



# **City of London Business College**

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

February 2014

## Key findings about City of London Business College

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in February 2014, the QAA review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in how the College manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of ATHE Ltd, the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants, Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations, and Pearson.

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

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

### Good practice

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

- comprehensive and effective procedures for communicating with staff (paragraph 1.4)
- significant levels of student engagement (paragraph 2.8).

### Recommendations

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

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

- ensure that the academic committees fulfil their terms of reference (paragraph 1.2)
- develop further the analysis of data in annual programme reviews (paragraph 1.3)
- continue to map College policies, procedures and practices to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 1.7).

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

- review the Quality Assurance Manual (paragraph 1.5)
- continue to develop the new learning and teaching strategy (paragraph 2.3)
- revise the format and scope of the student feedback form (paragraph 2.4)
- evaluate the effectiveness of the virtual learning environment (paragraph 2.13)
- develop a publication policy (paragraph 3.5).

## About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)<sup>1</sup> (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at the City of London Business College (the College), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College 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 College delivers on behalf of ATHE Ltd, the Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (CIMA), Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR), and Pearson. The review was carried out by Dr Helen Corkill, Dr Colin Fryer (reviewers) and Mrs Catherine Fairhurst (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).<sup>2</sup> Evidence in support of the review included policies and procedures, reports supplied by the College, meetings with staff, an awarding organisation representative and students, and reports of review and monitoring visits by QAA.

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

- the guidelines provided by the awarding organisations
- UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code).

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

The College was established in 1990 to provide vocational training to local residents. Since then, it has developed its provision to include a mixture of professional and vocationally related courses in the subject areas of business management, health and social care, hairdressing and teacher education. It operates from a site at Seven Sisters in North London. The College uses teaching and learning spaces in two adjacent buildings, one of which is run as a local community learning centre.

At the time of the review there were 53 students, three of whom were on a higher education programme. There are 10 full-time management and administrative staff and two full-time and 12 part-time teaching staff at the College.

Together with a portfolio of courses at levels 2 and 3, the College offers the following higher education programmes, listed beneath their awarding organisation with student numbers shown in brackets:

### **ATHE Ltd**

- Postgraduate Diploma in Business Management (0)

### **Chartered Institute of Management Accountants**

- Test of Professional Competence in Management Accountancy (0)

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<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/educational-oversight](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/educational-oversight)

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx)

### **Oxford, Cambridge and RSA Examinations (OCR)**

- Certificate in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (0)
- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (0)
- Diploma level 5 in Leadership for Health and Social Care and Children and Young People's Services (3)

### **Pearson**

- HND in Business Management (0)
- HND in Computing and Systems Development (0)
- HND in Health and Social Care (0).

## **The provider's stated responsibilities**

The College has the following responsibilities devolved from each of its awarding organisations: student recruitment, admission and guidance; staff development to support teaching and assessment; teaching and learning; library and learning resources; student feedback; and the accuracy of public information. There is shared responsibility with the awarding organisations for providing programme and module information. The awarding organisations are responsible for programme content. The College has responsibility for setting and marking assessments on programmes awarded by ATHE Ltd, OCR and Pearson.

## **Recent developments**

The number of international students on higher education programmes has recently dramatically reduced because of Home Office policies. Currently the College is focused on the provision of courses in business, health and social care, children and young people and hairdressing at levels 2 and 3. The College intends to increase the number of students studying higher education programmes and is investigating new strategies for both home and international student recruitment.

## **Students' contribution to the review**

Students studying at the College were invited to present a submission to the review team. With assistance from the College students on courses at levels 2 and 3, although not higher education students, a written submission was produced describing the quality of their learning experience. This provided a helpful starting point for the team. Nine of these students met the reviewers during the review visit, when they were able to discuss wider issues about the teaching and learning experience on their courses. The reviewers also met one student recently enrolled on a higher education programme. The review team found these meetings useful.

## Detailed findings about City of London Business College

### 1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The management structure of the College is effective in managing its responsibilities for academic standards. The senior management team, consisting of the Principal, Director of Operations, Director of Academic and Professional Studies and Director of Health and Vocational Studies, normally meets monthly to discuss operational and strategic issues.

1.2 The College has strengthened its committee structure to enhance the management of academic standards. The Academic Board and the Quality Assurance Committee have not yet fully developed their roles according to their terms of reference. For example, the minutes of meetings do not demonstrate consideration of annual monitoring reports, external verifier reports or approval of new College policies. The College is aware of the importance of establishing clear lines of reporting as it continues to embed the quality framework. It is **advisable** that the College ensures that its academic committees fulfil their terms of reference.

1.3 Departmental meetings consider annual monitoring reports but do not comprehensively interrogate the data. For example, the reports do not fully reflect on student progression and achievement data. The College is implementing a standardised data template as part of its revised annual monitoring process. It is **advisable** for the College to develop further the analysis of data in annual programme reviews to enable the College committees to identify cross-College themes.

1.4 The College has maintained the well-developed and effective mechanisms for communicating with staff and sharing good practice in response to the 2012 review report. The College is responsive to staff with lecturers receiving a tutor course handbook containing programme and module specifications. Academic staff contribute to the development of policy and practice through regular tutor planning days and standardisation meetings, which enhance the effectiveness of the management of academic standards. The comprehensive communication with staff is **good practice** which enhances the effectiveness of the management of academic standards.

1.5 The College Quality Assurance Manual contains some detailed policies and procedures but not the broad range of issues covered by the Quality Code. It includes some policies and procedures that would be better located in a staff handbook, for example staff induction and workload allocation. It would be **desirable** for the College to review its Quality Assurance Manual and include all aspects of the College's quality procedures.

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

1.6 The College's arrangements with its awarding organisations are appropriate and meet expectations. The awarding organisations are responsible for ensuring that its processes and procedures take into account the key external reference points, including *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). There are clear lines of communication with the awarding organisations to support engagement with the external reference points.

1.7 The College is in the early stages of engaging with and developing its understanding of the Quality Code relating to the management of academic standards. The College has raised awareness of the Quality Code through discussion at a tutor planning day held in January 2013 and distributed the QAA publication *The UK Quality Code for Higher Education: A brief guide* to staff. The College management are in the early stages of mapping processes against the relevant chapters of the Quality Code. However, there is no clear evidence from the minutes of the Quality Assurance Committee of how the College has systematically engaged with the Quality Code and what impact this has on revisions to policies and procedures. It is **advisable** that the College continues to map policies, procedures and practices to the Quality Code.

### **How does the College use external moderation, verification or examining to assure academic standards?**

1.8 The College has appropriate procedures in place for the internal verification of assignments. Staff are clear about their assessment responsibilities. The Quality Assurance Manual clearly describes procedures for moderation and resolving disagreements.

1.9 Standardisation meetings consider the external verifier reports and identify actions. Progress against these actions is systematically considered at departmental level. College oversight through its committee structures is not as well defined. Although the College management team see the external verifiers' reports, it is unclear what role the Quality Assurance Committee has in the oversight of the external verifier system. The terms of reference for the Committee make reference to monitoring the outcomes from external verifier reports, but currently this is not reflected in the minutes.

## **2 Quality of learning opportunities**

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

2.1 The College effectively fulfils its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. The processes reflect those for managing academic standards, as described in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2. The College's responsibilities for the quality of learning opportunities are monitored by the Quality Assurance Committee and the Academic Board.

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

2.2 The College's use of external reference points is described in paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7. The College has begun to take account of the Quality Code as an external reference point to inform its policies and procedures for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. For example, the revision to the placement system within health and social care and the enhancement of the staff peer review system reflect the Expectations of the Quality Code.

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

2.2 External verifier reports, annual monitoring reports and student feedback assure the College that the quality of learning and teaching is maintained. The Quality Assurance Committee monitors and coordinates learning and teaching activity. The College has recently developed a learning and teaching strategy. This has aspirational aims but does not specify intended actions to achieve the stated strategic aims. It would be **desirable** for the

College to continue to develop the new learning and teaching strategy and state clearly what actions are required to maintain and enhance the quality of teaching and learning.

2.3 Students complete a formal survey on the quality of teaching and learning every term. The survey questions are not sufficiently clear or extensive to allow the College to assure itself of student opinion across a range of areas. The students are given no detailed guidance on the scoring criteria which are on a basic numerical scale. It would be **desirable** for the College to revise the format and scope of the student feedback form to obtain valid and reliable student opinion.

### **How does the College assure itself that students are supported effectively?**

2.4 The College assures itself in a variety of ways that students are supported effectively. There is a dedicated Student Support Officer who offers academic and pastoral support to students and contributes to the monitoring of a student's academic progress. The Officer works closely with the student representative committee to deal with problems. Students are very appreciative of the support available.

2.5 The College operates a system of group and individual tutorials. Academic tutorials are timetabled. All students maintain an Individual Learning Plan (ILP). These plans inform individual tutorials which take place every eight to 10 weeks. Students are highly appreciative of the one-to-one support the system affords.

2.6 The College offers a thorough student induction at the start of each course which covers pastoral, practical and academic areas. Academic induction includes an introduction to reading and assignment writing, plagiarism and referencing. The College tests all students for English language competency. Students confirm the usefulness of the induction course.

2.7 The College operates a well-embedded system of student representation. Each class elects two student representatives and there is also a lead student representative for the College. Student representatives meet with the Directors termly to discuss both academic and social matters. The minutes of these meetings are displayed on noticeboards for feedback to students and staff. Students consider that the system of student representation is effective and helpful. They state that the College listens to their concerns. The significant level of student engagement in quality processes and in the enhancement of their learning opportunities is **good practice**.

### **How effectively does the College develop its staff in order to improve student learning opportunities?**

2.8 The College effectively develops its staff to improve student learning opportunities. There is a comprehensive Staff Development Policy and all staff are appropriately qualified. There is an annual appraisal scheme for full-time staff and a performance management scheme for part-time tutors. Management observation of teaching identifies training needs. There is a well-embedded peer review scheme and staff are enthusiastic about this method of sharing good practice.

2.9 The College has an effective staff training and development plan which is described in the Quality Assurance Manual. The College provides funds for staff to attend internal and external training events. Staff complete detailed continuing professional development records annually.

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

2.10 The College senior management team and the accounts manager are responsible for learning resources. The Directors allocate resourcing requirements and requests from both staff and students together with requests for external staff training.

2.11 The College has a small reading room and collection of reference books. Students on some courses are provided with free core textbooks and there is a discounted bulk textbook purchase scheme. The College has an arrangement with the British Library whereby books can be ordered and posted to the College. Students are appreciative of this scheme.

2.12 The College provides a basic virtual learning environment (VLE). The students find this useful for their studies but there is little evidence of the system being used as an interactive tool. A VLE policy provides staff with clear guidelines to ensure parity of support for students across programme but this has not yet been reviewed. It would be **desirable** for the College to evaluate the effectiveness of the VLE to enhance the students' access to learning resources.

2.13 The College is effective in fulfilling its responsibilities for managing the quality of the intended learning opportunities it provides. It has developed a learning and teaching environment within which students feel well supported and are motivated to learn. They also feel able to contribute to quality processes. However, there are still a number of areas the College needs to address if it is to enhance further the quality of the learning opportunities it provides. A well-embedded learning and teaching strategy would help achieve consistency of practice between courses and the College could make more effective use of formal feedback, evaluation processes and the VLE.

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 effectively does the College communicate information about learning opportunities to students and other stakeholders?**

3.1 The College effectively communicates information about learning opportunities. Since the last Review for Educational Oversight in September 2012, the College has enhanced academic and welfare support for students through the implementation of a common template for the content of student handbooks. Student programme handbooks provide a factual overview of each programme, including structure of the qualification, assessment requirements, module specifications and a guide to referencing. The documents are consistent cross-college and ensure that all students are effectively supported.

3.2 The College relies extensively on its website to provide information to potential and existing students and to other stakeholders. This is supplemented by a prospectus and other promotional material. The website is well designed to provide students with a comprehensive and helpful range of information, including programme details, guidance on visas, accommodation and living costs, facilities and support services for students.



3.3 Students receive a programme handbook and a student induction handbook. The latter contains a broad range of useful information, including tutorial support arrangements, College opening hours, staffing details, health and safety procedures and access to the VLE. The programme handbooks contain information about the course content and learning objectives derived from the programme specifications and syllabus outlines of the awarding organisations.

3.4 The College has produced a policy document on plagiarism and collusion and publicised some awarding organisation guidance on plagiarism. A revised policy addresses all forms of unfair practice, such as cheating in examinations. The procedures are comprehensive, consistent with information provided to students, and align with the management structure for higher education provision at the College.

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

3.5 The College's processes assure information is fit for purpose, accessible, trustworthy and understood by all staff. However, they are largely informal and the Director of Operations has overall responsibility for the accuracy and consistency of information the College provides. An agreed schedule for the production of public information lists the key staff responsible for producing and reviewing the student handbook, programme handbooks, prospectus, website and advertisements. However, the College does not have a formal information policy for the management of public information. It would be **desirable** for the College to develop a publication policy to support engagement with *Part C: Information about higher education provision* of the Quality Code.

3.6 The College has effective yet informal processes for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of information it is responsible for producing. The processes currently in place could be further enhanced through the development of a formal publication policy.

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 plan<sup>3</sup>

City of London Business College action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight February 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 <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>comprehensive and effective procedures for communicating with staff (paragraph 1.4)</li> </ul>	Ensure communication with staff is effective, consistent and timely	<p>Updated Academic and Quality calendar are distributed to all staff members on a termly basis</p> <p>Monitoring to ensuring adherence to the Academic and Quality calendars</p>	Termly (first week)	Director of Studies	Quality Committee	<p>Updated calendars</p> <p>Minutes of scheduled meetings</p> <p>Staff planning day questionnaire</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>significant levels of student engagement (paragraph 2.8)</li> </ul>	Continue to ensure significant levels of student engagement	<p>Ensure schedule for rep meetings is followed</p> <p>Minutes of rep meetings to be available within two working days on notice boards and on the virtual learning environment</p>	<p>Termly</p> <p>March 2014</p>	<p>Student Support Officer</p> <p>Student support Officer</p>	<p>Quality Committee</p> <p>Director of Operations</p> <p>Academic Board</p>	<p>Minutes of meetings</p> <p>Virtual learning environment records</p> <p>Notice boards</p>

<sup>3</sup> The College 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 College's awarding organisations.

		capturing and logging agreed actions  Redevelop student survey to become more comprehensive	June 2014	Director of Operations	Quality Committee	Revised student surveys
<b>Advisable</b>	<b>Intended outcomes</b>	<b>Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes</b>	<b>Target date(s)</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation (process or evidence)</b>
The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that the academic committees fulfil their terms of reference (paragraph 1.2)</li> </ul>	Committees understand and fulfil the full remit of their duties outlined in respective terms of reference	<p>Review terms of reference of the academic committees to ensure compliance with relevant reference points</p> <p>Implement system to track actions resulting from the meetings</p>	<p>June 2014</p> <p>Thereafter to be reviewed annually</p> <p>June 2014</p>	Director of Operations/ Acting Principal	<p>Quality Committee</p> <p>Academic Board</p> <p>Management Team</p>	<p>Minutes of meetings</p> <p>Updated terms of reference for Academic and Quality Committees</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop further the analysis of data in annual programme reviews (paragraph 1.3)</li> </ul>	Robust data collection and recording in formats that facilitate easier interpretation and analysis at annual programme reviews	<p>Implement new termly collections of data from each department</p> <p>Interrogation of data in annual programme reviews to provide input to strategic decision making</p>	<p>June 2014</p> <p>August 2014</p>	Director of Operations/ Acting Principal	<p>Quality Committee</p> <p>Management Team</p>	<p>Annual Programme Review (APR) minutes</p> <p>Updated data section of APR</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continue to map College policies, procedures and practices to the</li> </ul>	College policies and procedures mapped to Quality Code	Complete framework template to map College processes to Quality Code	December 2014	Director of Operations/ Acting Principal	<p>Quality Committee</p> <p>Senior</p>	<p>Mapping document</p> <p>Minutes of</p>

UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 1.7)		Staff training on Quality Code  Publish progress updates for Quality Code mapping project	June 2014 and annually thereafter  Termly from July 2014		Management Team  Academic Board	meetings  Training logs
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Intended outcomes</b>	<b>Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes</b>	<b>Target date/s</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation (process or evidence)</b>
The team considers that it would be <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review the Quality Assurance Manual (paragraph 1.5)</li> </ul>	Updated fit for purpose Quality Assurance Manual	Review Quality Assurance Manual	July 2014	Director of Studies	Quality Assurance Committee  Academic Board	Updated Manual
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continue to develop the new learning and teaching strategy (paragraph 2.3)</li> </ul>	Embedded teaching and learning strategy	<p>Training and development of teaching staff to facilitate the implementation of new learning strategy</p> <p>Engage students in the development of teaching and learning strategy</p> <p>Publish key points of strategy on the virtual learning environment and on notice boards</p>	<p>July 2014</p> <p>June 2014</p> <p>August 2014</p> <p>August 2014</p>	<p>Director of Operations/ Acting Principal</p> <p>Director of Studies</p> <p>Director of Operations/ Acting Principal</p> <p>Management</p>	<p>Quality Assurance Committee</p> <p>Academic Board</p>	<p>Minutes of meeting</p> <p>Updated Teaching and Learning Strategy</p> <p>Virtual learning environment records</p> <p>Evaluation report</p>

		Implement strategy		Team		
		Review effectiveness of teaching and learning strategy	Termly in first year and then annually			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>revise the format and scope of the student feedback form (paragraph 2.4)</li> </ul>	Revised comprehensive Student Survey form	Engage staff to consider structure of new student surveys	June 2014	Director of Operations	Quality Committee	Minutes of meetings
		Engage students to consider structure of new student surveys	June 2014	Student Support Officer	Academic Board	Updated student feedback form
		Review <i>Chapter B5</i> of Quality Code	June 2014	Director of Operations		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>evaluate the effectiveness of the virtual learning environment (paragraph 2.13)</li> </ul>	Effective virtual learning environment aligned to needs of College staff and students	Obtain and analyse student feedback on the virtual learning environment	May 2014	Director of Operations	Quality Committee	Student surveys
		Obtain and analyse staff feedback on the virtual learning environment	May 2014	Student Support Officer	Senior Management Team	Minutes of meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop a publication policy (paragraph 3.5)</li> </ul>	Development of a College publication policy	Engage management team in development of a policy governing publishing of internal/ external information	August 2014	Senior Management Team	Academic Board Quality Committee	Publication Policy Minutes of meeting

## 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](http://www.qaa.ac.uk).

More detail about Review for Educational Oversight can be found at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/educational-oversight](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/educational-oversight).

## Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary). Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).<sup>4</sup>

**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.

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

**designated body** An organisation that has been formally appointed or recognised to perform a particular function. QAA has been recognised by UKBA as a designated body for the purpose of providing educational oversight.

**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 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.

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

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<sup>4</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx)

**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.

**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**.

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