



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

London Bridge Business Academy Ltd

May 2014

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Key findings about London Bridge Business Academy Ltd

As a result of its adapted Review for Specific Course Designation carried out in May 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 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**:

- a comprehensive skills programme for students that supports their academic studies (paragraph 2.6)
- regular in-house staff development workshops that enhance teaching and learning (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 is **advisable** for the provider to:

- formalise the process of updating of documentation (paragraph 1.4)
- enhance the test of English language (paragraph 1.5)
- ensure the timely marking of summative assignments (paragraph 2.1)
- review the reassessment policy (paragraph 2.4)
- consistently apply grade criteria guidance on assignment briefs (paragraph 2.9).

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

- ensure consistency in assessment handbooks (paragraph 1.3)
- further embed the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 1.7)
- extend the involvement of student representatives in quality assurance processes (paragraph 2.10)
- ensure version control of documents is maintained (paragraph 3.1).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the adapted [Review for Specific Course Designation](#)¹ conducted by [QAA](#) at London Bridge Business Academy Ltd (the Academy), 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 Professor Chris Hudson, Mrs Angela Maguire (reviewers) and Dr Heather Barrett-Mold (Coordinator).

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

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:

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)
- regulations of the awarding organisation.

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

The Academy is an independent academy of further and higher education and was established in 2002 with the aim of delivering quality education in central London to students aiming to advance their careers in business. The Academy mission statement states 'Education has no boundaries', which feeds into the culture of the organisation. There are 35 students undertaking the HND in Business Studies who commenced this course in August 2013.

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

Pearson

- HND in Business Studies (Levels 4 and 5).

The provider's stated responsibilities

The Academy's responsibilities in relation to its awarding organisation are clearly defined through formal agreement. The Academy is responsible for the recruitment of students, learning and teaching, student support and learning resources. There is a shared responsibility for assessment, quality assurance, public information and some resources.

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

² At the time of publication of this report, the Handbook has been republished as *Review for Specific Course Designation: Handbook, May 2014*, available at www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2707

Recent developments

The Academy was originally located close to London Bridge. In 2013 it relocated to its present self-contained building in Farringdon. This was the result of a decision to have sole use of accommodation and control over the upkeep of the building.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on the higher education programme at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. These students, with support from the Academy, produced an informative written submission for the review team. The team also explored student views in meetings with students to gain a clear picture of their learning experience. In addition, a helpful meeting was held with students, including student representatives prior to the visit by the team.

Detailed findings about London Bridge Business Academy

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The Academy has a flat management structure, with clear reporting lines and leadership being delivered by the senior managers. The Director of Studies is pivotal to the management structure, but is supported by both academic and support staff. The Director of Studies has ultimate responsibility and authority for the management of academic standards and quality of the student experience.

1.2 The Director of Studies is responsible for most decisions and is informed by the programme team. The Academy is progressing from being predominantly reactive to proactive in its management of the current programme which started in August 2013. At the time of the visit there was a small cohort of students enrolled on the one programme and as such, there are few formal committees. Various qualitative and quantitative measures are used by the Academy in order to check its effectiveness and to benchmark its position. These include standard management statistics but also the recognition of wider aspects of students' progression.

1.3 The Academy continues to work with other awarding organisations although the current cohort are on one programme. This wider experience has provided them with expertise in procedures required. The Academy has a Quality Committee, with articulated reporting lines and terms of reference and minutes with appropriate actions. There are a number of handbooks for staff and students. Since August 2013 these have been incrementally, yet substantially, improved in their accuracy and consistent use of terminology. Assessment handbooks vary in the information that they provide and the good practice in some is not there in others. It would be **desirable** for the Academy to ensure consistency in assessment handbooks.

1.4 The Academy has developed a series of policies and procedures specifically for the organisation while being informed by its awarding organisation and practice from other providers. The policies underpin the quality assurance process, and are being further developed, adapted and updated as part of the action planning process. Currently this is taking place as required. It is **advisable** for the Academy to formalise the process of updating documentation.

1.5 Students are clear about the admissions policy and procedure. The level of English language required by students on entry is not specific and although it is assessed by a simple test, a better diagnostic tool would be helpful. It is **advisable** for the Academy to enhance the test of English language to ensure that, on entry, students have the required proficiency in English to benefit from the HND course. The Academy no longer uses agents for recruitment and admissions as they found this procedure unsatisfactory. A prior learning policy is in place but has yet to be used for the admission of a student requiring the assessment of prior learning.

1.6 The assessment process is clear. Twice per term for each unit, staff provide information about the performance of each student which is recorded on the Scorecard. Performance is tracked closely using this method and it is used to monitor progress and record grades. This provides the Director of Studies with information on the overall performance of each student to enable suitable support to be given to students where needed. Details of the learning outcomes, teaching plan and assessment requirements are made available to the students via the student portal, for each unit.

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

1.7 The Academy is gaining a sound understanding of QAA guidance and terminology, with references being made to the Quality Code. An extensive mapping exercise has been carried out identifying where the Academy meets the Quality Code and where there are gaps. The Academy found this to be a very useful developmental method of preparation for the review. It would be **desirable** for the Academy to further embed the Quality Code as part of its quality improvement.

1.8 The benefits of communicating with external bodies and agencies are recognised by the Academy. Local market information has not yet been used to a great extent given the recent move to this location. Understanding the needs of and working with the local community and business could potentially benefit the provision.

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

1.9 The external examiner appointed by the awarding organisation has yet to make contact with the Academy. A comprehensive and effective internal verification system has been developed by the Academy and is delivered using most of the teaching staff. It is used in assessment writing and grading and has led to reflection and improvement by both staff and students. As this is the first year of the programme no further information was available.

1.10 The Director of Studies ensures efficient and effective running of the programmes, and oversees the use of resources and deployment of teaching staff.

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

2.1 The Academy fulfils its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities well. Student performance is monitored through the use of formative feedbacks, of which there must be three for each unit. The feedback provides information to allow the students to improve the work for the final, summative submission, but occasionally the written feedback is rather brief. The students stated that in addition there is verbal feedback provided to them in class which they value highly. There has been a delay in marking some summative assignments recently due to registration issues and it is **advisable** for the Academy to ensure the timely marking of summative assignments.

2.2 There is a good use of the three hour teaching block. The sessions use a mix of formal teaching by the lecturer; student activities, often based on the assessment assignments; student presentations and feedback to the students. The lecturing staff showed a very positive and enthusiastic attitude to teaching and students enjoy their classes. Four units, together with a skills course, are delivered each week for the 14 week teaching term. Teaching plans, indicating what students will learn each week, are made available to students for each of the teaching sessions. In some cases the plan includes details of the classroom activities and homework, although in others there are only the topics to be covered.

2.3 Within each unit guidance is provided on learning. This includes information on referencing and how to avoid plagiarism. Students have been provided with access to plagiarism-detection software to allow them to assess at what level their assignments meet the threshold of 20 per cent, prior to submission.

2.4 The policy for internal progression does not appear in the student handbook, although it is well understood by students. In order to progress from one term to the next, students must pass at least two of the four units. Students who do not achieve all the learning outcomes in any individual unit will be allowed to be reassessed, but will not be allowed higher grades on reassessed units. The written policy needs to clearly articulate this procedure in order to ensure transparency. It is **advisable** for the Academy to review the reassessment policy.

2.5 The Academy provides students with good library support with all the recommended books available to borrow. The details of available books, along with a picture of the front cover, are provided through the Student Portal. The students stated that the library meets their needs. Wireless access to the internet is available in most parts of the Academy and computers are provided for students to use. There is easy access to resources through the Student Portal. The students the team met commented on sufficient access to resources and to the library.

2.6 All students are expected to take the English Development Course, which is a comprehensive and effective skills course covering report writing and writing style; the requirements of BTEC assessments; referencing and how to avoid plagiarism; presentation techniques; and career development, such as curriculum vitae writing and interview techniques. The students stated that this was a very useful unit. A comprehensive skills programme for students that supports their academic studies is considered **good practice**. The students emphasised that this is a very useful module.

2.7 In addition to the Scorecard, students who are identified as requiring extra support have a Personalised Learning Plan prepared by the Director of Studies, who cited a case where a student missed some classes due to illness and the Personalised Learning Plan was used to help the student catch up with studies. Support for students with special needs is provided by the Head of Administration, who gave an example of how a dyslexic student was supported.

2.8 Staff are available to help students outside of the normal class time. Students are appreciative of the level of support provided for them. In addition to staff at the Academy, a Catholic Priest acts as an independent person to whom the students can speak if they seek pastoral support. The students are aware of this opportunity and have met him on at least two occasions.

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

2.9 Staff understand the Quality Code level descriptors. In general, assessments are written using appropriate terms against the requirements for that. In a number of units, the assignment requirements have been mapped to the BTEC HND specification requirements for pass/merit/distinction, although this is not done for all of the units. Each assessment learning outcome is graded as pass, merit or distinction but there is no formal method of deciding the overall grade for a unit based on the individual learning outcome grades. It is **advisable** for the Academy to consistently apply grade criteria guidance on assignment briefs.

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

2.10 There are student representatives for both the day and evening courses and these meet regularly with the Director of Studies to discuss student issues. The students stated that they were very happy with this and the availability of staff to discuss academic and pastoral problems. The students stated that they requested an increase in access to computing facilities and this has now been provided to their satisfaction. However, students are not represented on committees and it would be **desirable** for the Academy to extend the involvement of student representatives in quality assurance processes.

2.11 Effective use is made of feedback provided by students both formally through questionnaires and informally. Questionnaires are completed twice each term with scores, as well as comments being used. This questionnaire is analysed by the Director of Studies and informs staff appraisals and course review. The Academy responds to students quickly and where changes can be made, they are.

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

2.12 A peer observation system is currently being developed. In addition, the Director of Studies regularly undertakes classroom observations for all lecturers and these observations are used to inform the staff appraisal process.

2.13 An effective programme of staff development is available and well attended. The programme includes pedagogic issues; BTEC requirements; classroom management; and peer observation. Workshops are programmed on Saturdays and take place approximately twice a term. A record is kept of staff attendance at these meetings. Some lecturing staff reported that they also work for other academic institutions where they also receive staff training. Regular in-house staff development workshops that enhance teaching and learning are considered **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 Academy's arrangements for assuring that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy?

3.1 The Academy website is well laid out and easy to navigate with links to the awarding organisation's information. The website acts as a repository for all Academy information, having separate portals for students and staff. Lecturers' materials are made available to the students via email on request. The Academy is committed to ensuring that the latest versions of all documents are available via the web portal. It would be **desirable** for the Academy to ensure that version control of documents is maintained.

3.2 Communication of information to potential and current students occurs with the website being the main source. In addition students have good direct open access to Academy managers and teachers, and they communicate effectively with teaching staff email.

3.3 The Academy's arrangement for assuring that information about learning opportunities is satisfactory. It is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy, with all information being approved by the Director of Studies and checks being made by the Head of Administration.

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

London Bridge Business Academy Ltd action plan relating to the Review of Specific Course Designation May 2014						
Good practice	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the Academy:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a comprehensive skills programme for students that supports their academic studies (paragraph 2.6) 	<p>A skills programme to continue and improve the quality of student support, employability skills, student needs and future employer's needs</p> <p>The programme will be better suited to supporting new students according to their subjects and the tasks set for the term (this will be an enhancement of what the Academy already does as previously there was not enough information as</p>	<p>Identify students needs and weaknesses and offer the support they need in the skills programme</p> <p>The content of the course will be reviewed and adapted ahead of each term and implemented during the term to reflect the needs of students, the assessment tasks in hand and the subjects on offer</p> <p>The feedback from BTEC with any suggested</p>	December 2014	<p>Director of Studies</p> <p>English Development lecturer</p>	Quality Committee	<p>Student feedback</p> <p>Director of Studies checks on the progress of students</p> <p>Monitoring using the timed formative feedback provided to students by each lecturer</p> <p>Work marked by lecturers should show</p>

³ The Academy 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 Academy's awarding organisation.

	the course was new; the information now collected will be used to improve the course)	improvements will be used to plan the skills programme Adding more focus on how students can further improve their assignments				improvements in comparison to work scanned in our system from last term Comparison of work and comments on last year's Scorecard The English Development lecturer will check and monitor student development before half-term and after half-term to check on impact of the English skills lecture 20% increase in pass rate with the extra support and overall improvement in grades
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> regular in-house staff development workshops that enhance 	Continued support for teaching, learning and administration at the Academy	Regular in-house training sessions to include support staff and academic staff	June 2015	Director of Studies	Quality Committee	Evaluation will be based on any improvements observed during lecturer

<p>teaching and learning (paragraph 2.13).</p>	<p>It is intended that the support for administration and lecturers will continue but further assist in supporting them in their day-to-day work and save time on administration</p> <p>Lecturers continue to have more workshops and development; the workshops and training will consider any improvement identified during observations of teaching, feedback from students, BTEC report</p> <p>Administration will continue to have workshops with more training built in</p>	<p>Some external involvement by trainers to be included and planned ahead of the term</p> <p>Workshops to include training on what lecturers can do to improve their teaching</p> <p>Information from the awarding organisation and QAA guidance to be used</p> <p>Topics for lecturer training: how to help students improve their grades; time management; how to provide effective feedback to students; how to make feedback more positive to students; how to prepare students for scenario-based questions; how to plan ahead and provide effective assessment plans, better assessments and appropriate activities</p> <p>Topics for administration training: what information they can now find on the portal; what documents</p>				<p>observation, and if feedback provided to students is now more positive</p> <p>Better results and grades produced at the end of term with more credits</p> <p>Work handed in for feedback is on time, according to the assessment plan</p> <p>Student feedback on assessments is positive</p> <p>Reduction of student concerns and better management</p> <p>A reduction of administration time of 15% each month</p>
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		still need to be version controlled; what changes have been made to policies and documents using QAA guidance; how to provide better customer service; the use and purpose of new forms in operation				
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 Academy to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> formalise the updating of documentation (paragraph 1.4) 	All documentation to be updated using and referring to the Quality Code	Continue to check all existing documents	July 2015	Head of Administration	Director of Studies and Quality Committee	<p>Lecturers and stakeholders to provide feedback on the documentation including how it is working and the success of the changes</p> <p>Feedback to reflect at least 50% success</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> enhance the test of English language (paragraph 1.5) 	Have a concise test to ensure the students recruited are of the right calibre; the test can be used to inform the	<p>Devise and implement new tests and evaluate results</p> <p>Later amend the tests</p>	<p>December 2014</p> <p>Revise</p>	Head of Administration and relevant staff	Director Of Studies	Students' success rate and feedback provided in formative and

	course, as well as to develop the English development curriculum	according to objectives	Feb 2015			<p>summative assessment</p> <p>Re-evaluation of students performance at a later date and match it to the new tests used; this will reflect how effective the tests were in identifying the students with appropriate language skills</p> <p>Achievement rate to be higher than previous term; Scorecard to be used to check effectiveness</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure the timely marking of summative assignments (paragraph 2.1) 	All summative feedback to be provided to students with a maximum turnaround time of 8 weeks	<p>Students to be allowed only a certain time to register with Pearson; this should not be subject to their concerns with student finance</p> <p>Pearson has been invited and has completed their first visit to the Academy</p> <p>All lecturers can now</p>	February 2015	Director of Studies	Quality Committee	<p>Pearson has approved all results from the first cohort of students and lecturers have been sanctioned to go ahead and mark the second assessments</p> <p>The turnaround</p>

		mark the second assessments as soon as possible				<p>to be between 6-8 weeks with some of the teething issues having being resolved</p> <p>Dates of when feedback is provided will be checked and monitored: to be within 8 weeks maximum from collection</p>
<p>14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the reassessment policy (paragraph 2.4) 	<p>The assessment policy to address key additional issues discussed with QAA</p> <p>This will help students plan their work better and be more aware of their responsibilities</p>	<p>The policy has now been amended and includes key information, such as procedures for internal progression and resubmission</p> <p>The revised policy has replaced the previous policy on the portal</p>	June 2014	Head of Administration	Director of Studies	<p>Students will be aware that they need feedback over the term to be allowed resubmission</p> <p>More work will be handed in on time and during the term for feedback</p> <p>Students will be aware that they are allowed a maximum of three attempts per module</p>

						<p>Expected increase of students asking for feedback and making the necessary improvements; this will be measured by feedback forms, which are scanned and kept as records for each student and group</p> <p>Impact will be measured with more work being handed in as per assessment plan dates</p> <p>This will also be measured by the number of personalised plans per term and from comments in register and the Scorecard; this data will be maintained</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consistently 	All assessment modules	Staff training as required	February 2015	Academic	Director of	Impact will be

<p>apply grade criteria guidance on assignment briefs (paragraph 2.9).</p>	<p>to have specific grade criteria guidance included to reflect pass/ merit/distinction grades effectively</p>	<p>Assessment handbooks to include this guidance</p>		<p>staff Internal verifier</p>	<p>Studies</p>	<p>measured using feedback from students on the grading in the first few weeks of the course</p> <p>The internal verifier will check grading against that of the previous term</p>
<p>Desirable</p>	<p>Intended outcomes</p>	<p>Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes</p>	<p>Target date/s</p>	<p>Action by</p>	<p>Reported to</p>	<p>Evaluation (process or evidence)</p>
<p>The team considers that it would be desirable for the Academy to:</p>						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure consistency in assessment handbooks (paragraph 1.3) 	<p>All assessment handbooks to use a standardised framework containing information that is both meaningful and useful</p>	<p>Training session for lecturers offered to discuss the framework and the importance of consistency</p> <p>Administration to send the team a sample assessment handbook to refer to and work with</p>	<p>February 2015</p>	<p>Head of Administration</p>	<p>Quality Committee</p>	<p>Checks on the assessment handbooks in August 2014 and then February 2015</p> <p>Students and student representatives feedback on the handbooks</p> <p>Training sessions to evaluate and check if all</p>

						<p>handbooks are consistent</p> <p>Improvements that may be identified by the Quality Committee are then included</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> further embed the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 1.7) 	<p>All policies and documents to have the Quality Code included, referred to, and used</p>	<p>Ensure all staff and student representatives are made aware of the Quality Code and its potential impact</p> <p>Continue with the mapping exercise and use this to inform and cross-reference all new processes and procedures to ensure best practice</p>	<p>January 2015</p>	<p>Director of Studies</p> <p>Staff</p> <p>Head of Administration</p>	<p>Quality Committee</p>	<p>Mapping exercises to continue and evaluation to be carried out on a regular basis to map and check cross-referencing against the Quality Code</p> <p>Handbook checks to include the Quality Code</p> <p>Checks on the new policies and procedures introduced do they reflect the Quality Code</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extend the involvement of student representatives in quality 	<p>Increased student participation and interest in the quality assurance processes</p>	<p>Offer training to student representatives</p> <p>Hold regular meetings with student</p>	<p>June 2015</p>	<p>Staff</p> <p>Head of Administration</p>	<p>Quality Committee</p>	<p>Feedback provided</p> <p>Improvements identified or</p>

assurance processes (paragraph 2.10)		<p>representatives and discuss key issues</p> <p>Regular feedback to be encouraged, both formal and informal, from the student representatives</p> <p>Minutes of student representative meetings to be recorded</p> <p>Have a transparent mechanism for student representatives to work with and enable them to be more aware of the quality assurance processes</p>				<p>made to the quality assurance process</p> <p>Minutes to reflect who attended and involvement</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure version control of documents is maintained (paragraph 3.1). 	All documents to be version controlled	<p>Staff to start using version control on all new documents</p> <p>A list to be prepared with all documents which highlights how many documents are already version controlled and how many still need to be</p> <p>Eventually staff to version control all documents that are in existence</p> <p>Upload documents that are changed on the portal</p>	January 2015	Staff Head of Administration	Director of Studies	<p>Better day-to-day management for administration and lecturers as documents are version controlled</p> <p>All documents used will be with the same version at the bottom and thus ensure all have the right version</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 Courses Specifically Designated for Student Support 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/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx. Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Review for Educational Oversight \(and for specific course designation\): Handbook, April 2013](#).⁴

academic quality A comprehensive term referring to how, and how well, higher education providers manage teaching and learning opportunities to help students progress and succeed.

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

awarding body A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the power to award degrees, conferred by Royal Charter, or under Section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or under Section 48 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, or by Papal Bull, or, since 1999, granted by the Privy Council on advice from QAA (in response to applications for taught degree-awarding powers, research degree-awarding powers or university title).

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

differentiated judgements In a Review for Specific Courses Designation, separate judgements respectively for the provision validated by separate awarding bodies.

enhancement The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in QAA's review processes.

external examiner An independent expert appointed by an institution to comment on student achievement in relation to established academic standards and to look at approaches to assessment.

framework for higher education qualifications A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland*.

good practice A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's review processes.

learning opportunities The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, and resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

learning outcomes What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

⁴ At the time of publication of this report, the Handbook has been republished as *Review for Specific Course Designation: Handbook, May 2014*, available at 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.

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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