



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

Fairfield School of Business Ltd

November 2013

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Key findings about Fairfield School of Business Ltd

As a result of its adapted Review for Specific Course Designation carried out in November 2013, 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 programme 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.

Good practice

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

- the use of a comprehensive information system to manage academic standards, quality and enhancement (paragraphs 1.4 and 2.2)
- staff awareness and use of the Quality Code (paragraphs 1.6, 2.4 and 3.2)
- the effective processes for verification, moderation and standardisation of assessment (paragraph 1.9)
- the group approach to peer observing and standardising teaching (paragraph 2.13).

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:

- monitor and periodically review the work of the boards and committees (paragraph 1.3)
- develop its use of external benchmarking (paragraph 1.7)
- develop a more strategic approach to resource allocation (paragraph 2.3)
- increase the level of engagement with employers, sector and professional bodies (paragraph 2.5)
- implement the mechanisms for election and training of student representatives (paragraph 2.7)
- provide staff with individually appropriate opportunities to gain relevant teaching qualifications (paragraph 2.11).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the adapted [Review for Specific Course Designation](#)¹ conducted by [QAA](#) at the Fairfield School of Business Ltd (the School) which is a privately funded provider of higher education. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of Pearson. The review was carried out by Mr John Holloway, Dr Helen Thomas (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 include documentation supplied by the provider and awarding organisation, meetings with staff and students, reports of reviews by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) and the British Accreditation Council (BAC).

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

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

- Pearson
- The UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

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

The School is situated in central Croydon. Under new ownership it has changed its focus from English for speakers of other languages to higher education and has undergone rapid expansion during 2012 and 2013. It has acquired new premises for teaching, with student facilities (administration, student support, library and common rooms) continuing in adjacent units.

Students are currently admitted at four points during the year, the total enrolled rising from 38 in October 2012 to 629 at the time of the visit. There are 860 planned places for the remaining recruitment period in the academic year 2013-14. All students are full-time, with some flexibility in attendance patterns to accommodate the needs of a largely mature student intake. All students are currently home based or from the European Union.

At the time of the review, the School offered the following higher education programme, listed beneath its awarding organisation:

Pearson

- HND Business

The provider's stated responsibilities

The School runs standard Pearson units, with full responsibility for teaching, assessment, quality assurance, student admissions, and guidance and support. This is subject to annual

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

review by Pearson external examiners. The School is responsible for information about itself and study materials. Pearson has responsibility for information about the awards. The School will undergo an Academic Management Review by Pearson in 2014.

Recent developments

The School commenced its relocation into new teaching and academic staff accommodation in April 2013. This provides 10 teaching areas, each accommodating up to 40 students, two of which are computer laboratories. A third is under immediate development. It is in the process of introducing designated pathways into the Business HND and is exploring the introduction of top-up degrees with a number of universities. A new Academic Dean has been appointed, with the Acting Principal assuming the strategic role of Provost.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. Student representatives submitted a written submission based on focus groups held with their classes. Support was provided by the School through the student support officer. The submission gave a helpful summary of developments in the School in response to issues raised by students. Its findings were confirmed when the reviewers conducted a meeting with students during the visit.

Detailed findings about Fairfield School of Business Ltd

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 Although the School has only recently been constituted in its current form it demonstrates strong and effective management structures and processes. The processes are separated into academic and operational aspects; the academic processes and staff are managed by the (acting) Principal, with the operational aspects managed by the Deputy Chief Executive, both of whom report to the Director. Two new posts, a Provost and a Dean, have been developed to replace the role of Principal. The Dean will have oversight of the academic processes reporting to the Provost, who will concentrate on strategic developments, reporting to the Director.

1.2 The committee structure gives effective oversight of academic standards at management and programme levels. It is structured to enable expansion in student numbers and programmes. The Executive Committee reports to the School's Board. The Academic Board, Student Experience Committee and Management Board report to the Executive Committee. Only the Academic Board and the Student Experience Committee have met, due to the recent implementation of the committee structure. The School intends that the Management Board will become operational during this academic year. A number of the Management Board's subcommittees have already met and currently report to the Executive Committee.

1.3 The effective programme-level committees and committed staff are strengths of the provision. Academic and administrative staff contribute to the committee processes in accordance with the terms of reference and the published procedures. Staff are clear about the committees' roles and purposes. The committee structure is continuing to develop. As the School expands, it would be **desirable** for it to monitor and periodically review the work of the boards and committees to confirm they continue to maintain academic standards and enhance student achievement.

1.4 The School has a management information system that captures and enables the analysis of a significant range of data. The School's recent focus has been on attendance levels and attainment. The system provides early evidence of improvement. The potential of this system has not yet been fully realised by the School but it is already being used as an effective tool for managers, teachers and personal tutors. The use of a comprehensive information system to manage academic standards, quality and enhancement is **good practice**.

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

1.5 The School is aware of key external reference points and assures itself that these are applied throughout all levels of its operation. It works with just one external partner, Pearson, and has had one standards verification (external examiner) visit and report. This, and the reports from the British Accreditation Council and the Independent Schools Inspectorate, have been positive and the School has enhanced its provision following the recommendations from these external bodies.

1.6 The School has been effective in introducing the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) in staff development sessions for both academic and administrative staff. It has also mapped its academic and administrative processes in

response to the Quality Code. Staff have developed an enhanced programme specification using *Chapter A1: The national level* of the Quality Code. The preamble to the School's procedural and guidance documents all make reference to the relevant aspect of the Quality Code, including module monitoring, review procedures and guidance on the use of grade descriptors. Staff awareness and use of the Quality Code is **good practice**.

1.7 The School provided accurate progression data for all students, which indicates that attainment and progression levels are appropriate. However, the School has yet to develop a system of external benchmarks for its performance. The School's management information system allows benchmarking and the setting of retention and achievement targets based on data from the sector. It would be **desirable** for the School to develop its use of external benchmarking to assure itself and external bodies of its effective maintenance of academic standards.

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

1.8 The School has effectively developed its assessment practices in response to external recommendations. It has developed a taxonomy of pedagogic verbs to assist students to understand the key aspects of assessment tasks following recommendations included in a recent external examiner's report. Students were very positive about this improvement and staff have embedded this change within their pedagogic and managerial practices.

1.9 The School has implemented an effective verification, moderation and standardisation process at unit level. Verification of assignment tasks is carried out with sign-off by the Principal. Blind marking is used, and marking and feedback is moderated and signed off. Staff work in standardisation groups to ensure that marking and feedback is consistent across each unit, and standardised across the programme. These systems are effectively managed by a capable administrative officer. All assignments are submitted electronically and checked for plagiarism. The effective processes for verification, moderation and standardisation of assessment are **good practice**.

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

2.1 The School has effective arrangements for fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, mirroring those for academic standards described in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2. The Principal provides clear leadership of quality and enhancement, supported by the Executive Committee, and a strong and committed team of academic and professional staff. The committee structure reflects the changing needs of the School and although not yet fully implemented is formalising the effective but predominantly informal mechanisms previously in place.

2.2 The School has implemented a robust student management system which has been used effectively to support the implementation of comprehensive procedures for recording, monitoring and enhancing student attendance. Different layers of management information are being used for monitoring, evaluation and action planning at programme, unit

and student levels. They provide a strong basis to inform the impact of wider enhancement activities.

2.3 The Executive Committee manages resource allocation as required by the School's development. This has resulted in the extension of the available accommodation and increased staffing to support the growth in higher education provision. It is also responsive to resource needs identified through programme and unit review and student feedback. There is no formal resource allocation strategy. The School conceded that the relocation caused some temporary disruption to teaching timetables and computer availability, which has now been resolved. In future, it would be **desirable** for the School to develop a more strategic approach to resource allocation to ensure sustainable enhancement of learning opportunities.

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

2.4 Members of academic and professional support staff clearly understand the major practical provisions of the Quality Code. They also use external reference points provided by Pearson and external examiners to enhance learning opportunities. The Principal has worked successfully with specialist staff to benchmark and enhance policies and procedures, making them aware of the Quality Code. This has included mapping student support mechanisms to the Indicators of *Chapter B4: Enabling student development and achievement* as part of focused induction and staff development activities.

2.5 The School recognises the importance of employer engagement to fulfil its mission and meet the needs of students. This is at an early stage of development. The School has not yet established any advisory links with local or regional employers or professional bodies, and does not have an Employer Liaison Committee. It would be **desirable** for the School to increase the level of engagement with employers, sector and professional bodies to enhance employability and learning opportunities.

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

2.6 Student engagement is a particular strength in the School, with clear communication channels between students, student representatives and management, academic and support staff. There is an ethos of valuing student feedback and enhancing the quality of their educational experience. Students equally value the collective nature of discussions around student issues, as well as regular meetings between student representatives, lecturers, student support staff and the Principal. All decisions are relayed back to students via student representatives and sometimes by the Principal or lecturers.

2.7 In recognition of the need to move from effective but informal student engagement to more structured engagement, the School has published a Student Engagement Policy. This formalises student representation in its quality systems, particularly through the Programme Committee and the new Student Experience Committee reporting directly into Executive Committee. To enable fuller formal student representation, it would be **desirable** for the School to implement the mechanisms for election and training of student representatives.

2.8 The School gathers student's views on the quality of learning and teaching through online student evaluation questionnaires, which are considered as part of the module and annual programme evaluation and review processes. These are monitored through Academic Board. Enhancements in response to student feedback range from the introduction of air conditioning units, through the acquisition of 100 new computers, to more

streamlined and simplified assignment pro forma, and more varied, interactive teaching methods.

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

2.9 The School has effective and responsive arrangements in place to support staff development needs identified on an individual or collective basis.

2.10 The School has an effective induction process for new staff which includes a managed workload, academic support from experienced staff, informal teaching observations and a comprehensive set of briefing and training sessions. All lecturing staff at the School receive a copy of the Teaching and Learning Handbook, which functions as a continuous training and reference support for new and existing staff. It contains information on developing quality teaching, lesson planning, classroom management, education theories and strategies to motivate students.

2.11 The School recruits well-qualified staff and, if they have not already done so, they are encouraged to gain a teaching qualification within two years of appointment. There is limited consideration of the most appropriate routes to teaching qualifications for staff of different levels of qualification and experience. It would be **desirable** for the School to provide staff with individually appropriate opportunities to gain relevant teaching qualifications.

2.12 The staff appraisal system is detailed and constructive and successfully identifies areas for professional development. There is a clear process for requesting professional development support through the Executive Committee. There are graded teaching observations, by external staff, linked to appraisal. The School supports a range of in-house and specialist staff training and development days aligned to the staff appraisal process.

2.13 There is an effective peer observation system where staff work in 'quads' (groups of four) to reflect on and critique their own and others' practice. This enhances the student learning experience. It has been particularly effective in harmonising the approach across units and the programme to provide a more holistic approach for students. The group approach to peer observing and standardising teaching is **good practice**.

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

3 Information about learning opportunities

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

3.1 The School's system for assuring that its public information is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy is well understood by staff.

3.2 The School uses an effective range of media for communicating with stakeholders, including its website and a virtual learning environment (VLE). The School has recently reviewed its public information policy and approval procedure in line with *Part C: Information about higher education provision* of the Quality Code. This comprehensive policy assigns responsibilities and defines procedures for the secure preparation of all documents and information. It is supported by an online repository (Master Index of Regulations, Policies

and Procedures) which ensures version control and centralised management of document approval, release and review.

3.3 The Executive Committee maintains effective oversight. All new items of central information (marketing, communication with the press/media, and regulations, policies and procedures) are authorised before their publication or use within the School. The Principal, through the Executive Committee, is responsible for seeking written approval for release of shared materials from Pearson. All programme, unit and teaching materials are approved by the programme coordinator in consultation with unit leaders.

3.4 Information for prospective students is provided through the user-friendly website. This contains a welcome from the Principal; an online prospectus outlining the key elements of each programme; entry requirements; key policies including admissions, accrediting prior experience and learning; and external examiner and inspection reports. Information on fees, previously on the website, is not available on the website.

3.5 Learning and support materials provided to students are current, relevant and meet external requirements. They include the Student Handbook, covering general information about submission of work, and more student-focused information such as the Student Code of Conduct and Student Charter. A comprehensive study skills and learning materials booklet focuses on student responsibility and engagement in learning. There is a range of study materials available on the VLE and individual textbooks are provided as part of the programme fee.

3.6 The VLE has recently been upgraded to give offsite access for students. It is increasingly being used as an interactive tool as well as a repository for programme information.

3.7 The School provides public information training as part of the induction process for new staff and update training for existing staff. The policy specifies that staff giving false or misleading information to students or members of the public will be subject to disciplinary proceedings as specified in the Staff Handbook.

<p>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.</p>

Action plan³

Fairfield School of Business Ltd action plan relating to the Review of Specific Course Designation, November 2013						
Good practice	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the School:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the use of a comprehensive information system to manage academic standards, quality and enhancement (paragraphs 1.4 and 2.2) 	To provide greater monitoring of student tracking in areas such as attendance and attainment and to enable a range of functions to take appropriate and timely action as necessary	<p>Personal tutors to use the data available to prompt students (for example persistent absenteeism)</p> <p>Module convenors to use the data to support the Module Monitoring and Review process</p> <p>Course coordinators to use the data to support the Programme Evaluation and Monitoring Report process</p>	<p>Mid term</p> <p>End of each term</p> <p>End of each year</p>	<p>Personal tutors</p> <p>Module convenors</p> <p>Course coordinators</p>	<p>Course coordinators and Dean of School</p> <p>Course coordinator and Programme Committee</p> <p>Dean of School and Academic Board</p>	<p>Personal tutor records</p> <p>Programme Committee, Academic Board minutes</p> <p>Programme Committee, Academic Board, Student Experience Committee minutes</p>

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

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> staff awareness and use of the Quality Code (paragraphs 1.6, 2.4 and 3.2) 	To support greater understanding and implementation of nationally agreed quality practices at all levels across the School	<p>Continued mapping of the Quality Code</p> <p>Continued staff development opportunities for both new and existing staff</p>	<p>July 2014</p> <p>One per term</p>	<p>Dean of School</p> <p>Human Resources Officer</p>	<p>Provost</p> <p>Dean of School</p>	<p>Academic Board minutes</p> <p>Management Board minutes</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the effective processes for verification, moderation and standardisation of assessment (paragraph 1.9) 	To assure the quality of all aspects of assessment and of its consistency across the school and against national standards	Continued application of internal verification, moderation and standardisation practices	<p>Mid term</p> <p>End of term</p>	Dean of School, course coordinators and module convenors	Standardisation Meeting, Examinations Board, Academic Board and awarding organisation external examiner	Internal verification sheets, standardisation meeting minutes, Academic Board minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the group approach to peer observing and standardising teaching (paragraph 2.13). 	To support the development, standardisation and shared good practice of teaching and learning to enhance and ensure consistency in the learner experience	Continued use of Peer Quads	Mid term	Dean of School	Academic Board	Peer Quad reports, Academic Board minutes
Desirable	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date/s	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The team considers that it would be desirable for the School to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> monitor and periodically 	To ensure that the School's systems and	All action points are tracked, reported and	July 2014	Committee chairs	Director and Provost	Completed committee review

review the work of the boards and committees (paragraph 1.3)	<p>procedures are appropriately monitored</p> <p>To increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the decision-making structure of the School</p> <p>To ensure effective governance and assure transparency and accountability</p>	<p>signed off in a timely manner</p> <p>Introduce an annual monitoring review of the boards and committees</p>		School Administrator		<p>reports</p> <p>Executive Committee meeting minutes</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop its use of external benchmarking (paragraph 1.7) 	To support the School in making comparable performance judgements against the sector	Develop a benchmarking framework that seeks to compare external datasets	July 2014	Dean of School	Academic Board	<p>Academic Board minutes</p> <p>Benchmarking framework/data</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a more strategic approach to resource allocation (paragraph 2.3) 	To ensure that learning resources are appropriate to allow students to achieve the learning outcomes of their programmes	<p>Develop a learning resource allocation plan</p> <p>Heads of departments to provide business cases for new programme provision and investment decisions are reviewed by the School Executive</p>	July 2014	Dean of School	Management Board	<p>Learning resource allocation plan</p> <p>Management Board minutes</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase the level of engagement with employers, sector and professional bodies (paragraph 2.5) 	To develop employability skills of the learners	<p>Developing links with local businesses and professional bodies</p> <p>Inviting external speakers</p>	July 2014	Dean of School, course coordinators	Student Experience Committee	Student Experience Committee minutes

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> implement the mechanisms for election and training of student representatives (paragraph 2.7) 	<p>To increase student engagement with the School and promote a strong sense of collaboration and participative management</p>	<p>Publicise the representative system in the early weeks of the programme</p> <p>Conduct elections of class representatives using ballot papers</p> <p>Schedule regular training sessions for student representatives</p>	<p>Start of each academic intake</p> <p>Third week of first term</p> <p>Once per term</p>	<p>Student Support Officer</p>	<p>Dean of School</p>	<p>Electoral representatives meeting minutes</p> <p>Records of training sessions for student representatives</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide staff with individually appropriate opportunities to gain relevant teaching qualifications (paragraph 2.11). 	<p>To maintain and enhance the continued development of staff and of teaching practice</p>	<p>In addition to the needs considered through the appraisal system and of the staff development policy to seek a formal qualification, for the School to investigate further the Higher Education Academy's UK Professional Standards Framework and encourage staff to make application</p>	<p>July 2014</p>	<p>Human Resources Officer</p>	<p>Provost</p>	<p>Meeting minutes, anonymised staff appraisals, Higher Education Academy applications</p>

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 of 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 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/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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