



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

## London College of Business Sciences Ltd

October 2014

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## Key findings about London College of Business Sciences Ltd

As a result of its Review for Specific Course Designation carried out in October 2014, the QAA review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of the Association of Business Executives, ATHE Ltd and 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 these awarding organisations.

The team considers that reliance **can** be placed on the information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

## Recommendations

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

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

- improve its academic committee procedures to assure the maintenance of academic standards (paragraph 1.2)
- implement fully and consistently its annual monitoring procedures and practice (paragraph 1.4)
- focus lesson observation feedback on student learning (paragraph 2.5)
- ensure that all information for prospective students is accurate and trustworthy (paragraph 3.4).

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

- include the Disciplinary Committee powers in the Student Handbook (paragraph 1.7)
- further rationalise College policies (paragraph 2.2)
- use performance appraisal feedback to identify good practice and college-wide improvement needs (paragraph 2.12).

## About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Specific Course Designation](#)<sup>1</sup> conducted by [QAA](#) at London College of Business Sciences Ltd (the College), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of the Association of Business Executives (ABE), ATHE Ltd and Pearson Education. The review was carried out by Mr Rob Mason, Miss Sarah Riches, (reviewers) and Mrs Catherine Fairhurst (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Specific Course Designation: Handbook, May 2014](#).<sup>2</sup> Evidence in support of the review included documentation supplied by the College and the awarding organisations, meetings with staff and students, and reports of the reviews by the Independent School Inspectorate (ISI) and the British Accreditation Council (BAC). The review team also considered the provider's use of the relevant external reference points:

- the guidelines provided by the awarding organisations
- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)
- *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)
- the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

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

The College was established in January 2010 with teaching commencing in 2011. It is owned by three directors, each of whom holds a position of responsibility in the College and is a member of the Board of Governance. The College occupies eight rooms on the lower ground floor of the Waterfront Studios Business Centre in Royal Victoria Docks, an area of regeneration in the Docklands. The College's stated aim is to provide educational services to international and some local students wishing to pursue further study in health care and business management. There are currently 30 students studying at the College, nine teaching staff and seven management and administrative staff.

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

### **ABE**

- Extended Diploma Level 7 (1)

### **ATHE Ltd**

- Diploma in Management Level 6 (3)
- Diploma in Healthcare Management Level 6 (11)
- Diploma in Healthcare Management Level 7 (11)

### **Pearson Education**

- BTEC HNC Business Management (4)

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<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/RSCD.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/RSCD.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2707](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2707)

## **The provider's stated responsibilities**

The awarding organisations are responsible for curriculum development and programme specifications. The College's responsibilities depend on those stipulated by the awarding organisations. They include, for example, admissions, gathering and responding to student feedback, and staff development. Responsibilities for the setting and marking of assessment, including moderation, vary between the awarding organisations. For ABE and Pearson Education, the setting and marking of assessments is the responsibility of the College, with moderation being shared between the College and awarding organisations. For ATHE Ltd, the setting of assignments and moderation is a shared responsibility between the College and ATHE Ltd while the first marking is the responsibility of the College.

## **Recent developments**

Since the previous review the College has restructured its committee and reporting structure. The College has plans to increase student numbers to 100 in 2015.

## **Students' contribution to the review**

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. Students on the programmes met to discuss their views and produced a recording of the meeting. This recording was available to the reviewers. A group of students met the coordinator at the preparatory meeting in advance of the visit. Students from different programmes participated in a meeting during the review. Their contribution was constructive and helpful.

## Detailed findings about London College of Business Sciences Ltd

### 1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The College's management of academic standards on behalf of its awarding organisations is satisfactory. The Principal has overall responsibility for the operation of the College. He is assisted by three directors and the Vice Principal, the Quality Assurance Manager and the Student Welfare Officer. All staff are clear about roles and responsibilities and they all have job descriptions. The College has engaged the services of an external consultant who sits on the Board of Governance and has contributed to the development of its quality structures and processes.

1.2 The committee structure is new and appropriate for the size of the College. The Academic Board has operational responsibilities and reports to the Board of Governance which is responsible for the strategic direction of the College. The Disciplinary Committee and the Admissions Committee are subcommittees of the Academic Board. The Committees do not yet have fully developed terms of reference or complete membership lists and agreed actions are not always formally tracked. It is **advisable** that the College improves the academic committee procedures to assure the maintenance of academic standards.

1.3 The management of student admissions is effective. The Admissions Committee is responsible to the Academic Board for ensuring that applicants meet the entry requirements specified by the relevant awarding organisation and the minimum English language requirements set by the Home Office for international students.

1.4 At the last review it was considered essential that the College develop and implement consistent and effective procedures for annual monitoring at programme level and College level. The College has recently revised its annual programme monitoring procedures. Programme leaders use a standard template to prepare annual programme reports but do not yet use student data effectively to analyse performance and achievement. The compilers use their own knowledge of student data to complete the forms rather than a centrally produced data set. The annual programme reports (APR) will contribute to the overall College annual monitoring report (AMR). The College AMR provides a general summary of key events and activities. It is intended that both reports will be considered by the Academic Board annually with any significant issues progressed to the Board of Governance. There appears to be no clear link between the APRs and the AMR. The Quality Improvement Plan exists independently of the AMR. A quality assurance calendar lists key areas and dates of quality activities, for example, internal verification, assessor meetings, module and programme evaluations, and AMR preparation. Staff say they find the calendar useful. The College is only partway through the annual monitoring process so it is **advisable** that the College implements fully and consistently its annual monitoring procedures and practice to provide a basis for enhancing the provision.

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

1.5 The College relies on the awarding organisations to manage external reference points. Pearson Education is responsible for ensuring that its awards meet the requirements of the FHEQ, the Quality Code Part A: Setting and Maintaining Standards and are informed by the Subject Benchmark Statements. The other awarding organisations rely on the QCF.

Centre approvals, reviews and external verifiers' reports confirm that the College consistently meets the conditions of the awarding organisations.

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

1.6 The College's Guide to Assessment and Internal Verification clearly details the arrangements for assessment and verification of student work. The College undertakes first marking and internal verification for all programmes while the awarding organisations carry out external verification. Students' assessed work and its verification confirm this. The College convenes standardisation meetings of internal assessors on a regular basis to consider the recommendations of external verifiers, to internally verify marking and review the quality of feedback to students, as confirmed by the minutes. Responses to external verifier reports in the form of an action plan are considered at standardisation meetings, Academic Board and the Board of Governance. External verifiers confirm consistently that their recommendations have been acted upon by the College. For example, the Pearson external verifier made recommendations to improve the assessment practices by the College tutors. This resulted in the item being discussed at the College standardisation meetings and Academic Board, resulting in an improved approach to marking student work. External verifier reports are made available to students through the Student Portal.

1.7 The Student Handbook provides information about plagiarism and academic misconduct but does not describe the penalties and the specific powers of the Disciplinary Committee. Students sign a Code of Conduct and show an understanding of the relevant disciplinary procedures. It would be **desirable** for the College to include the Disciplinary Committee's powers in the Student Handbook.

1.8 In summary, the College is largely effective in managing its responsibilities for delivering academic standards. There are coherent line management structures in place but the underdeveloped procedures for the emerging committees have the potential to put standards at risk. The admissions practice is good. The programme annual monitoring is developing well but will need monitoring and evaluating to further secure standards. Internal verification is sound. The College needs to define clearly the specific powers of the Disciplinary Committee.

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

## **2 Quality of learning opportunities**

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

2.1 The procedures for the management of academic standards described in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2 also apply to the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities. Programme teams monitor effectively the quality of learning opportunities using annual programme reports which include external verifiers' reports and student feedback. Students have a variety of formal and informal opportunities to comment on their learning opportunities. The Student Committee acts as a formal channel of communication between the College and its students. Student representatives attend Academic Board and Board of Governors meetings. Students complete module and programme evaluation surveys, they have regular informal meetings with the Director of Studies and they report good access to tutors with regular tutorials.

2.2 The College has a wide range of policies based on the expectations and indicators of the Quality Code. The Policies and Procedure Framework provides a basis for the delivery and management of the courses. It includes policies on governance, academic regulations, admission, teaching and learning and assessment, student support and engagement, information, marketing and promotion, human resources and finance. The policies and procedures are newly developed and contain some duplication. It would be **desirable** for the College to further rationalise its policies.

2.3 The College relies on awarding organisation external verifier visits as the main mechanism to monitor the quality of learning opportunities and uses their reports to reflect on the effectiveness of policies, procedures and practices. The Academic Board discusses improvement plans that have been prepared to address external verifier queries and to reflect on the effectiveness of its internal monitoring and enhancement activities.

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

2.4 The College's use of external reference points are as described in paragraphs 1.5 and 1.6. It uses the Quality Code as an external reference point to inform its policies and procedures for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. The College's Policy Framework clearly identifies the correspondence of policies and procedures to the Quality Code. The Quality Assurance Manual provides further guidance for staff. The College organises seminars for staff on the application of the Quality Code and they show a good understanding. A detailed mapping process has been undertaken to compare the levels of College provision against the Quality Code indicators. An action plan outlines strategies to meet indicators that have not yet been met.

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

2.5 The College has developed a Course Delivery Policy and uses information from lesson observations and student feedback to assure the quality of teaching and learning. Each tutor is observed twice a term, by a senior manager and then by a peer. Post-observation feedback is supportive but concentrates on teaching techniques and insufficiently on the students' acquisition of knowledge and skills. It is **advisable** that lesson observation feedback is focused on student learning.

2.6 There is a comprehensive mechanism for obtaining student feedback using paper-based questionnaires. Module, programme and whole-college surveys gather feedback about teaching quality, learning opportunities, and the effectiveness of College policies. The Student Engagement Policy and Procedure clearly outlines the methods of collection, analysis and dissemination of the results. The Academic Board considers this feedback and refers serious issues to the Principal. Students speak highly of their tutors' knowledge, range of teaching techniques and methods and the effective use of group work.

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

2.7 The College supports its students effectively. Students met by the team spoke highly of the range and quality of support throughout their courses. Provision for student support is set out in the College's tutorial policy. Timetabled tutorials include one-to-one and group sessions where the focus is on academic topics, for example assignment support. Students' Individual Learning Plans, which are regularly monitored, records their learning goals and an assessment of their support needs.

2.8 The College provides appropriate non-academic support for the students. The Student Welfare Officer provides advice on personal issues and topics such as accommodation, travel and visas. Students confirm that they have helpful pastoral support when they need it.

2.9 A three-day induction programme helps students settle into the College at the start of their course. This includes a College briefing, introductions to rules and regulations, preparation for study, English language support and study skills. Students say they value the informative nature of their induction.

2.10 The Student Committee is a forum for elected student representatives to discuss academic and related issues. The meetings are used to update and inform the students about College activities. Students confirm that their views are heard formally and informally and that the College responds to their requests quickly and efficiently. They gave examples of the improvement of the wireless network and how their request for additional library books was resolved by the provision of an e-library.

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

2.11 The College has a thorough staff recruitment and selection policy which ensures new staff have the appropriate skills and qualifications. Teaching staff are well qualified with almost all teaching staff having a higher degree or a professional qualification. The College is supporting staff who do not have a teaching qualification to study for the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector. College training and development during the 2013-14 academic year focused on first aid, awarding organisations' regulations, QAA briefings and administrative items.

2.12 The College has a comprehensive Staff Development Policy. The staff performance appraisal effectively identifies individual training needs which are collated into a wider staff development programme and discussed by the Board of Governance. However, the analysis and feedback from performance appraisal are not used formally to identify college-wide improvement needs and areas of good practice. It would be **desirable** for this analysis and feedback to be used to identify good practice and college-wide improvement needs.

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

2.13 The College manages learning resources effectively. The College Directors' termly assessment and student feedback identify learning resource needs. The Academic Board considers these needs, for example, updating the library computers. Students say that they are satisfied with the level and range of resources provided, especially the provision of an e-library to extend reading and research opportunities.

2.14 In summary, the College has mapped comprehensively the Quality Code against its current policies. There is some duplication of these policies. Staff are aware of the Quality Code and its applications. The College adheres to the processes laid down by awarding organisations and relies heavily on these to monitor quality of learning opportunities. Lesson observations and student feedback are the main mechanisms for monitoring teaching quality. Students say the teaching and support is good and the College deals with their concerns effectively. Teaching staff are well qualified. A revised performance appraisal process has strengthened the review of individual staff. The learning resources are accessible to students and sufficient. The quality of learning opportunities would be enhanced if tutor observation feedback was focused on student learning and if the college-



wide staff development programme included the dissemination of good practice and college-wide improvement needs.

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

### 3 Information about learning opportunities

#### How effectively does the College communicate information about learning opportunities to students and other stakeholders?

3.1 The website is the main vehicle for communication between the College and prospective students. It includes a downloadable prospectus and application form, information about the application process, tuition fees and accreditations held by the College. The website also describes facilities and student support services and policies relevant to the admissions process. Students confirmed that the website provides useful information. Admission requirements for each programme and the admissions procedure are accessible from the College's website. There is a clear system of version control on printed documents.

3.2 All students receive a detailed Student Handbook which includes key student-related policies, including the plagiarism policy, disciplinary, complaints and appeals procedures. Students are provided with information about their programme of study by the awarding organisation, which is made available to them through the website and the Student Portal. The Student Portal has a range of documents and materials for students. These include lesson plans, work schemes, handbooks, and links to other websites, for example, the e-library. Students are able to access these remotely at any time and find the resource very helpful. Staff are able to upload and access documents to their specific courses and areas.

3.3 The College is piloting the use of social media to improve communication with students. It has a Social Media Policy which provides a framework for the development of these tools.

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

3.4 Generally, the College's arrangements for ensuring that the information it publishes is fit for purpose and trustworthy are effective. The College has recently reviewed and revised its policy and procedures for the approval of published information. The Principal has overall responsibility for the management of publications, including the prospectus, website, advertisements and the Student Handbook. The Director of Admissions and Administration has operational responsibility to check that information, including that sourced from external agencies such as programme details published by awarding organisations and Home Office immigration information, is accurate and up to date. The Public Information Policy requires all information contained in the Prospectus, on the website and in handbooks to be approved by Academic Board, with final sign-off provided by a Director. The minutes of Academic Board confirm that approval for changes to the website, prospectus and letterheads is obtained. However, the reference on the website to students' rights to work while studying might be misinterpreted by prospective students. It is **advisable** that the College ensures that all information for prospective students is accurate and trustworthy.

3.5 During the College's last QAA review in 2013, the team found inaccurate, misleading and incomplete information derived from the student record system in a 'To whom it may concern' letter and in correspondence with a third party. The College has introduced a Student Record Policy which requires all correspondence derived from the student record system to be checked by the Vice Principal before it is released. The team sampled student correspondence and files and did not find any inaccurate information. There were some typographical errors in student-related correspondence. These indicate that the internal checks are not completely effective.

3.6 In summary, the College communicates information effectively by various methods. Generally, the College's arrangements for ensuring that the information it publishes are fit for purpose and trustworthy are effective although statements in the prospectus about working while studying could be misleading for prospective students.

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 plan<sup>3</sup>

London College of Business Sciences action plan relating to the Review of Specific Course Designation in October 2014						
Advisable	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>improve its academic committee procedures to assure the maintenance of academic standards (paragraph 1.2)</li> </ul>	<p>Clear structures, roles and reporting lines for all College committees</p> <p>Assure the maintenance of the academic standards</p>	<p>Redefine the committee structure and roles with clear reporting lines and terms of reference</p> <p>Develop clear terms of reference for each of the committees</p> <p>Complete a constituent membership list for each committee clearly indicating responsibilities</p> <p>Develop a monitoring instrument, ie on the minutes such that actions could be tracked down formally</p>	End March 2014	Director of Administration, Vice Principal, Director of Marketing, Principal	Board of Governance	Board of Governance to evaluate the effectiveness of the structures by June 2015

<sup>3</sup> The College has been required to develop this action plan to address any recommendations arising from the review. QAA monitors progress against the action plan, in conjunction with the College's awarding organisation.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>implement fully and consistently its annual monitoring procedures and practice (paragraph 1.4)</li> </ul>	<p>Use the annual monitoring process effectively to operate efficiently and consistently</p>	<p>Training session with Programme Leaders</p> <p>Use effectively centrally produced existing student data to generate the annual programme reports that report on student performance and achievement</p> <p>Link clearly the annual programme reports and the annual monitoring report and the quality improvement plan</p>	<p>May 2015</p>	<p>Principal Director of Administration Teaching staff Internal Quality Manager</p>	<p>Board of Governance</p>	<p>Annual course and programme review reports. Board of Governance minute review on the process</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>focus lesson observation feedback on student learning (paragraph 2.5)</li> </ul>	<p>Review the existing formal system of observations on teaching staff to include student's acquisition of knowledge and skills</p>	<p>Revise observation forms to include an assessment of student's acquisition of knowledge and skills</p> <p>Brief all affected staff on the new development</p>	<p>February 2015</p>	<p>Director of Administration</p>	<p>Academic Board</p>	<p>Tutor feedback analysis considered by Academic Board</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that all information for prospective students is accurate and trustworthy (paragraph 3.4).</li> </ul>	<p>All published material is accurate, complete and has been checked and approved by the relevant committee</p>	<p>Revisit all public information to ensure that all statements that may be misleading are corrected</p> <p>Identify and correct the misleading statement in the prospectus</p>	<p>August 2015</p>	<p>Director of Administration</p>	<p>Academic Board</p>	<p>Feedback from staff and students about published information on the higher education provision</p> <p>Enhancements to be identified</p>

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 <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>include the Disciplinary Committee powers in the Student Handbook (paragraph 1.7)</li> </ul>	Greater student awareness of disciplinary protocols	Revise handbook to include Disciplinary Committee powers	January 2014	Director of Administration	Principal	<p>Revised student handbook that includes the disciplinary powers of committees</p> <p>Disciplinary Committee meeting minutes</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>further rationalise College policies (paragraph 2.2)</li> </ul>	Policies reviewed to ensure their continuing currency, relevance and utility	<p>Make a clear distinction between policies (which are statements of broad intent) and procedures (which detail the operational arrangements for a particular task or set of tasks)</p> <p>Separate the policies and procedures to remove duplication and produce separate documents</p>	June 2015	Principal Vice Principal Director of Administration	Board of Governance	Discuss the documents at Academic Board and at Board of Governance level for approval

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• use performance appraisal feedback to identify good practice and college-wide improvement needs (paragraph 2.12).</li> </ul>	<p>A staff development programme that supports staff in their professional development and meets future needs of the College</p>	<p>Produce a college-wide staff development plan developed through a process of training needs analysis</p> <p>List the identified good practice and discuss in standardisation meetings</p>	<p>March 2015</p>	<p>Principal Vice Principal Director of Administration</p>	<p>Board of Governance</p>	<p>Training needs analysis report</p> <p>Board of Governance minutes</p> <p>Reviews of the effectiveness of training programmes</p>
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## About QAA

QAA is the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. QAA's mission is to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education.

QAA's aims are to:

- meet students' needs and be valued by them
- safeguard standards in an increasingly diverse UK and international context
- drive improvements in UK higher education
- improve public understanding of higher education standards and quality.

QAA conducts reviews of higher education institutions and publishes reports on the findings. QAA also publishes a range of guidance documents to help safeguard standards and improve quality.

More information about the work of QAA is available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk).

More detail about Review for Specific Course Designation can be found at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/RSCD.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/RSCD.aspx).

## Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary). Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Review for Specific Course Designation: Handbook, May 2014](#).<sup>4</sup>

**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.

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<sup>4</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2707](http://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.

**QAA1050 - R4238 - Jan 15**

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