

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

David Game College

October 2014

Contents

Key findings about David Game College	1
Recommendations	1
About this report	2
The provider's stated responsibilities.....	3
Recent developments	3
Students' contribution to the review.....	3
Detailed findings about David Game College	4
1 Academic standards	4
2 Quality of learning opportunities.....	5
3 Information about learning opportunities	8
Action plan	10
About QAA	15
Glossary	16

Key findings about David Game College

As a result of its 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 Pearson.

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 organisation.

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.

Recommendations

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

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

- define clearly the terms of reference of the Academic Infringement Committee, and clarify the relationships and decision flows between committees (paragraph 1.2)
- reintroduce the statistical learning outcome results (paragraph 1.4)
- employ a more systematic approach to providing formal feedback on students' work (paragraph 2.8)
- broaden the scope of the course evaluation questionnaire (paragraph 2.13)
- implement staff development linked to module results, feedback and tutor appraisal (paragraph 2.14)
- produce and implement a staff recruitment policy (paragraph 2.16).

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

- clarify both the responsibilities of the Programme Leader and the programme organisational structure (paragraph 1.1)
- access the training offered by Pearson for assessors and verifiers (paragraph 2.15)
- make the information on progression routes to university readily available to students (paragraph 3.6).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the Review for Specific Course Designation¹ (RSCD) conducted by [QAA](#) at David Game 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 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 Pearson. The review was carried out by Mr Shahban Aziz, Dr Linda Keen and Professor Tony Whitehouse (reviewers) and Dr Alun Thomas (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 the College's self-assessment, strategy and policy documents, minutes of meetings, and two Pearson external examiners' reports. All of these were supported by meetings with staff and students during the review visit.

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

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)
- the regulations of its awarding organisation
- the Qualifications and Credit Framework.

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

David Game College was established in 1974 to deliver further and higher education programmes to both Home and EC and to international students. The David Game higher education centre was set up last year and extends the College's provision up to levels 5 and 6. The College is based on a campus close to Notting Hill tube station.

On 1 August 2014, there were 202 students at the College. All students were full-time; there were no international students.

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

Pearson

- HND in Business Management (150)
- HND in Hospitality Management (52)

There have been five intakes of students in the past 12 months, in September and October 2013 and in January, April and July 2014.

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

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

The provider's stated responsibilities

The College is responsible for the recruitment of students, their induction and guidance and for the quality of the higher education it provides. It is also responsible for setting assignments, internal verification, staff development and collecting and acting upon student feedback. The awarding organisation has responsibility for curriculum design and shares responsibility with the College for programme specifications and intended learning outcomes. College staff undertake first and second marking of assignments before student work is submitted for external verification.

Recent developments

The College has provided higher education programmes since September 2013. Pearson approved the first HND programme in Hospitality Management in September 2012. The College plans to introduce a top-up programme leading to a degree in 2015-16. In the future, the higher education centre is to become a larger and more resilient profit centre and make a greater contribution to the growth of the College.

Students' contribution to the review

A separate student submission, written independently by students, was received. The QAA review and the need for a student submission were discussed at a student/staff meeting in June and the students were issued with guidance shortly afterwards. A meeting was held with student representatives at both the briefing and the review meetings. These meetings with students and their submission were a most helpful contribution to the team's considerations.

Detailed findings about David Game College

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 A comprehensive quality assurance system is outlined in the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook (QAEH). The Director of Higher Education (DHE), supported by the Head of Academic Administration (HAA), is responsible for ensuring the overall maintenance and enhancement of quality and standards while the Programme Leader, supported by the Programme Managers, ensures implementation. Responsibilities of the DHE and the HAA are clearly set out in the QAEH. However, both the responsibilities of the Programme Leader and the programme organisation structure vary between documents. In addition, the Programme Leader has exceeded his powers in an academic misconduct meeting with students. It would be **desirable** for the College to clarify both the responsibilities of the Programme Leader and the programme organisation structure.

1.2 The initial application of policies in the first year of delivering higher education (2013-14) has involved incremental changes at operational level, including the treatment of plagiarism, and changes to student progression procedures. The College is clarifying procedures for approving such amendments at the Quality Standards Committee (QSC). The College also intends to review and consolidate the terms of reference and relationships of all its committees, currently specified in several documents. Current uncertainties include the absence of lists of members present and quorums from most committee records, and excessively wide-ranging discretion over penalties for academic misconduct exercised by the Academic Infringement Committee. It is **advisable** for the College to define clearly the terms of reference of the Academic Infringement Committee, and clarify the relationships and decision flows between committees.

1.3 The robust monitoring and review processes include tutor self-evaluation and peer observation; termly module reporting and interim/annual course and programme reviews reported to the Programme Management Committee (PMC); extensive student feedback; a new Teaching and Learning Group; and an online discussion forum in the virtual learning environment (VLE). Programme, interim and annual course reviews are well organised, with standardised agendas, clearly specified action plans, and action tracking, although module reports are variable in quality and length.

1.4 Extensive information is available on student cohort profiles, progression and retention. The useful statistical learning outcome results, produced for each module until April 2014, enabled rigorous longitudinal and comparative analysis of all results at the appropriate evaluation meetings. It is **advisable** for the College to reintroduce the statistical learning outcome results.

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

1.5 External reference points are clearly embedded in the College's institutional policies, and the College's VLE includes all relevant documents. A mapping exercise shows clearly the relationship between the Quality Code, College policies and all aspects of programme design, delivery and review. Comprehensive and specific references are made to Pearson's guidelines in the College's policy documents. Clearly identified responsibilities for liaison with Pearson operate through the DHE, the PMC and tutors. The HAA is responsible for administering the Pearson online platform for the College, and jointly responsible with the Programme Leader for liaising with the Standards Verifier. The College

did not, however, liaise with Pearson over possible methods of mitigating the impact on students of the very low pass rate in a Human Resources Management module.

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

1.6 External examiners' reports are used effectively to ensure academic standards and to improve programme quality in alignment with principles outlined in Quality Code and Pearson policies. These reports are discussed thoroughly in module tutor meetings, specific sections of the interim and annual course reviews, the PMC and the QSC. The report from the external examiner for the Business Management Programme included recommendations for changes to enhance the effectiveness of the assessment strategy and study skills. They have since been implemented. Proposals for improvements in internal verification recommended for Hospitality Management were implemented through an action plan following a thorough analysis of the problem. A subsequent Pearson site visit resulted in a positive report, and further responses by the College are in hand.

1.7 There are satisfactory procedures for ensuring effective management of academic standards, although clarification is required of the College's programme organisational structure and in its committees' terms of reference and relationships. External reference points and a comprehensive external examiner system are used effectively to review and monitor adherence to the requirements of the awarding organisation, and to manage academic standards.

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 organisation.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 There are effective processes for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. The committee structure ensures that issues are discussed and action plans are produced with implementation dates.

2.2 The Programme Leader is responsible for ensuring that students receive academic support together with appropriate teaching and learning opportunities and for enhancing the quality of learning opportunities within the College. The Programme Leader is a member of the Programme Management Committee and of the Quality and Standards Committee. Both committees meet under the chairmanship of the DHE to evaluate and address academic issues. This structure ensures that the quality of learning opportunities is discussed throughout the College.

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

2.3 The College makes effective use of relevant chapters of the Quality Code. Policies and procedures are mapped against the Quality Code and discussed at committee and informal staff meetings. External reference points, provided by Pearson, are used in College regulations and policy documents.

2.4 Staff and students are provided with clear information about the academic programmes of study. The College has a teaching and learning strategy and related policies on the quality of learning opportunities. The strategy is evaluated against delivery and adjustments made to meet students' needs.

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

2.5 The College has recently completed the first year of delivery of higher education and it continues to develop a range of effective mechanisms for assuring the quality of learning and teaching. Based on experience and comments from external examiners, the College has enhanced its marking and assessment policy. Teaching observation is to be carried out annually and will then be fully integrated with appraisal and development of teaching staff.

2.6 Annual and interim monitoring is the central mechanism that the College uses to assure itself that quality is being maintained and enhanced. The College recognises that it could use available information and data more effectively to enhance its strategic planning and oversight of the quality of teaching and learning, including more effective review of module and progression results (see paragraph 1.4).

2.7 Students are represented on all relevant College committees. A Student/Staff Liaison Committee meeting is held each term and students confirm that their voice is heard and appropriate action taken. The College uses email and its VLE to communicate with students, who confirm that the process is effective. At the request of the students, the College has increased the amount of instruction for students and staff on the effective use of the VLE system for teaching and learning.

2.8 The College requires students to submit assignments at mid-term for formative feedback. Students confirmed that this greatly improves their understanding and confidence in meeting intended learning outcomes. External examiners have commented on the variability of feedback and the College has provided further training to staff and an enhanced marking and assessment guide. It is **advisable** for the College to employ a more systematic approach to providing formal feedback on students' work.

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

2.9 The College has introduced a variety of formal mechanisms to assure itself that students are supported effectively. The majority of applicants are mature (average age 38) and do not hold a level 3 qualification. The admission interview procedure, including an English test, supports a robust admission process and identifies personal development needs. The College is currently revising two elements of its admissions policy: its English tests, and the criteria for assessing relevant experience of applicants without formal qualifications.

2.10 The College has recognised the need for extra support to be provided to its mature students. This has resulted in a dedicated programme of learning support and study skills together with timetabled personal tutor sessions.

2.11 Each student is assigned a personal tutor who meets students as required and also completes a student review form each term. Further support is provided through the induction process, timetabled study skill sessions and academic misconduct training; students confirmed that each of these is useful.

2.12 Academic administration alerts personal tutors to any student who is not engaging in teaching and learning activities. Attendance and submission of mid-term formative assessments are monitored to identify students at risk.

2.13 Comprehensive systems designed to encourage student involvement and engagement include surveys, module evaluation questionnaires, and student participation in the student/staff liaison committee and the PMC and QSC meetings, although students are uncertain about the extent of their representation on the latter. The course evaluation questionnaires omit questions about important elements of student feedback on their courses, such as the quality of feedback on assessed work, the time taken to return work, and the suitability of learning resources. The College is currently addressing the problem of declining rates of questionnaire completion during the academic year. Student feedback indicates high levels of satisfaction with both formal and informal methods of student engagement. It is **advisable** for the College to broaden the scope of the course evaluation questionnaire.

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

2.14 The College has a staff development policy and is gradually implementing the arrangements for staff appraisal, review and development. There is a formal staff induction programme and, following completion of its first academic year, the College plans to implement a linked sequence of teaching observation, appraisal and staff development. A tutor handbook is provided and the role of a tutor is made clear at induction. The Programme Leader, or an experienced tutor, provides ongoing support to new staff. It is **advisable** for the College to implement staff development linked to module results, feedback and tutor appraisal.

2.15 To date staff development has been limited and the College has not taken the opportunity for its staff to be trained by the awarding organisation as assessors and internal verifiers. A separate budget for staff development provides financial assistance for tutors to become members of the Higher Education Academy and to obtain a professional teaching qualification though no staff have yet taken advantage of this. There is scope for College managers to provide tutors with developmental feedback that is constructively critical to enhance quality. It would be **desirable** for the College to access the training offered by Pearson for assessors and verifiers.

2.16 During the first year of operation, an informal process has been used by the DHE, with the support of the Programme Leader, to appoint teaching staff. Although the College stipulates that staff are required to hold at least a first degree, the College admits that it has not always been able to ensure this. It is **advisable** for the College to produce and implement a staff recruitment policy.

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

2.17 External examiners have confirmed that learning resources are sufficient for student needs. A learning resources development plan is produced annually to identify the resources required for each new academic year.

2.18 The College continues to develop its VLE, which is well received by students. In response to student feedback, the College has improved the library stock and also increased the learning materials available through the VLE.

2.19 Both formal and informal meetings are held to discuss all aspects of delivery and assessment, including the availability and suitability of learning resources, at which feedback from staff and students is considered and appropriate action taken.

2.20 The College has effective procedures and staff for the management of its responsibilities for the provision of learning opportunities. Extra support needs have been identified and provided for mature students. Students' views are gathered by a variety of formal and informal means and students confirm that timely and relevant actions are taken. Student questionnaires on courses need to include additional questions if comprehensive student feedback is to be gained. A formal staff recruitment policy is needed. Staff development has been limited during this first year of operation and the College needs to link staff appraisal with staff development.

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 communicates effectively about learning opportunities to students and other stakeholders. Information for students is provided through the website, visits to the College, and the programme handbooks. The College's higher education centre does not make use of social media but will do so in due course.

3.2 Students stated that it was difficult to find the higher education course that they wanted on the College website. The website for the College's higher education centre is not operational and students have to obtain information about higher education courses through the wider David Game website. Students have been asked to comment on the accuracy of the newly proposed higher education website and to provide feedback on the site.

3.3 Students not meeting the formal entry requirements are interviewed before starting the programme. However, no formal checklist for entry exists and students were unaware of the criteria against which they would be checked at in their interview. The College would benefit from a more formalised approach to ensure consistency in entry requirements.

3.4 Students are required to attend a short but comprehensive induction course which they commended. This informative orientation period includes the provision to students of information that complements the Programme Handbook as well as information about plagiarism and information available on the VLE.

3.5 The Course Handbook is comprehensive and outlines the programme specification, the academic calendar, the academic misconduct policy and the rationale for assessment methods and learning outcomes. Students also have access to the Handbook through the VLE and students indicated that they are satisfied with the accuracy and usefulness of the information provided. The Student/Staff Liaison Committee minutes are not currently placed on the VLE, but are emailed directly to students instead.

3.6 Students appeared to be confused about the universities to which they could progress after completing their course in order to complete a top-up year and gain a degree qualification. This information has not been provided to them by the College. It would be

desirable for the College to make the information on progression routes to university readily available to students.

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

3.7 The procedure for managing the publication of information about learning resources is fully documented and effective. The Managing Public Information Policy details the procedures that are in place to track, amend and sign off any changes in public information. The DHE is responsible for reviewing and updating website content.

3.8 Students are able to comment on the information that is placed on the VLE through the student/staff liaison committee meetings and this has resulted in changes to the information that is available to students. Students are also able to give feedback by means of surveys and the student representative chat room on the VLE.

3.9 The College has an effective system for producing accurate information. Students value the VLE and are satisfied with its accuracy and usefulness. The College is likely to move from its current premises next year and it is important that current and prospective students are aware of this.

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

David Game Colleg action plan relating to the Review for Specific Course Designation of October 2014						
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 College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> define clearly the terms of reference of the Academic Infringement Committee, and clarify the relationships and decision flows between committees (paragraph 1.2) 	<p>Clarity in all aspects of the operation of the Academic Infringement Committee including its purpose, membership, terms of reference, functions, procedures, outcomes and appeals process</p> <p>Clarity in inter-committee relationships</p>	<p>Review and amend Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy</p> <p>Amend documentation relating to the Academic Infringement Committee</p> <p>Review and amend membership, terms of reference and standing orders for all committees</p>	16 Jan 2015	Programme Leader	<p>Director of Higher Education</p> <p>(and later presented to the Quality and Standards Committee)</p>	<p>Academic Integrity and Misconduct Policy</p> <p>Committee descriptors</p> <p>Review by the Quality and Standards Committee after 12 months</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reintroduce the statistical learning outcome results (paragraph 1.4) 	<p>Module results reporting to include statistical analysis of pass, merit and distinction profiles to enable comparison and evaluation across the entire programme</p>	<p>Redesign of results tracking template</p> <p>Implementation of new system at next assessment board</p>	<p>12 Dec 2014</p> <p>16 Dec 2015</p>	<p>Head of Academic Administration</p> <p>Head of Academic Administration</p>	<p>Director of Higher Education</p> <p>Programme Assessment Board</p>	<p>Module results tracking template</p> <p>Review by the Programme Assessment Board after 12 months</p>

³ 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 organisation.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> employ a more systematic approach to providing formal feedback on students' work (paragraph 2.8) 	<p>High levels of student satisfaction with: quantity and quality of feedback, its delivery timing, and the channels used</p> <p>Structured grading template broken down by learning outcome with actions to improve in future work</p> <p>Enhanced moderation quality check on first marker feedback before release of grades</p> <p>Creation of deadlines to lecturers on formative and summative feedback (turnaround time for all marking) that needs to be complied with strictly</p>	<p>Consultation with external verifiers on current approaches to feedback</p> <p>Enhanced new tutor induction to include standardisation of grading and feedback training</p> <p>Enhanced marking and assessment guide</p> <p>Verbal feedback on assignments to be logged and detail recorded</p> <p>Review of academic calendar and specific feedback deadlines</p>	<p>26 Jan 2014</p>	<p>Programme Manager</p>	<p>Programme Leader</p>	<p>Assessment decision internal verifier reports</p> <p>Marking and assessment guide</p> <p>Student feedback</p> <p>External verifier feedback on grading standards</p> <p>Module reports</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> broaden the scope of the course evaluation questionnaire (paragraph 2.13) 	<p>Comprehensive questionnaire providing evaluation opportunities on all aspects of the student experience and the student life-cycle</p>	<p>Review and extend questionnaire</p> <p>Present revised draft at the November Student/Staff Liaison Committee</p>	<p>14 Nov 2014</p> <p>18 Nov 2014</p>	<p>Head of Academic Administration</p>	<p>Director of Higher Education</p>	<p>Course evaluation questionnaire</p> <p>Student/Staff Liaison Committee meeting minutes</p>

		Implement new questionnaire	16 Feb 2015			Questionnaire outcomes Review by Student/Staff Liaison Committee after first use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement staff development linked to module results, feedback and tutor appraisal (paragraph 2.14) 	<p>Linked sequence of: teaching observation; module results/reports and student feedback to inform appraisal process and hence staff development needs</p> <p>Review of peer observation to include students perceptions and referral to Programme Leader for appraisal purposes</p>	<p>Coordinate existing activities in order to implement linked sequence</p> <p>Review and revise the Staff Appraisal and Development Policy</p> <p>Implement development opportunities identified with first round of appraisals and monitor improvement</p>	27 Apr 2015	Programme Leader	Director of Higher Education	<p>Staff Appraisal and Development Policy</p> <p>Staff appraisal and development records reviewed by Director of Higher Education</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produce and implement a staff recruitment policy (paragraph 2.16). 	Introduction of a formal staff recruitment policy	Review of current and proposed future course provision, identification of appropriate candidate qualifications/profile, production and implementation of a staff recruitment policy	27 Apr 2015	Programme Leader	Director of Higher Education	Staff Recruitment Policy
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 College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clarify both the responsibilities of the Programme Leader and the programme organisational structure (paragraph 1.1) 	Clear and comprehensive programme leader job description and how programme managers support this function and clarity on where both these roles fit within the programme organisational structure	<p>Review and revise programme leader and programme manager roles and responsibilities</p> <p>Review and revise Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook</p>	27 Apr 2015	Programme Leader	Director of Higher Education	<p>Programme leader and Programme manager job descriptions</p> <p>Programme organisational structure diagram</p> <p>Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> access the training offered by Pearson for assessors and verifiers (paragraph 2.15) 	Tutors informed about the training courses available from Pearson and how to access them including financial support	Identification and internal publication of Pearson training events and dates	26 Jan 2015	Head of Academic Administration	Programme Leader	<p>Pearson Training Courses Calendar</p> <p>Tutor continuous professional development records</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make the information on progression routes to university readily available to students 	Student familiarity with the university application process through UCAS and the progression opportunities (courses and institutions) available to them upon successful	<p>Develop and publish a handbook and schedule and deliver UCAS training course</p> <p>Secure articulation agreements from three</p>	12 Dec 2014	Head of Academic Administration	Registrar	<p>University Progression Opportunities Handbook</p> <p>Student feedback</p>

(paragraph 3.6).	completion of their qualification	universities	6 Jul 2015	Director of Higher Education	Senior Management Team	Articulation agreements
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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.

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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