



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

Cambridge Arts & Sciences Ltd

October 2014

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Key findings about Cambridge Arts & Sciences Ltd

As a result of its adapted Review for Specific Course Designation carried out in October 2014, the QAA review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of Kingston University and University of the Arts London.

The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the quality and enhancement of the learning opportunities it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies.

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

Good practice

The team has identified the following **good practice**:

- responsiveness to the pastoral and academic support needs of individual students (paragraph 2.2)
- effectively planned, regular, detailed and high quality formative feedback (paragraph 2.3).

Recommendations

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

The team considers that it is **advisable** for the provider to:

- map explicitly all policies and practices to the relevant expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) (paragraph 1.3)
- engage students as partners in key decision-making processes (paragraph 2.6).

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

- establish a formal platform for academic staff to develop a shared understanding of the Quality Code (paragraph 1.4).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the adapted [Review for Specific Course Designation](#)¹ conducted by [QAA](#) at Cambridge Arts & Sciences Ltd (the School), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of Kingston University and University of the Arts London. The review was carried out by Ms Erika Beumer and Mr David Orford (reviewers) and Mr Christopher Mabika (Coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Specific Course Designation: Handbook, May 2014](#).² Evidence in support of the review included:

- operational and policy documents, partnership agreements and minutes of meetings
- meetings with staff, students, and representatives of Kingston University and the University of the Arts, London
- reports of reviews by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI).

QAA carries out an adapted review for providers who are also reviewed by another approved body. The *Review for Educational Oversight (and for specific course designation): Handbook, April 2013* provides further details.

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

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code)
- *Subject Benchmark Statement: Art and Design*
- *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)
- Higher Education Academy: UK Professional Standards Framework.

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

Cambridge Arts and Sciences Ltd represents the interests in Cambridge of the Cambridge Education Group, namely CATS Cambridge and the Cambridge School of Visual and Performing Arts. These share premises, facilities and services at two nearby locations and also share student accommodation in the city of Cambridge, which the Group manages. The Group also assumes direct responsibility for the School's student admissions, services and welfare.

Cambridge School of Visual and Performing Arts was set up as a department under CATS Cambridge and became a division of the School with its own brand identity in 2005. Cambridge School of Visual and Performing Arts delivers the School's further and higher education programmes.

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/RSCD.aspx

² www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2707

At the time of the review the provider offered higher education programmes to 299 students of thirty-three different nationalities (student numbers in brackets):

Kingston University

- Graduate Diploma Art and Design (Pre-Master's level 6/7) (10)
- BA (Hons) Fashion Design (26)
- BA (Hons) Graphics and Illustration (36)

University of the Arts London

- Extended Diploma in Art and Design (level 3/4) (46)
- Extended Diploma in Performing & Production Arts (level 3/4) (24)
- Foundation Diploma in Art and Design (level 4) (157)

The provider's stated responsibilities

In its agreements with both Kingston University and University of the Arts London, the School is responsible for student issues including recruitment, selection, admissions and induction. It teaches and monitors student admissions, retention and completion. The School first marks student work and gives feedback to the students, and collects and responds to feedback from students.

The School's validation agreement with Kingston University requires it to identify curriculum needs and develop the curriculum. The School is also responsible for providing programme specifications, intended learning outcomes and assessments for students.

The School shares the responsibility for providing learning resources to its students with both partners.

Recent developments

The School signed its validation agreement with Kingston University in August 2011. In November 2012, Kingston University revalidated the School's BA (Hons) Fashion Design and the BA (Hons) Graphics and Illustration degrees to ensure that they satisfied the requirements of its Revised Academic Framework. In June 2014, the University approved the School's Graduate Diploma in Art and Design, which is designed to prepare students who wish to follow an Art or Design pathway on a master's degree course.

The University of the Arts London approved the School to run its programmes in April 2013.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. The students presented a written submission, which they developed with support in the form of space and time to conduct meetings, writing resources and guidance from the School. As the students were on their summer break at the time of the preparatory meeting, their representatives had an initial briefing with the review team before the team's meeting with the larger group that represented a cross-section of the School's higher education programmes on the first day of the review.

The students who attended the two meetings participated actively in discussions with the team, freely offering their views, which together with those in the Student Submission, made a valuable contribution to this report.

Detailed findings about Cambridge Arts & Sciences Ltd

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The School carries out its duties effectively through clear management and committee structures and policies, which the Cambridge Education Group provides. It understands its roles and responsibilities for the management of academic standards as stipulated in its collaborative agreements with Kingston University and University of the Arts London, and effectively applies both these partners' academic regulations, policies, procedures and guidelines.

1.2 The School's structure shows clear lines of reporting in which the Head of School has ultimate responsibility for the management of academic standards. The Deputy Head of School and the Academic Director support the Principal in this role. The Deputy Head of School is also a course leader, and the Academic Director liaises with awarding partners and assumes the quality assurance role. Course leaders carry out annual reviews of their courses. A tiered committee structure, within which various groups meet at agreed intervals to carry out specific responsibilities, complements the management structure. The Board of Studies has oversight of academic standards. The awarding partners carry out annual reviews of the School's course design, learning, teaching and assessment and a representative from Kingston University chairs the School's Module and Programme Assessment Boards. Both partners attest to the effectiveness of the School's management of academic standards.

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

1.3 The School has limited explicit engagement with the Quality Code although it applies Kingston University's policies and standards, which clearly map to the relevant sections of the Quality Code. It also applies the University of the Arts London's policies and standards, which are designed in line with the Qualifications and Credit Framework. However, the School's own policies and practice do not make explicit reference to the Quality Code. Its programme specifications make clear reference to the Quality Code and to the *Subject Benchmark Statement: Art and Design*. The School is a member of the Higher Education Academy. It is **advisable** for the School to map explicitly, all policies and practices to the relevant expectations of the Quality Code.

1.4 Teaching staff have varied levels of understanding of the *Subject Benchmark Statement: Art and Design*, which they obtain from other higher education institutions where they also teach, as they are mostly part-time. They are not familiar with the Quality Code. Although staff can access the UK Professional Standards Framework of the Higher Education Academy through Kingston University's Centre for Higher Education Research and Practice and through the School's membership of the Higher Education Academy, the School does not provide them with structured training or a forum to share understanding on the Quality Code. It would be **desirable** for the School to establish a formal platform for academic staff to develop a shared understanding of the Quality Code.

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

1.5 The School uses external examining effectively to assure academic standards. Under its partnership with Kingston University, the School has two external examiners, one

industry-based, who benchmarks against industry standards, and the other academic, who focuses on professional standards. The University trains and takes responsibility for the external examiners. Module leaders mark student work and course leaders internally verify it. The School follows a coherent action planning process for responding to external examiners' comments. It responds to these comments in line with the University's procedures. External examiners' reports indicate a high level of satisfaction with the School's provision. The Module and Programme Assessment Boards approve module and programme results respectively. University of the Arts London follows a similar external examining process, with one external examiner. The School convenes an internal assessment board meeting and attends a standardisation event, which the awarding body hosts.

1.6 Despite the potential future risk relating to its engagement with, and the need for its staff to have a forum to establish a shared understanding of, the Quality Code, the School manages academic standards effectively. Structures for this purpose, which include processes to make use of external examining, enable the School to discharge its responsibilities successfully.

The review team has **confidence** in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of its awarding bodies.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 The effective and clearly defined management and committee structures, and systems and processes noted in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2, also apply to the School's management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.

2.2 The School sets and meets high expectations for student support. Teaching and management staff understand these expectations and what constitutes good practice in providing support to students. The School has structured teaching sessions with a high number of timetabled hours. These clearly focus on learning outcomes, and offer each individual student the opportunity to build expertise and experience through low student-to-staff ratios designed to facilitate effective learning. Students receive individual incentives, including discounts on fees. The School's achievement and progression statistics reflect high pass rates, which managers, academic and support staff as well as students agreed were a result of the support that students receive. Students commented positively about their learning experience, stating that they receive well-resourced and structured learning support and a high level of pastoral support and that all members of staff were responsive to their needs. Each student has a personal tutor. The School employs dedicated learning support and pastoral support staff, as well as student welfare and client care teams. The School's responsiveness to the pastoral and academic support needs of individual students is **good practice**.

2.3 The School follows clear and effective assessment practices. Students receive assessments on a formal, four-week cycle during which staff give regular, detailed and high quality formative feedback, which students confirmed. The students also noted that they had the opportunity to assess and provisionally grade their own work in summative assessments. In addition, staff stated that the School has an effective internal verification process. Student work confirms the effectiveness of the assessment and feedback processes, including the

practice of double marking before external verification. The School's effectively planned, regular, detailed and high quality formative feedback to students is **good practice**.

2.4 The School collects destination data for all its students and uses this information to link with an effective alumni network. This network provides key industry contacts for work experience placements.

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

2.5 The concerns in paragraph 1.3 and 1.4 regarding the School's engagement and the requirement for a staff forum to establish a shared understanding of the Quality Code also apply to its management and enhancement of learning opportunities. The School's practices fulfil some expectations of the Quality Code without explicit reference to them. Examples of such practices include, for example, the learning and teaching approaches which meet the Expectation in *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching*, and formative and summative assessment practices which align with the Expectation in *Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement*, and the Expectation in *Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning*. The School has documented work experience guidelines that do not directly refer to, but observe all key elements of, the Expectation in *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others*.

How does the School engage students in its quality assurance processes?

2.6 The School provides its students with some opportunities to give formal feedback on their experience, but they are limited. Students have limited representation in School committees, contrary to *Chapter B5: Student Engagement* of the Quality Code. The School collects formal student feedback on their courses at two points during the academic year, using an online questionnaire. Senior management staff analyse and consider the outcome of the feedback. Two elected course representatives from each course and year group attend the Staff and Student Consultative Committee, providing additional formal feedback opportunities. Students confirmed that this group meets regularly and that it is effective in advising the School. They were able to give examples of requests, in relation to resources and logistics, that they had made and the School actioned. They also confirmed that teaching staff gave them regular informal feedback during and after timetabled classes. The students perceived the use of student feedback as a way the School evaluates its own provision, but were doubtful of its role in framing future provision, or in contributing to the enhancement of quality assurance. The School provides an additional feedback loop through meetings with groups and individuals, as part of its well-developed student welfare function. However, there was no evidence of student participation in such groups. It is **advisable** for the School to engage students as partners in decision-making.

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

2.7 The School has effective processes for staff development. Teachers joining it are required to either have, or plan to have, a teaching qualification. Staff receive financial support to acquire the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector qualification. Six teachers gained the qualification during the 2013-14 academic year. Other members of staff confirmed that they received support to attend external courses and attended seminars, arranged by the School, with high profile speakers. The School also encourages staff to attend a range of meetings, which Kingston University and University of the Arts London organise, for information on assessment, teaching and regulatory changes.

2.8 The School operates appraisal and peer observation schemes to ensure that staff have the skills and knowledge required to meet their teaching obligations. The peer review scheme is currently under review following operational issues last year. The School plans to reintroduce it in a number of selected areas this year, prior to full implementation next year.

2.9 The School has robust systems for managing and enhancing learning opportunities. Concerns about its formal engagement with the Quality Code and the limited opportunities students receive to provide feedback do not diminish the effectiveness of these systems. The academic and pastoral support and formative feedback it gives to its students are exceptional and staff development processes are satisfactory.

The review team has **confidence** that the provider is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of the intended learning opportunities it provides for students.

3 Information about learning opportunities

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

3.1 The School publishes an extensive range of information for current and potential students. Hard and electronic copies of the documents are available, of which the website holds up-to-date versions. The website also provides detailed information about the School's courses. Current students receive their information in hardcopy, through electronic mail, and by use of the student portal.

3.2 Following consultation with its sales teams, the School redesigned the content of the prospectus to ensure that the information it published met expectations of parents of potential students, in clear and concise language and giving facts, figures and an example of a class schedule. The marketing department monitors and controls information available to the School's agents and ensures that they only hand the current versions of documents to prospective students.

3.3 The School follows clear procedures to ensure that the information it provides about learning opportunities is accurate, current and fit for purpose. Both Kingston University and University of the Arts London approve information relating to the courses they award before publication.

3.4 The systems for checking the currency, accuracy and fitness for purpose of the information that the School publishes are satisfactory.

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

Action plan³

Cambridge Arts and Sciences Ltd action plan relating to the Adapted Review for Specific Course Designation October 2014						
Good practice	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the School:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> responsiveness to the pastoral and academic support needs of individual students (paragraph 2.2) 	<p>Differentiated teaching with a focus on learning outcomes</p> <p>Academic, learning and pastoral support staff to provide 'easy to reach' and effective support for all students</p>	<p>Delivery of structured teaching sessions that provide a high number of timetabled hours with low student to staff ratios to facilitate learning</p> <p>Each student to be provided with a Personal Tutor. Minimum of two Personal Tutor meetings in each teaching block. Sessions that can be blocked with Study Skills Officer are available to all students</p>	<p>Timetables and schemes of work set by September each year</p> <p>Personal Tutors assigned in first teaching week</p>	<p>Course Leaders</p> <p>Course Leaders</p>	<p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Senior Management Team</p>	<p>Annually monitor achievement and progression data from Module Assessment Board and Programme Assessment Board minutes</p> <p>Tutorial report forms</p>

³ The School has been required to develop this action plan to follow up on good practice and address any recommendations arising from the review. QAA monitors progress against the action plan, in conjunction with the School's awarding bodies.

	<p>All welfare/pastoral actions and responses are recorded in 'student notes' on the School information management system</p> <p>Diagnostic sessions with Special Educational Needs Officer are available to all students</p>	<p>Information recorded in student welfare notes are discussed at weekly welfare meetings. All actions and responses are reviewed and updated</p> <p>Academic staff to refer individual students to the Special Educational Needs Coordinator as required. Weekly support provided as required</p>	<p>Monitor weekly</p> <p>Monitor monthly</p>	<p>Welfare Team</p> <p>Course Leaders</p>	<p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Senior Management Team</p>	<p>Welfare Team meeting minutes</p> <p>Special Educational Needs Officer's records and timesheets</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> effectively planned, regular, detailed and high quality formative feedback (paragraph 2.3). 	<p>Assessment feedback provided to students is regular, clear and effective</p>	<p>Feedback to students is documented on 'feedback forms' where tutor comments are aligned to learning outcomes</p> <p>Internal verification of assessment feedback to be carried out by course leaders and/or internal academic staff</p> <p>Students assess and provisionally grade their own work at summative assessment points</p> <p>Double marking of summative assessment before external verification</p>	<p>Formative written feedback provided at the end of each project</p> <p>At the end of each module</p> <p>At the end of each module</p> <p>At the end of each module</p>	<p>Module Leaders</p> <p>Module Leaders</p> <p>Module Leaders</p> <p>Module Leaders</p>	<p>Course Leaders</p> <p>Course Leaders</p> <p>Course Leaders</p> <p>Course Leaders</p>	<p>Annually monitor assessment feedback forms</p> <p>Internal verification marks and comments on assessment forms</p> <p>Student comments on assessment forms</p> <p>Double marker comments on assessment forms</p>

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 the School to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> map explicitly, all policies and practices to relevant expectations of the Quality Code (paragraph 1.3) 	<p>Production of a student/staff handbook for the School that maps and describes the relevant expectations of the Quality Code to school policies and practices</p> <p>All staff and students are aware of the Quality Code (and expectations therein) and competently use the School handbook to support the management of quality assurance in the school</p> <p>Staff and students verify that they are familiar with the relevant expectations of the Quality Code</p>	<p>Map the expectations of the Quality Code to school policies and practices</p> <p>Brief all higher education staff and students on the Quality Code. Ensure all higher education staff and students have access to the School's student/staff Quality Code handbook</p> <p>Annually evaluate staff and student familiarity with the Quality Code</p>	<p>November 2014 to be published by April 2015</p> <p>April 2015, then annually each October from 2015</p> <p>October each year from 2015</p>	<p>Academic Director</p> <p>Academic Director</p> <p>Senior Management Team</p>	<p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Head of School</p>	<p>The School's student/staff Quality Code handbook</p> <p>Senior Management Team Meeting minutes</p> <p>Senior Management Team Meeting minutes</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> engage students as partners in key decision-making processes (paragraph 2.6). 	<p>Issue of a student engagement policy handbook for the School</p> <p>Students fully understand, and action, their responsibilities as partners in key decision-making processes</p> <p>The school actively promotes and supports student engagement in key decision-making processes</p> <p>Students verify that they are partners in key decision-making</p>	<p>Produce and publish a policy for maximising student engagement in key decision-making processes</p> <p>Brief all higher education staff and students on how students are engaged as partners in key decision-making processes</p> <p>Ensure all students have access to the student engagement handbook</p> <p>Annually evaluate student familiarity with the School student engagement policy</p>	<p>December 2014 to be published by March 2015</p> <p>April 2015, then annually each October from 2015</p> <p>April 2015, then annually each October from 2015</p> <p>Annually each October from 2015</p>	<p>Academic Director</p> <p>Academic Director</p> <p>Course Leaders</p> <p>Senior Management Team</p>	<p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Senior Management Team</p> <p>Head of School</p>	<p>The School's student engagement policy handbook</p> <p>Student Staff Consultative Committee and Board of Studies meeting minutes</p> <p>Senior Management Team meeting minutes</p> <p>Senior Management Team meeting minutes</p>
Desirable	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date/s	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The team considers that it would be desirable for the School to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish a formal platform for academic staff to develop 	Academic staff have a shared understanding of how the Quality Code plays a key role in the	Run teaching block inset days for staff with a focus on the Quality Code	March 2015, then each September from 2015	Course Leaders	Senior Management Team	Senior Management Team meeting minutes

a shared understanding of the Quality Code (paragraph 1.4).	management of quality assurance The School responds effectively to any changes made to the Quality Code	Staff review and discuss how the Quality Code plays a key role in the management of quality assurance	Annually each September from 2015	Course Leaders	Senior Management Team	Senior Management Team meeting minutes
	Academic staff verify they have a forum for developing a shared understanding of the Quality Code	Annually evaluate staff and familiarity with the Quality Code	Annually each September from 2015	Senior Management Team	Head of School	Senior Management Team meeting minutes

About QAA

QAA is the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. QAA's mission is to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education.

QAA's aims are to:

- meet students' needs and be valued by them
- safeguard standards in an increasingly diverse UK and international context
- drive improvements in UK higher education
- Improve public understanding of higher education standards and quality.

QAA conducts reviews of higher education institutions and publishes reports on the findings. QAA also publishes a range of guidance documents to help safeguard standards and improve quality.

More information about the work of QAA is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk.

More detail about Review for Specific Course Designation can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/RSCD.aspx.

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 [Review for Specific Course Designation: Handbook, May 2014](#).⁴

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

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

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

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

differentiated judgements In a Review for Specific Course Designation, separate judgements respectively for the provision validated by separate awarding bodies.

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

external examiner An independent expert appointed by an institution to comment on student achievement in relation to established academic standards and to look at approaches to assessment.

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

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

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

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

⁴ www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2707

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

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

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

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

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

quality See **academic quality**.

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

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

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

threshold academic standards The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national **Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications** and **Subject Benchmark Statements**. See also **academic standards**.

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

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