



Leicester International Pathway College

Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements

March 2017

About this report

This is a report of a review under the Educational Oversight - Exceptional Arrangements method conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Leicester International Pathway College. The review took place on 02 March 2017 and was conducted by a review team, as follows:

- Ms Brenda Eade
- Ms Barbara Howell.

The main purpose of the review was to:

- make judgements about the provider's management of its responsibilities for academic standards, as set out in its contractual arrangements with its academic partner
- make judgements on the provider's management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities
- make judgements about the reliability of the information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers
- report on any features of good practice
- make recommendations for action.

A summary of the [key findings](#) can be found in the section starting on page 2. The [context](#) in which these findings should be interpreted is explained on page 3. [Explanations](#) of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.¹ More information about this the review method can be found in the Handbook for providers.

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us

Key findings

The QAA panel considered evidence relating to the educational provision at Leicester International Pathway College (LIPC), both information supplied in advance and evidence gathered during the review visit. The review has resulted in the key findings stated in this section.

Judgements

The QAA panel formed the following judgements about Leicester International Pathway College.

- **Confidence** can be placed in Leicester International Pathway College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards, as set out in its contractual arrangements with its academic partner.
- **Confidence** can be placed in Leicester International Pathway College's management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.
- **Reliance can** be placed on the information that Leicester International Pathway College produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Good practice

The QAA panel identified the following features of **good practice** at Leicester International Pathway College:

- the strong and collegial relationship between DMU, OIEG and LIPC that contributes to the enhancement of learning opportunities.
- the comprehensive induction and the staff development opportunities offered to all staff that enables them to effectively support the specific needs of their international students.

Recommendations

The QAA panel makes the following recommendations to Leicester International Pathway College

It is **advisable** for the provider to:

- ensure the Steering Group gives full consideration to the minutes and outcomes of the meetings of the JAB and PMG and that this is systematically documented
- systematically consider annual monitoring reports through the appropriate LIPC formal committee structure in accordance with its own terms of reference.

About Leicester International Pathway College

Leicester International Pathway College (LIPC) is an Embedded College offering integrated programmes with De Montfort University (DMU); established in 2013 by Collaborative agreement between Oxford International Education Group (OIEG) and the awarding body, De Montfort University. OIEG (formerly ISIS Education and Travel) was founded in 1991 as a provider of outbound tours for UK university students. It was rebranded in 2014 due to political events surrounding the name ISIS.

OIEG offers a range of education provision in the UK, Canada and USA and seeks to help students worldwide to develop personally and professionally by creating life enhancing learning experiences. It has four university partnerships (embedded colleges) in the UK (Bangor, Bedfordshire, De Montfort, and Dundee).

LIPC is based on the DMU campus, and operates in accordance with the DMU Guide for Managing Collaborative Proviso. The main aim of the partnership is widening access to, and participation in, Higher Education in the UK for International (Non-UK) students.

LIPC currently has 324 students with a target of 550 next year.

LIPC offers the following programmes:

- International Incorporated Bachelor's Degrees
 - International Year Zero (IYZ) - with pathways in Business and Law; Engineering and Computing; Media; Art and Design; Pharmacy; Life Sciences
 - International First Year (IFY) - with pathways in Business and Management and Engineering;
- International Incorporated Master's (IIM) - with pathways in Art and Design: Business: Engineering.

Key administrative and management staff at LIPC are employed on permanent full-time contracts. There are three full-time managers, and two full-time and one part-time support assistants. The majority of teaching staff are sessional (28 in total). There are eight permanent teaching staff, four of whom also act as programme leaders.

International students are recruited onto the LIPC programmes via the Tier 4 licence of DMU for level 6 and level 7. Consequently, DMU retains ultimate responsibility for admissions.

The responsibilities of DMU and OIEG in relation to the management of academic standards and quality is set out in the Collaboration agreement dated 2013. The agreement was revised to incorporate the renaming of OIEG in 2016. There is an operational agreement which sets out the roles and responsibilities of each member of the partnership for the day-to-day delivery of the programmes, and in particular admissions and monitoring of student attendance.

DMU has overall responsibility for setting and maintaining Academic Standards. Programmes are designed jointly by LIPC, OIEG and DMU, and are subject to DMU's regulations and approval processes. The Joint Academic Board (JAB) is responsible for monitoring quality assurance and standards.

External reference points used by the partnership for the design, approval assessment and monitoring of programmes include:

- the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF)
- *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies
- QAA's Subject Benchmark Statements.
- The Common European Framework of Reference (CFER) at B2 for language modules
- International English Language Testing System (IELTS) Descriptors for Bands 5 and 6
- Higher Education Credit Framework (HECF)
- external examiners
- UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code).

OIEG underwent a review by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in April 2015 which concluded that the 'College meets expectations for the quality of education'.

There have been no external reviews for LIPC but all of its programmes will undergo Collaborative Review (following three years of operation) by DMU in May 2017. LIPC will also be the subject of periodic review by DMU in 2019-20.

Detailed findings about Leicester International Pathway College

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The responsibilities of DMU and OIEG in relation to the management of academic standards and quality is set out in the Collaboration Agreement dated 2013 and the more recent Deed of Variation Collaboration Agreement 2016. There is an operational agreement in place that sets out the policies, processes and procedures agreed between the parties for complying with Home Office requirements in relation to Sponsored Students and International Students.

1.2 Governance and management is through a joint committee structure comprising a Steering Board, Joint Academic Board (JAB), Partnership Management Group (PMG) and subcommittees with agreed representatives from OIEG, LIPC and DMU. Membership and general operating principles of the respective boards are set out in the ISIS/DMU Collaboration Agreement 2013 and Terms of Reference are in place for the Steering Board and its sub-committees (Joint Academic Board and Partnership Management Group).

1.3 DMU has overall responsibility for setting and maintaining Academic Standards. Programmes are designed jointly by LIPC, OIEG and De Montfort, and are subject to DMU's regulations and approval processes.

1.4 The Joint Academic Board is responsible for monitoring quality assurance and standards, the Partnership Management Group is responsible for the operational aspects of the partnerships.

1.5 The team confirmed that both Partnership Management Group and Joint Academic Board minutes are expected to be considered at the Steering Board as set out in the terms of reference. The team learnt through meetings that the Partnership Management Group was comparatively new and created to be more nimble for operational issues, therefore due to the more regular meetings of the Partnership Management Group the Steering Group would consider the summaries in the future. The team were further informed that the agendas of the Steering Board would indicate that the respective Board minutes had been considered.

1.6 The team found that the Steering Board membership and those of the Joint Academic Board and Partnership Management Group was as intended. However, although the majority of Steering Board agendas noted papers relating to the Joint Academic Board and Partnership Management Group it was not evident from a review of the Steering Board minutes that the papers had been consistently considered. The team therefore **recommend** that LIPC ensure the Steering Group gives full consideration to the minutes and outcomes of the meetings of the JAB and PMG and that this is systematically documented.

1.7 An annual review compiled by the College/College Director is presented to the LIPC Steering Board via the Joint Academic Board as set out in the terms of reference and the team found comprehensive presentations had taken place in 2015 and 2016 by the Director. The team further learnt that annual monitoring reports are new this year and will be used to replace the College Directors' reports. The team found those reports to be comprehensive. Annual monitoring reports are used by DMU for collaborative partners. These first reports went initially to Academic Board for refinement and were then expected to be presented to

the Steering Board. However, it was not evident that the reports had been considered through LIPC's committee structure. The team therefore **recommend** that LIPC systematically consider annual monitoring reports through the appropriate LIPC formal committee structure in accordance with its own terms of reference.

How effectively are external reference points used in the management of academic standards?

1.8 LIPC makes use of the RQF, AQA subject descriptors, FHEQ, QAA Subject Benchmark Statements, CFER, IELTS descriptors and the HECF.

1.9 The use made of FHEQ, RQF (formerly NQF) and Subject Benchmark Statements was found to be explicit within programmes as set out in the validation and annual/periodic review processes.

1.10 External examiners report on FHEQ and those reports confirmed that standards were appropriate, within an acceptable range and comparable with similar programmes in the UK.

1.11 All three programmes in operation went through the DMU Programme Approval process with regard to external reference points and with external representation on the panel. It is further expected that periodic review events will consider external reference points such as Subject Benchmark Statements and Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Body (PSRB) requirements, where applicable.

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

1.12 The External Examiner Models of Engagements 2015-16 document sets out the level of interaction external examiners are expected to have with the programme to include receiving student work for moderation and attending the assessment boards (that is one visit).

1.13 Student handbooks further set the expectation that module grades are subject to an internal and external moderation prior to being submitted to an Assessment Board. External examiners are required to endorse the outcomes of the assessment process using an external examiner report pro forma and the team confirmed that those reports had been carefully considered by the Joint Academic Board.

1.14 LIPC has yet to undergo a periodic review by DMU as the former has been in operation for less than five years, however, all programmes will be subject to a Collaborative Review process by DMU in May 2017.

1.15 OIEG underwent a review by the Independent Schools Inspectorate in April 2015 and at the time of the inspection all key standards for Educational Oversight were met and the quality found to be good.

The review team concludes that **confidence** can be placed in Leicester International Pathway College's management of its responsibilities for academic standards, as set out in its contractual arrangements with its academic partner.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 OIEG, takes a strategic approach to enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. The main aim of the embedded college, LIPC, is to prepare international students for successful transition into the UK higher education system. This is monitored through the achievement of students on the LIPC pathways. Completion rates for all pathways for 2014-15 were 93 per cent and for 2015-6 94 per cent.

2.2 LIPC shares responsibility for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities with the awarding body, DMU. Under the terms of the Collaboration Agreement, DMU provides premises for LIPC, validates the three levels of programme and provides the ongoing quality assurance processes for monitoring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. OIEG employs and appoints all staff including the College Director, Head of English and the College Manager. This team is responsible for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities at LIPC. DMU assists in the recruitment and selection of teaching staff and has the right to veto any proposed appointments which do not meet DMU requirements.

2.3 LIPC, is responsible for delivering the curriculum, student support, setting assessment, marking and moderation of student work, and giving feedback to students. It effectively uses a range of metrics to monitor and track student engagement and progression. This includes the outcomes of Assessment Boards, tutor module evaluation forms and student feedback through College Boards.

2.4 The LIPC Teaching and Learning Strategy is designed to support international students in their transition to higher education in the UK. It addresses cultural differences and prepares them for their DMU programmes by developing their independent learning skills, teaching them how to reference their work, write academic essays and reports, and work collaboratively. It encourages them to develop the necessary skills for problem solving, creative thinking, research and self-directed study. It also provides the specialist skills such as writing up laboratory reports, which are required for their chosen pathway. The curriculum focuses on the development of English language and study skills in the early stages of the programme. This is gradually replaced with more subject content relating to the student's intended university pathway in the later stages of the programme.

2.5 The 'Introduction to DMU' module at the beginning of the programme helps to familiarize students with the expectations of their intended university pathway. Students confirmed this module provides an initial introduction to their university programme. They are also welcome to join events within the University Faculty, meet link tutors and with DMU students to further support their transition to the University.

2.6 LIPC collects feedback from DMU faculties on the achievement of students progressing from LIPC. Data provided by the Faculty of Art & Design and Humanities comparing direct entry international students and LIPC students indicates favourable results after completion of the first year of their university pathway. OIEG and DMU are currently working collegially to build a reporting system which will compare the achievements of LIPC students, direct entry international students, and all students who are studying on DMU programmes, which link to the LIPC pathways.

How effectively are external reference points used in the management and enhancement of learning opportunities?

2.7 LIPC uses a range of external reference points for the management and enhancement of learning opportunities. These include the DMU processes for programme design, approval and review.

2.8 The OIEG Admissions policy is mapped to the Quality Code, *Chapter B2*, and commits OIEG to providing a fair, effective and responsible Admissions service. Responsibility for admissions is set out in the Operating Agreement. OIEG is primarily responsible for the recruitment of students and handles the admissions process from the point of application up to and including the request for an Unconditional Offer and/or a request for a Confirmation of Acceptance for Studies (CAS) to be assigned. DMU is responsible for issuing the CAS and therefore makes the final decision on admission. Students confirmed that they had been effectively supported throughout the admissions process.

2.9 External examiners, appointed and trained by DMU, provide an external reference point for the management and enhancement of learning opportunities on the LIPC pathways. DMU's policy for the appointment and training of external examiners has recently been updated and continues to be mapped to the Quality Code *Chapter B7*, to ensure that it provides the necessary support for external examiners to effectively comment on assessment processes. Their annual reports provide feedback which is used for the enhancement of learning opportunities. Subject teams respond to their recommendations and produce action plans. External examiners are the external reference point for modifications to the curriculum, and their role has been extended to include meetings with students, enabling them to have a further input into the quality of learning opportunities.

2.10 The English Language modules which form part of the IYZ, IFY and IIM are mapped to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages to ensure that the assessment of the learning outcomes of these modules enables students to demonstrate their level of language ability. The International Year Zero pathways are mapped to the relevant subject and skills descriptors.

2.11 LIPC uses DMU's Appeals and Complaints procedures which make provision for referral to the OIA. LIPC Reception is responsible for providing initial guidance to students on the most appropriate procedure to follow. Students can also use the DMU Students' Union and Advice Centre. Information about the Appeals and Complaints processes is available to students on the Website, VLE and in handbooks. The DMU maintains a record of Academic Appeals which is considered by the Academic Board. DMU'S Complaints Committee produces a report for the Board of Governors documenting the nature and outcomes of complaints which LIPC can use for enhancement of learning opportunities. However, there have only been two complaints in relation to LIPC, and these have been resolved by it before the formal processes have been invoked.

2.12 The use of external reference points is also discussed in paragraphs 1.8 to 1.11.

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

2.13 The JAB is responsible for the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of the learning experience. It meets two or three times per year and considers the outcomes of the various monitoring reports, assessment boards, link tutor reports and feedback from external examiners. Teaching quality is a standard item on the agenda.

2.14 LIPC effectively uses DMU's quality assurance processes to monitor and enhance the student learning experience at the module and programme level through Module Enhancement Plans (MEPs) and Programme Enhancement Plans (PEPs). These take account of feedback from students through end of module and end of programme surveys and from their attendance at LIPC Boards.

2.15 Tutors contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of teaching and learning by completing Tutor Module Evaluation Forms (TMEF) at the end of each module. Where necessary, these make suggestions for changes to learning outcomes and module content and address issues relating to learning resources. The TMEFs feed into the DMU MEPs, which inform the development of the PEPs for the following year.

2.16 LIPC now follows the DMU monitoring processes for all collaborative partners and produces Annual Monitoring Reviews for each pathway. These are submitted to the University's Department of Academic Quality. Link tutor reports and external examiner reports also contribute to the monitoring and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.

2.17 Areas for enhancement have been identified through the various monitoring processes and appropriate action has been taken by LIPC and the DMU. This includes increasing teaching resources for LIPC and providing dedicated studio space for Art and Design students. Programme Leaders have been appointed for all LIPC pathways, Student attendance is more closely monitored: following poor attendance during the summer months, and an enhanced induction process has been introduced for January starters. Pre-arrival communication with students has been improved and students confirmed that they had been provided with detailed information about their programmes prior to enrolment.

2.18 As a result of feedback from the Link Tutor for Technology, a non-credit bearing maths module has been introduced to ensure that students have the relevant level of competence in maths to cope with their university programmes. This is being further developed to be a credit bearing module for future students.

2.19 LIPC has recently appointed a Student Representative on the JAB who is invited to make a presentation on student matters. Since November 2016, LIPC has had its own School Representative Coordinator (SRC), who, in common with DMU SRCs, receives a stipend. The LIPC SRC role is specifically aimed at enhancing the quality of student representation by professionalising the position. Training is provided by DMU.

2.20 The team considers the strong and collegial relationship between DMU, OIEG and LIPC that contributes to the enhancement of learning opportunities is **good practice**.

How effective are the provider's arrangements for staff development in relation to maintaining and/or enhancing the quality of learning opportunities?

2.21 LIPC effectively supports the continuing professional development of all staff through an extensive range of staff development, training, and mentoring activities. These are set out in the staff development policy which is mapped to *Chapter B3* of the Quality Code.

2.22 New staff undergo a detailed induction programme which introduces them to LIPC and the specific needs of LIPC students. This is conducted by the College Director, Head of English and other College staff. At the beginning of each term further induction sessions are held to ensure staff are familiar with the modules they are about to teach and to review feedback from the previous term. These sessions identify areas for improvement and encourage adoption of innovative practice. LIPC also has a mentoring and coaching policy which is particularly aimed at new members of staff but may also be used to support and

develop teaching practice following critical comments from teaching observations or student feedback.

2.23 The quality of teaching is monitored through annual teaching observation of all tutors by programme leaders. This process is designed to help tutors to develop their teaching practice and enables LIPC to ensure that teaching is effectively supporting learning opportunities. A pre-meeting is held with tutors prior to the observation and the outcomes of the observation are discussed and an action plan is created to identify areas which could further enhance teaching quality. LIPC has recently introduced a process of peer observation which operates at the programme level and encourages staff from different subject areas to observe one another. Staff from English and Media confirmed that this had enabled them to share pedagogic issues and gave valuable feedback for the delivery of their own modules. LIPC intends to further develop the peer observation process to include all pathways and to identify common themes for the enhancement of learning opportunities.

2.24 As associate members of the University, LIPC staff are able to attend training and development events run by the former. Details of these events are published quarterly by DMU. The VLE is effectively used as a resource for staff development materials and includes recent research and articles to support staff in developing their professional and subject areas.

2.25 The staff development needs of admissions staff are identified through regular one-to-one progress meetings and annual appraisal reports. Training is provided both in-house and through NARIC and UKVI. Staff confirmed that they had attended external events relating to international recruitment and participated in joint training sessions with DMU staff.

2.26 LIPC supports all staff to enhance their research abilities and develop their subject knowledge through participation in conferences or attendance at external events relating to their professional or subject areas. Staff are expected to share the outcomes of these events through team meetings and via the VLE. Staff confirmed that they were supported both financially and through cover arrangements for their staff development activities. They also met with link tutors which enabled them to see developments in their subject areas within DMU faculties.

2.27 LIPC maintains a detailed schedule of training activities for each member of staff and also records CPD in the annual monitoring review reports.

2.28 The team considers that the comprehensive induction and the staff development opportunities offered to all staff that enables them to effectively support the specific needs of their international students is **good practice**.

How effectively does the provider assure itself that students are appropriately and effectively supported?

2.29 OIEG, in partnership with DMU has put in place a range of measures to effectively support international students in their transition to the UK higher educational system.

2.30 The DMU website hosts a landing page specifically catering for international students during the recruitment and admissions stage. This provides a clear link to further information about LIPC. Online induction is available to students once they have accepted an unconditional offer, and a full induction programme is provided when students join LIPC. They are also encouraged to attend the activities offered by DMU during Fresher's week. Students confirmed that the induction programme was effective and that they received further presentations about College activities during the first weeks of their study.

2.31 Students also receive programme and module handbooks which support their learning. These are available in hard copy and on the VLE.

2.32 LIPC has a dedicated student support team which is based in reception and offers a first point of contact for students. When necessary, the team signposts students to more specialised support services. Students have access to all DMU resources, including its Students' Union but students indicated that they do not regularly access these resources.

2.33 Class sizes are small (a maximum of 18) enabling staff to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each student and work with them individually to develop the skills they need to meet the learning objectives of their modules and programme. LIPC has a robust attendance policy. Students confirmed that attendance is monitored for each class.

2.34 Students confirmed that they were able to contact their tutors outside of the class and had regular meetings and tutorials with their programme leaders. DMU has a personal tutoring system for students and LIPC is considering adopting this procedure to further support students in their transition to DMU.

2.35 LIPC continually reviews the effectiveness of its support for students through its monitoring processes. Satisfaction levels with student support are collected through the End of Programme Feedback Forms. These identified the need for further support for students prior to entry to help them to find accommodation. A member of staff has been employed for this purpose and initial feedback indicates that this has improved conversion rates.

2.36 LIPC is also involved in the DMU Universal Design for Learning project which is aimed at enhancing the access of all students to learning and assessment processes and resources. This has already resulted in minor modifications being made to the teaching and assessment of some modules to ensure that they are accessible to all students.

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

2.37 The provision of learning resources is a shared responsibility between LIPC and DMU. The JAB is responsible for strategic oversight of resources. OEIG recognises the need to continually monitor resources to ensure that they meet the needs of the increasing student population. Students and staff provide feedback on the learning resources, which feeds into the MEPs and PEPs.

2.38 LIPC students are provided with full borrowing rights for the DMU Learning Resource Centre (Library) and have access to its VLE. LIPC provides the teaching materials including handouts. Students confirmed that they could access all the necessary materials for their pathways.

2.39 The VLE is used for academic support and skills development, and provides additional learning material which students can work on in their own time. It also has an interactive forum for student discussion. Students confirmed that all the learning materials relating to their modules were made available on the VLE. However, some tutors provided more extensive resources such as conference and research papers.

2.40 LIPC students can use specialist facilities within DMU for practical activities. Their timetable gives them access to science and computing laboratories and the engineering workshops. Students following Art, Design, and Media Pathways have access to specialist studio space to complete, store and display their work. Students and staff confirmed that they have access to the relevant DMU learning facilities for their LIPC pathway.

The review team concludes that **confidence** can be placed in Leicester International Pathway College's management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.

3 Information

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

3.1 An emphasis has been placed on the way that DMU and its partners market themselves to students through programme and module information, prospectuses, Facebook and YouTube, recruitment fairs and open days. Information about LIPC and the relationship between it and DMU is on the latter's website along with information on the partnership.

3.2 Guidance has been produced by DMU to support staff in discharging their functions in accordance with the requirements of the Consumer Rights Act. DMU is responsible for ensuring the Key Information Set return is made for 'indirectly' funded provision.

3.3 The process and responsibility for checking the marketing materials produced by OIEG is set out in the ISIS Collaboration Agreement. OIEG works with DMU to develop templates for marketing materials and all templates are submitted to the Vice-Chancellor for prior approval. The students met by the team were clear about what to expect prior to joining and the team also viewed the marketing material which it found to be clear and accurate.

3.4 For the design of modules, LIPC use a module template originally made by DMU. Student programme and module handbooks were found to be consistent with the student handbook guidance document and the students met were clear about the expectations of the programme.

The review team concludes that **reliance can** be placed on the information that Leicester International Pathway College produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms that may be used in this report.

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **Glossary** on the QAA website: www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx

Academic standards

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

Award

A qualification, or academic credit, conferred in formal recognition that a student has achieved the intended **learning outcomes** and passed the assessments required to meet the academic standards set for a **programme** or unit of study.

Blended learning

Learning delivered by a number of different methods, usually including face-to-face and e-learning (see **technology enhanced or enabled learning**).

Credit(s)

A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education **programmes of study**, expressed as numbers of credits at a specific level.

Degree-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).

Distance learning

A course of study that does not involve face-to-face contact between students and tutors but instead uses technology such as the internet, intranets, broadcast media, CD-ROM and video, or traditional methods of correspondence - learning 'at a distance'.

See also **blended learning**.

e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning

Embedded college

Colleges, often operating as part of a network, that are embedded on or near the campuses of UK higher education institutions (HEI) and that primarily provide preparatory programmes for higher education

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 our review processes.

Flexible and distributed learning

A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations.

See also **distance learning**.

Framework

A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

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* (FHEQIS).

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 audit and 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.

Operational definition

A formal definition of a term, establishing 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.

Public information

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

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.

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.

Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)

Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

Threshold academic standard

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** and **subject benchmark statements**.

Virtual learning environment (VLE)

An intranet or password-only interactive website (also referred to as a platform or user interface) giving access to **learning opportunities** electronically. These might include such resources as course handbooks, information and reading lists; blogs, message boards and forums; recorded lectures; and/or facilities for online seminars (webinars).

Widening participation

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

QAA1874 - R9400 - May 17

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2017
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 01452 557050
Web: www.qaa.ac.uk