

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

Court Theatre Training Company Ltd

March 2014

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Key findings about Court Theatre Training Company Ltd

As a result of its Review for Specific Course Designation carried out in March 2014, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the programme it offers on behalf of the University of West 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 this awarding body.

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**:

- the responsiveness to the student voice (paragraphs 1.6 and 2.2)
- external engagement to embed employability skills and attributes (paragraphs 2.3 and 1.9)
- the provision of a broad range of enrichment opportunities (paragraph 2.6).

Recommendations

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

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

- make external examiner reports accessible to all students (paragraph 1.11)
- consolidate and document the internal systems for managing the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 2.1)
- use teaching and peer observation more systematically in order to identify and disseminate good practice (paragraph 2.5)
- implement and monitor the appraisal and staff development policies (paragraphs 2.10 and 2.11).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Specific Course Designation](#)¹ conducted by [QAA](#) at Court Theatre Training Company (CTTC), 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 the University of West London. The review was carried out by Ms Ann Kettle, Mr Mike Slawin (reviewers) and Dr John Hurley (Coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight \(and for specific course designation\): Handbook, April 2013](#).² Evidence in support of the review included documentation supplied by the provider and awarding body, meetings with staff and students.

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

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code)
- Drama UK standards
- University of West London Partnership Agreement.

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

CTTC primarily delivers its higher education provision from The Courtyard Theatre, which is a professional working theatre based in Hoxton, London. The Theatre has a strong reputation for innovation and the associated training provision has been established for 25 years with some distinguished alumni. The two organisations have evolved to become independent legal entities but are interlinked through their governance.

The degree programme with University of West London was validated in 2005 as a three year BA (Hons) and was revalidated as a two-year intensive BA (Hons) in 2011. The second and third cohorts of the two year intensive degree are currently enrolled, with 18 students in each year. The new programme has attracted a slightly more mature intake.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath their awarding body with student numbers in brackets:

University of West London

- BA (Hons) Acting 2 Year Intensive (36)

The provider's stated responsibilities

CTTC works closely with the University of West London with shared responsibilities for the quality assurance of standards and learning opportunities. Curriculum, teaching, all aspects of assessment, tutorial support and information provision are the responsibility of CTTC subject to the awarding body's approval and monitoring processes. Other aspects of student support are shared or provided by the awarding body.

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx

² www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

Recent developments

From the September 2014 intake the provision will change awarding bodies to Buckinghamshire New University, following a successful validation event which took place shortly after the visit during the drafting of this report. This results from the decision of the University of West London to introduce its own acting programmes. Links with the University of West London will continue through collaboration with the London College of Music. Buckinghamshire New University has existing performing arts provision and all partners are working collaboratively to ensure a smooth transition, with the intention that Buckinghamshire New University assumes many responsibilities currently provided by West London.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. A student written submission was prepared by student representatives based on discussions and survey data from their year groups. Data collection was assisted by the office administrator. The responses provided a broad and balanced evaluation of students' experience. Students met reviewers during the review visit and made an animated contribution which confirmed the findings of the written submission.

Detailed findings about Court Theatre Training Company Ltd

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 CTTC has effective structures and approaches for the management and development of academic standards. There is a well established management structure, which, while small, is clear with well-defined responsibilities and understood by all staff. Governance is effective and involves the Director of The Courtyard Theatre. The change of awarding body is being conducted efficiently. There is good dialogue with the existing awarding body, and CTTC has ensured that there are effective arrangements for the transition to the new one, to ensure that the established approaches to academic standards are maintained during the move.

1.2 The Principal and the Assistant Director of Studies are responsible for overseeing the curriculum, assuring that academic standards are met and that quality assurance systems are adhered to. There is effective dialogue with awarding bodies, and monitoring of provision is clear and transparent.

1.3 Programme monitoring occurs by module, and is in alignment with the expectations of the awarding body. These are completed rigorously, and conclude with an action plan. The first part of the monitoring report requires a response from the previous year's action plan, and ensures that all issues are addressed.

1.4 CTTC produces a comprehensive Staff Handbook, and a Quality Systems document. These clearly articulate the expectation from staff in terms of standards and assessment, as well as providing other quality and curriculum information and guidance. These documents are referred to frequently, and provide a valuable resource to those staff joining the teaching team.

1.5 Given the small size of the provision, communication between management and staff is often informal, or by email rather than through formal minuted meetings. When formal meetings and a record are required, appropriate committees are convened and meetings are minuted.

1.6 Student engagement is extensive, and student representatives, known as Company Managers play an active part in informing and influencing how the curriculum is managed and responds to student needs (see paragraph 2.2).

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

1.7 CTTC, with Buckinghamshire New University, has engaged with the Quality Code in the development process for programme validation. The programme being put forward for validation in April 2014 has been developed with reference to *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ), and the QAA subject benchmark statements for dance, drama and performance.

1.8 The Assistant Director of Studies has undertaken a mapping exercise of staff development activity cross referenced with some elements of the Quality Code. While there is understanding of, and engagement, with the Quality Code by management, there is not the same level of understanding by all teaching staff.

1.9 CTTC uses industry organisations extensively as reference points. CTTC is linked to The Courtyard Theatre through interlocking management and as such has a permanent industry reference point. It also takes note of Drama UK standards. The involvement of theatre companies sharing and renting rehearsal facilities at The Courtyard Theatre provides CTTC and the students with a valuable insight to current industry expectations. Students also have access to production companies designed to provide them with performance opportunities (see paragraph 2.3).

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

1.10 External examiners are appointed by the awarding body and reports are received at CTTC by the Principal and Assistant Director of Studies. Any issues are discussed and shared with staff. Actions are addressed and then information circulated to staff. External examiner reports influence the curriculum and have initiated improvement. The 2011-12 report identified the need to focus on improving aspects of critical self-reflection in assessment. Responses to this recommendation have been implemented, and the recommendations are now being consolidated into the assessment strategy for the new programme submission with Buckinghamshire New University.

1.11 Students were generally unaware that external examiner reports are made, and staff have not made them available to the student body as a whole, although they are discussed at meetings where student representatives are present. Awarding body expectations are that external examiner reports are easily accessible by students. It would be **desirable** for CTTC to make external examiner reports accessible to all students.

1.12 Internal management of assessment standards is effective. Assessment expectations are clear, and the process of internal moderation, through independent double marking, is well understood by staff and students. Marking is conducted against clear criteria and is, in general, transparent. The expectations of the awarding body are fulfilled and assessment board requirements observed.

1.13 The team concludes that CTTC manages its responsibilities for academic standards effectively, though sometimes less formally than larger institutions. It has sound mechanisms for the management of its academic programmes in accordance with awarding body requirements, with every expectation that this situation will continue under the validation by Buckinghamshire New University.

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

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 CTTC has an effective, if informal, structure for managing its activities which are described in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.4. The small management team discusses learning opportunities daily, either through meetings or email. This adequately maintains the quality of learning opportunities, but lacks the formality provided by the awarding body systems to assure standards. There are no processes and structures which capture and embed enhancements beyond termly staff meetings. It would be **desirable** for CTTC to consolidate and document the internal systems for managing the quality of learning opportunities.

2.2 The management team are responsive, where possible, to issues raised by students. Quantitative and qualitative summaries of student feedback on modules are considered at staff meetings and form the basis of curriculum planning. Student representatives attend staff meetings and hold meetings of their own. Current students have been consulted on the proposed changes to the degree course. Students are confident that they can raise concerns, either individually or through their representatives, and that the management team will take action. The responsiveness of CTTC to the student voice is **good practice**.

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

2.3 CTTC makes extensive use of external organisations and agencies to enhance the employability of its students. While it does not at the moment intend to seek accreditation from Drama UK, it engages with a large number of external industry bodies and agencies to advise on course delivery and to work directly with its students. Engagement with these agencies forms part of a module in professional practice designed to prepare students for the acting industry and improve their employability. The recent figure of over 70 per cent of students gaining an acting agent on completion of the course reflects the success of this emphasis on preparing students for entry to the industry. The close connection with industry bodies and agencies will be embedded in the new course structure. External engagement to embed employability skills and attributes is **good practice**.

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

2.4 CTTC assures itself that the quality of learning and teaching is maintained and enhanced by the careful selection and management of teaching staff and by seeking feedback from students. A core team of four full-time teaching and administrative staff is supplemented by a pool of freelance teachers who are all current industry professionals and who also teach at similar institutions. Students are highly appreciative of the opportunity to work with highly knowledgeable and experienced practitioners and benefit from their connections with the profession.

2.5 New staff are provided with a comprehensive handbook on appointment and there is a meeting at the start of each session to induct all staff into curriculum developments and changes in processes and procedures. An initial round of teaching observations has recently been completed and staff are encouraged to engage in peer observation. It would be **desirable** for CTTC to use teaching and peer observation more systematically in order to identify and disseminate good practice.

2.6 There are structured opportunities for the enhancement of student learning. In addition to the degree programme, CTTC offers students opportunities to enrich and develop their craft skills. These additional opportunities include: body conditioning, period dance movement, sight reading and improvisation sessions, ballet training, and workshops in design and stage management. Students take the London College of Music examinations and are able to acquire an award in stage combat from the British Academy of Stage and Screen Combat. The provision of a broad range of enrichment opportunities is **good practice**.

2.7 CTTC tutors provide continual informal feedback on the development of students' learning. Teaching arrangements facilitate developmental comment on students' performance work by their peer group. Written feedback on assessments varies in the degree to which it relates to learning outcomes or differentiates levels of achievement, but the best examples are full, constructive and facilitate improvement.

How does CTTC assure itself that students are supported effectively?

2.8 A small close-knit community ensures that effective academic and personal support is an integral part of the student learning experience. Each year group is assigned a personal and an academic tutor and mandatory individual meetings are arranged each term to discuss academic and personal progress on the basis of an action plan completed by the student. The Assistant Director of Studies acts as academic tutor across both year groups and supports students by providing general and specific advice on such matters as assessment, reflective practice, compiling working journals and referencing systems.

2.9 Students are asked to disclose any assessed physical and educational needs during induction and enrolment. The Assistant Director of Studies provides bespoke and flexible internal support with study skills. Support for students with specialised needs, such as dyslexia, is provided in partnership with the current awarding body, and it is intended that the new awarding body will allow students to access similar specialist support.

How effectively does CTTC develop its staff in order to improve student learning opportunities?

2.10 CTTC is in the process of formalising staff development activities in order to make them more effective. All staff are expected to maintain their expertise and undertake appropriate professional development. Following an audit of staff curricula vitae, a record of the professional development and scholarly activities of freelance staff has been drawn up. Staff development activity has been mapped against indicators in *Chapter B3: Learning and teaching* and *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning* of the Quality Code. It is intended to introduce an appraisal system during the current session in order to identify staff development needs.

2.11 Under a formal policy which is being developed, staff appointed to a teaching role who do not already have an appropriate teaching qualification or at least two years' experience of teaching in higher education will be required to enrol on a postgraduate teaching course within two years of appointment. Staff will be encouraged to take advantage of staff development opportunities offered by the new awarding body and encouraged to seek associate fellowship of the Higher Education Academy. It would be **desirable** for CTTC to implement and monitor the appraisal and staff development policies.

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

2.12 Students have access to appropriate and sufficient learning resources that are effectively managed by CTTC in collaboration with The Courtyard Theatre. As the course is located in a professional working theatre, access to physical resources is current, fit for purpose and kept under continual review. Inevitable tensions arise over competition for space but there is close cooperation over timetabling with The Courtyard Theatre to ensure that, when necessary, CTTC can hire external space for student learning activities. Students are kept informed of the reason for any disruption. By the lease of rehearsal space in partnership with a neighbouring theatre company, the space available for CTTC activities has recently been increased by 25 per cent. There has also been recent investment in soundproofing and in improving technical equipment.

2.13 A small specialist library is maintained with at least two copies of texts in module reading lists; students also have access to specialist online resources. The number of available computers has been increased to one for every six students and there is wireless access throughout the building.

2.14 The team concludes that CTTC has effective mechanisms for the management and enhancement of learning opportunities in accordance with awarding body requirements. While some systems are still being developed there is evidence of good practice in those areas which most impact on students' future employment.

The 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 CTTC communicate information about learning opportunities to students and other stakeholders?

3.1 CTTC is effective in its approach to communicating its information. It produces a useful and informative prospectus that is available in hard copy as well as downloadable from its website. The well presented website is easily navigable and contains comprehensive information, including extensive information on application, fees, and student support. In addition to this, the website contains a virtual tour providing an online taste of CTTC, as well as providing links to key documents such as student handbooks, CTTC policies and an insight into CTTC alumni.

3.2 There is regularly updated social media managed by the CTTC administrator. This allows updates from the leading industry journals as well as links to events and shows that are of interest to students. These are also accessible to prospective students, giving them an indication of CTTC activities and culture. Students find both the website and social media useful, and actively engage with them.

3.3 CTTC produces a comprehensive staff handbook that is circulated to all staff. Student handbooks and module study guides are clear, and available on the website and the University of West London virtual learning environment.

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

3.4 CTTC management staff take appropriate responsibility for assuring the accuracy, accessibility and trustworthiness of information about learning opportunities. Before any adjustments are finalised to the website, staff and student handbooks or social media pages, the Assistant Director of Studies checks the information for accuracy and completeness, and it is then checked again and finally adjusted by the CTTC Administrator. Although CTTC does not have a written policy for checking information, the approach used is well understood.

3.5 Any information relating to the programmes (such as prospectus, student handbooks and module handbooks) follows the same process as above, but the Assistant Director of Studies is required to have it agreed by the awarding body, as explicitly identified in the partnership agreement.

3.6 CTTC has also recently introduced a Social Media Policy in alignment with that of the new awarding body, although this has yet to be fully implemented. However, no problems with social media have been identified and current working practices are sufficient.

3.7 The team concludes that CTTC has effective mechanisms for the management of the information it produces, which ensure that the information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

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

Court Theatre Training Company Ltd action plan relating to the Review for Specific Course Designation March 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 CTTC:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the responsiveness to the student voice (paragraphs 2.2 and 1.6) 	Work closely with Buckinghamshire New University (BNU, validating partner from September 2014) to sustain current and develop new mechanisms to capture and respond to the student voice	<p>Meeting with curriculum and quality teams at BNU to discuss student voice strategies and disseminate information about current good practice</p> <p>Due diligence meeting held on 15 May 2014 where current systems were discussed and minuted</p>	August 2014	Director of Studies	Principal	<p>Collaborative team meeting minutes and operations manual</p> <p>Annual review reports (to be captured formally in 2015 after first annual quality cycle)</p>

³ The CTTC 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 CTTC's awarding body.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> external engagement to embed employability skills and attributes (paragraphs 2.3 and 1.9) 	<p>Sustain current relationships with external agencies and develop new companies and agencies to extend employability links</p>	<p>Develop and extend the professional practice programme of activities, as imbedded into level 6 curriculum with BNU</p>	<p>September 2014</p>	<p>Director of Studies Courtyard Theatre Director</p>	<p>Principal</p>	<p>Review student feedback forms related to professional practice programme</p> <p>Feedback from external industry links and sessions held</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the provision of a broad range of enrichment opportunities (paragraph 2.6) 	<p>Continue current enrichment skills classes as timetabled activities and external workshops and seminars</p> <p>To work with BNU to create cross company activities</p> <p>Develop The Courtyard Theatre links and opportunities available to students through this relationship</p>	<p>To be addressed within quarterly management meetings and formally minuted</p> <p>To hold monthly meeting between CTTC management and Courtyard Executive team to explore opportunities with external companies programmed at The Courtyard</p> <p>Side agreement in development with BNU</p>	<p>September 2014</p>	<p>Director of Studies Courtyard Theatre Director</p>	<p>Principal</p>	<p>Conclusion of agreement made, evidenced through the side agreement</p>

		additional to formal validation based on skills/facilities share				
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 is desirable for the CTTC to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make external examiner reports accessible to all students (paragraph 1.11) 	<p>Student access to reports through website</p> <p>Hard copy of report made available at student representative meetings</p>	<p>Upload 2011-12 and 2012-13 reports to 'useful documents' tab on website</p> <p>Make student aware of ability to access information</p>	20 May 2014	Director of Studies	Principal	Upload completed to website
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consolidate and document the internal systems for managing the quality of learning opportunities (paragraph 2.1) 	To hold quarterly formally minuted management meetings to capture ongoing developments and review the quality of learning opportunities	<p>Create an annual internal quality and committee meeting calendar made available to all management and staff at CTTC</p> <p>Disseminate minutes to staff regularly and respond to feedback</p>	August 2014	Courtyard Theatre Director	Principal	Committee calendar and minutes published
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use teaching and peer observation more systematically in order to identify 	<p>Complete biannual management teaching observations</p> <p>Develop a peer teaching observation programme</p>	<p>Create timetable of observations</p> <p>Meet with staff to re-address previous observation reports and</p>	August 2014	Director of Studies	Principal	<p>Publish observation timetable</p> <p>A report on observation outcomes and</p>

and disseminate good practice. (paragraph 2.5)	in consultation with staff	<p>discuss developments</p> <p>Hold meeting with all staff to discuss possible peer teaching framework and to assess need</p>				actions produced and reviewed by senior management group
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement and monitor the appraisal and staff development policies (paragraphs 2.10 and 2.11). 	Complete annual appraisals with full-time and freelance staff	<p>Consult with validating universities regarding official higher educational institute appraisal policies and systems</p> <p>Create calendar of appraisals schedule</p> <p>Develop full-time and freelance appraisal documentation to record the outcomes of meetings</p>	September 2014	Director of Studies	Principal	Review appraisal outcomes in the senior management group

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/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx.

Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary. Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Review for Educational Oversight \(and for specific course designation\): Handbook, April 2013](#).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 Courses 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/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

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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