules for which they have responsibility, and they are able to sample as they wish within the parameters laid down in the External Examiner Duties statement. External examiners produce annual reports using the University's external examiner report template. Reports are made available to both staff and students via the virtual learning environment (VLE), and to the University. The Head of Centre coordinates a written response to each external examiner report, and actions in response to external examiner comments may be included in the Centre Action Plan, and be discussed at the Staff-Student Liaison Committee (SSLC) and the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group (QAEG). An innovation for 2014-15 is an external examiner chat room facility, which will allow the external examiners to have contact with selected students and thereby gain a better appreciation of the provision.

How effectively is statistical information used to monitor and assure academic standards?

13   UoSISC collects a range of statistical data which is submitted to BES, and facilitates analysis across all ISCs. BES also identifies UoSISC's use of statistical data to monitor and assure academic standards as an area for development. UoSISC is introducing a new web-based system for managing academic data, which is already in use in other ISCs.

14   The UoSISC and the University recognise the value of data relating to students as they progress on their degree programme. This should ensure teaching and learning strategies and entry criteria are appropriate, and the programme of study at UoSISC effectively supports students when they transfer to the University.

There can be **confidence** that the academic standards at UoSISC are managed appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of BES Ltd.

How effectively are responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities fulfilled?

15   Responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities are effectively fulfilled. The formal agreement between UoSISC and the University includes the requirement that both parties agree the content of a Quality Handbook and comply with their obligations as set out in this handbook. To meet this requirement a Centre Handbook has been produced which contains a chapter on quality. The agreement also specifies reasonable access to the University's ICT facilities and access to teaching and laboratory space, including the support of a laboratory technician.

16   Appraisal and staff development policies are in place for both teaching and support staff. Teaching observation is used to identify and spread good practice. Approval and annual review processes report on quality issues and the annual monitoring process offers opportunity to identify good practice. Students are engaged in the quality processes and feedback from students is used to enhance their experience.

17   A number of initiatives have been introduced in order to enhance the quality of the learning experience for students in 2014-15. These are specified in an action plan and include the development of a Teaching and Learning Strategy for UoSISC which will be developed during 2014-15 and implemented in 2015.

How effectively are external reference points used in the management and enhancement of learning opportunities?

18   As with academic standards, UoSISC is taking steps to engage with relevant external reference points used in the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities. UoSISC is currently mapping its quality assurance mechanisms against relevant sections the Quality Code. Link tutors were closely involved in the development of the curricula for the UoSISC programmes in order to ensure articulation into the relevant programmes at university level. Such articulation ensures that UoSISC curricula reflect, where appropriate, the Subject Benchmark Statements and this is noted in programme specifications. The English and Skills for University Study (ESUS) modules have been developed in line with the Common European Framework (CEFR) global descriptors. Assessment tasks in these modules are designed to be in line with CEFR expectations and marking schemes are informed by both IELTS criteria and CEFR descriptors.

How effectively do BES and UoSISC assure themselves that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced?

19   There are effective systems in place for BES and UoSISC to assure themselves that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced. There is a formal induction for new members of staff and for new tutors. This is followed by a goal-setting meeting replacing formal appraisal in the first year. New tutors also have a mentor. An annual appraisal system exists for teaching staff. This includes a formal observation of teaching carried out by the Head of Centre or the Deputy Head of Centre, which is recorded and used both to identify examples of best teaching practice and to determine areas for staff development. The appraisal system was not followed correctly in 2013-14, but it has now been extended to all teaching and administrative staff and is taking place. A peer review process has also been introduced and has already led to the spread of good practice.

How effectively is student feedback used to assure and enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

20   Students are actively and effectively engaged as partners in the quality assurance of their education. Questionnaires are used to seek feedback on the student induction process and are also issued at the end of each module. BES also runs a student satisfaction survey at the end of each programme, the results of which are analysed and recommendations recorded. Personal tutorials also provide a forum for feedback.

21   There is a student representative system in place and representatives are invited to attend the training sessions organised by the Students' Union at the University. There is also a brief description of their duties in the Student Handbook. Student representatives attend the Staff Student Liaison Committee and elect from their number a representative for QAEG. Representatives are given time in tutorials to speak with their classmates about issues that should be taken to the Committee and to report on the discussion.

22   Students are very positive about the range of ways in which they can make their voices heard and see this as one of the major strengths of UoSISC. The comprehensive engagement of students as partners in the quality assurance of their learning opportunities is **good practice**.

How effectively do BES and UoSISC assure themselves that students are supported effectively?

23   Overall, the policies and procedures in place effectively support students to develop their personal, academic and professional potential. Students are issued with the Student Handbook during induction. This document is also available electronically and provides clear information about a range of support and academic issues. It also explains the procedures for complaints and appeals of which students are aware.

24   UoSISC operates a personal tutor system with weekly meetings. Some meetings involve the tutor group as a whole and focus on specific issues such as study skills, using the library or electing class representatives; others offer one-to-one meetings between tutor and student. One-to-one meetings are scheduled at least once per term and students can seek further such meetings should they be necessary. Information about the personal tutorial system is provided in a Tutorial Booklet. Individual tutorial files are held for students enabling any issues to be recorded and tracked.

25   Assessed work is returned, with feedback, within seven days, although this is an informal rather than formal policy. The feedback students receive is helpful in indicating how they might improve.

26   In addition to the formal processes, students are clear that they can access staff either in person or by email and receive a rapid response. The quality of academic and pastoral support offered by UoSISC is **good practice**.

27   In some instances, more advanced students may not be challenged beyond their prior knowledge or skills. For example, all students from a programme are taught English simultaneously. Students and staff agreed that classes fail to stretch those who already have a good grasp of the language. In some academic classes, for example maths, the more advanced students may also not be sufficiently challenged. It would be **desirable** for UoSISC to further develop the approach to learning and teaching so that it sufficiently challenges all learners, taking into account their prior knowledge or skills.

How effectively does UoSISC manage the recruitment and admission of students?

28   Selection and admission is normally managed centrally by BES. Students who narrowly miss the entry requirements may, however, be referred to the Head of Centre. UoSISC is also discussing with the University how students who miss entry requirements for university courses can be referred to BES.

What are the arrangements for staff development to maintain and/or enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

29   UoSISC offers a series of staff development events throughout the year. Some of these are facilitated by BES, some by external agencies, some by the University and some by UoSISC staff. BES also holds an Annual Teachers' Conference and quarterly Heads of Centre Conferences. In 2014, the latter included a session discussing BES's mechanisms for quality assurance and enhancement. In addition, staff are encouraged to participate in subject-specific and pedagogic conferences, to network with appropriate subject associations and communities in the Higher Education Academy and to interface with learning and teaching groups at the University and with other subject tutors in BES's regional network. BES will provide up to 50 per cent of the cost of fees for teachers seeking further qualifications.

How effectively do BES Ltd and UoSISC ensure that learning resources are accessible to students and sufficient to enable them to achieve the learning outcomes?

30   Systems are in place that ensure learning resources are accessible to students and sufficient to enable them to achieve their learning outcomes. Teaching and laboratory space are available from the University. In addition, students have access to the full range of University facilities and there are plans to have the recommended text books for UoSISC programmes available in the University library.

31   UoSISC uses the same VLE as the University. A VLE Champion is in place and there is increasing use of the VLE to share information such as external examiners' reports and a student forum, assessment details and quizzes. Staff are offered support to engage further with the system. It would be **desirable** for UoSISC to maintain the priority being given to the development and implementation of the VLE to further enhance the quality of learning opportunities.

> There can be **confidence** that the quality of learning opportunities at UoSISC is assured and enhanced appropriately and in accordance with the policies and procedures of BES.

How effectively does UoSISC's public information communicate to students and other stakeholders about the higher education it provides at this college?

32   Information produced about the higher education provided at UoSISC is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. Prior to their decision to study at UoSISC and their arrival at the ISC, students receive information about the ISC and its programmes from the UoSISC prospectus, which is reviewed and revised each year, the website which has details of the academic provision and the progression requirements for transfer to the University, and from agents acting on behalf of BES. This material is informative and helpful and, in particular, provides clear information on arrangements for progression to the University. Students confirmed that, based on this material and material gained via agents, their expectations were met or even exceeded.

33   Once at UoSISC, information is provided to students through the Student Handbook available in both hard copy and electronic formats, which incorporates UoSISC Assessment Regulations and programme specifications. Students should also receive module guides with module-level learning outcomes, schemes of work and assessment details. However, not all students had received module guides and the quality of the guidance was variable. In relation to assessment briefs, the information is clear and students understand what they are being asked to do, and what is required to gain a high mark.

How effective are UoSISC's arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information it has responsibility for publishing at this college?

34   The arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information is effective. Publication is overseen by BES's publication and branding team, and its Creative Services department. There is a robust proofreading and checking protocol to ensure information is trustworthy and fit for purpose. The Head of Centre has ultimate responsibility for the accuracy of both hard-copy and web-based material. The review team was told that UoSISC requires sign-off of publicity materials by the University, although University staff whom the review team met were unsure what the process for this was. BES also has effective systems to train and to oversee the performance of agents acting on its behalf to recruit students.

Reliance can be placed on the information that BES produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Action plan[1]

UoSISC action plan relating to the Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight in November 2014						
Good practice	**Intended outcomes**	**Actions to be taken to maintain good practice**	**Target date(s)**	**Action by**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation (process or evidence)**
The team noted the following features of good practice at UoSISC:						
• the effective use of shared external examiners for both the University programmes and UoSISC (paragraph 11)	Four external examiners providing externality, but with the insight of their association with the University's processes	External appointments agreed by University Reports uploaded to the University's Sharepoint site	31 May 2015, then 31 August 2015	Deputy Head of Centre	Regional Director, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group and Academic Management Board	Successful Programme Assessment Board at the end of programmes in June and August 2015
• the comprehensive engagement of students as partners in the quality assurance of their learning opportunities (paragraph 22)	Student engagement with their learning throughout the course of their programmes	External examiner reports on the virtual learning environment and discussion of these at tutorials; engagement of Student representatives with shared governance through their attendance at Academic Management Board meetings	Academic Management Board, 10 Feb 2015, then 31 July 2015 for virtual learning environment	Deputy Head of Centre	Regional Director, Student/Staff Liaison Committee, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group and Academic Management Board	Student feedback mechanisms/ Module Evaluation Questionnaires and end-of-programme questionnaire via Provider led 'Spark' (global survey) initiative

[1] BES has been required to develop this action plan to follow up on good practice and address any recommendations arising from the review. QAA monitors progress against the action plan, in conjunction with the partner higher education institution.

• the quality of academic and pastoral support (paragraph 26).	Continue to support students to achieve their potential and to experience a positive transition to the University	Personal tutorials now established Deputy Head of Centre also meeting with all students at least twice per term, as well as in cases of progression concern	28 Feb 2015	Deputy Head of Centre	Regional Director, Quality Assurance and Enhancement Group	Progression, and Student feedback (as above)
Advisable	**Intended outcomes**	**Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes**	**Target date(s)**	**Action by**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation (process or evidence)**
The team considers that it is advisable for UoSISC to:						
• make full and effective use of the Quality Code in the management of academic standards and the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 9).	Quality assured in the management of academic standards and enhanced learning opportunities; demonstrated engagement with the Expectations and Indicators in the Quality Code	In order to demonstrate engagement with Quality Code Expectations and Indicators with respect to managing academic standards and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, the Centre will continue to develop robust governance structure, supported by specific personnel both at the University and Study Group, with a quality remit; pursue a Teaching and Learning enhancement process, advised by Study Group's Director of Teaching and Learning	31 July 2015	Deputy Head of Centre	Regional Director (Study Group) Associate Deputy Principal (Learning and Teaching) University of Strathclyde Director of Learning and Teaching (Study Group)	Improvements in highest quartile of performers, raising of standards throughout learners - evidenced by external examiner comments Enhancement recognised in student feedback mechanisms

Desirable	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The team considers that it would be desirable for UoSISC to:						
• further develop the approach to learning and teaching so that it sufficiently challenges all learners, taking into account their prior knowledge or skills (paragraph 27)	Wherever possible, a cohort could be streamed into ability-groups (this is only likely to be possible once the Centre numbers increase) Where feasible, a variety of materials suited to all abilities should be used in classroom learning	Splitting teaching into groups of similar-ability students would enable more targeted teaching This would be effective in improving and maintaining numbers progressing A variety of learning materials and assessments with a group/class, based on assessed levels in placement tests at the beginning of the student's programme	30 Sept 2015	Deputy Head of Centre	Regional Director (Study Group)	Progression figure trajectory Student feedback mechanisms
• maintain the priority being given to the development and implementation of the virtual learning environment to further enhance the quality of	Virtual learning environment integral to communication with students and delivery of enhancements to their learning objectives and approaches	Employ VLE Champion to develop further	Complete	Deputy Head of Centre/ VLE Champion	Deputy Head of Centre	Student use of virtual learning environment will be monitored, student feedback, Academic Management Board minutes, Annual Monitoring Reports

learning opportunities (paragraph 31).						

Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary. Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the
Embedded College Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook[2]

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

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

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

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

differentiated judgements In a review for educational oversight, separate judgements respectively for the provision validated by separate awarding bodies.

enhancement The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

framework for higher education qualifications A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland*.

good practice A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's review processes.

highly trusted sponsor An organisation that the UK government trusts to admit migrant students from overseas, according to Tier 4 of UK Visas and Immigration points-based immigration system. Higher education providers wishing to obtain this status must undergo a successful review by QAA.

learning opportunities The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, and resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

learning outcomes What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

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[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx

partner higher education institution A body with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the **framework for higher education qualifications**, such as diplomas or degrees.

programme (of study) An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

programme specifications Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of **programmes** of study, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

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

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

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

quality See **academic quality**.

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

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

threshold academic 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 **frameworks for higher education qualifications** and S**ubject Benchmark Statements**. See also **academic standards**.

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