



## **London Guildhall College Ltd**

Review for Educational Oversight  
by the Quality Assurance Agency  
for Higher Education

April 2014

## Key findings about London Guildhall College Ltd

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in April 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 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.

### Good practice

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

- The supportive admissions process tailored to individual international students (paragraph 2.9).

### 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:

- revise College policies to reflect current practice (paragraphs 1.2 and 2.3)
- initiate a committee structure with clear terms of reference (paragraphs 1.3 and 2.2)
- organise a systematic mapping of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraphs 1.5 and 2.4).

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

- formally record discussions and action points from management and academic meetings (paragraph 2.6)
- implement mechanisms to recognise and share good practice (paragraph 2.14)
- compile a resources report as part of the annual review process (paragraph 2.15)
- enhance current procedures for version control of policies (paragraph 3.7).

## About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)<sup>1</sup> (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at London Guildhall College 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 ATHE Ltd and Pearson. The review was carried out by Mr Philip Price and Mrs Trudy Stiles (reviewers) and Mrs Suzanne Richardson (Coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).<sup>2</sup> Evidence in support of the review included the following:

- College self-evaluation
- Academic Management Review Report for 2013-14 from Pearson
- External Verification from ATHE Ltd for 2013
- College annual monitoring report for December 2013
- Academic Board terms of reference and minutes
- student feedback and written submission
- College policies
- sample student work marked and internally verified
- staff development activities and lesson observations
- meeting notes reflecting discussions held with staff and students conducted during the review.

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

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code)
- the regulations and guidelines of the awarding organisations
- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)
- Pearson Programme Handbook.

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 2003 as a private higher education institution. It was originally based in the docklands area of London but moved to Whitechapel, East London, in 2005 due to rapid growth. In 2010 the current owner took over the College and is also the Marketing Director. The other senior staff members include the Principal and the Head of Administration and Course Coordinator. The vision of the College is to enable and inspire individuals to develop their potential to grow intellectually throughout their life, to equip them for the challenges they will face in the workplace and to make a positive impact on society and its well-being.

At the time of the review there were approximately 60 students studying at levels 5, 6 and 7 on awards accredited by ATHE Ltd and four students studying on the Pearson level 7 award.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/educational-oversight](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/educational-oversight)

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx)

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

#### **Pearson**

- Extended Diploma in Strategic Management and Leadership - level 7 (4)

#### **ATHE Ltd**

- Diploma in Strategic Management - level 7 (6)
- Diploma in Management - level 6 (37)
- Diploma in Management - level 5 (10)
- Diploma in Healthcare Management - level 7 (3)

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

The College has responsibility for recruitment and monitoring admission, retention and achievement of students. It is also responsible for the first marking of assessments and providing feedback to the students. The College is responsible for collecting and acting upon student feedback, for the admission and induction of students, providing academic tutorials and guidance as well as support for staff development opportunities.

The awarding organisations are responsible for curriculum development, providing programme and module specifications and second marking and moderation. ATHE Ltd sets the assignments but Pearson devolves this responsibility to the College.

The College shares responsibility with the awarding organisations for reviewing and responding to annual monitoring reviews, monitoring the quality of teaching and learning, student appeals and the procedures for ensuring that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose.

### **Recent developments**

The College had an inaugural meeting of its Academic Board on 11 April 2014 with appropriate terms of reference. The agenda included development of a Learning and Teaching Strategy, a review of student attendance and academic staff development requirements. The student attendance system has recently been updated with an aim to provide robust data and to meet UK Border Agency (UKBA) requirements.

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

Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the review team. The student representative took the lead in writing the student submission with contributions from a variety of students. The College provided details of student feedback to assist the process but the students were given complete editorial control. Students were present at both the preparatory meeting and had a meeting with the review team during the review visit and their views were helpful in informing the discussions.

## Detailed findings about London Guildhall College Ltd

### 1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The College is at an early stage of its development but is currently fulfilling its responsibilities to its awarding organisations for the management of academic standards effectively. At College level the management of academic standards is planned on an informal basis and benefits from constant, regular interaction between the small team of staff. At programme level, the process of management of standards is more transparent and with high completion rates on all awards.

1.2 In practice, quality assurance is managed to comply with the requirements of UKBA and the awarding organisations and not through a robust quality assurance cycle linked to academic standards. The self-evaluation does not fully describe the College processes and there is no articulation of the recently established Academic Board. Some recently developed College policies have yet to be fully embedded and contain aspirational statements for the overall management of higher education. These do not always match College practice or provision but the College plans to review these in line with its annual review cycle over the summer. It is **advisable** for the College to revise College policies to reflect current practice.

1.3 The College has a management structure which is not clearly defined. The Principal and the recently established Academic Board report to the Board of Directors and together have responsibility for academic standards. Senior staff are able to describe the function of both the academic and management meetings which operate as decision-making committees. In practice, due to the small scale of the College staff base, these meetings replicate membership and the relationship between them is not well documented. The minutes of the management and academic meetings are brief but suffice due to the overlapping attendance. These meetings do not have terms of reference and the flow of information between them is not clearly defined. Current systems are working effectively with student representation on the management meeting but these meetings would both benefit from a more formalised approach. It is **advisable** for the College to initiate a committee structure with clear terms of reference.

1.4 The recently formed Academic Board has responsibility for developing appropriate policies and oversight to support academic standards and quality of learning opportunities. It is scheduled to meet at least twice a year which may be insufficient during the continuing development of the College. Its membership includes student representation and at the time of the review the Board had met only once. From September 2014 the Board will consider minutes of the management and academic meetings/committees, student retention and progression data to ensure accuracy and reliability, student views and feedback.

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

1.5 The College has yet to make effective use of relevant external reference points to identify good practice or areas for development. The College operates within the guidance provided by its awarding organisations who benchmark provision in line with the National Qualifications Framework and Qualifications and Credit Framework. Learning outcomes and programme specifications are the responsibility of the individual awarding organisations. The College has made limited use of the Quality Code to review policies and procedures. As part of the recent Academic Board development the terms of reference suggest it plans to

undertake a College-wide consideration of the alignment of College policies and procedures. It is **advisable** for the College to organise a systematic mapping of the Quality Code.

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

1.6 The College internal procedures for the moderation of assessment ensure that intended learning outcomes are assessed at the appropriate level and decisions are secure. The responsibility for moderation and second marking lies with the awarding organisations. This practice is confirmed in recent awarding organisation reports and the marked work considered by the review team. These external reports refer to sound practice and the increasing use of electronic feedback across levels. The process follows a well organised College procedure with internal verification plans prepared at the start of each academic year and include internal verifiers supported by an experienced Course Coordinator who undertakes a supervisory role across awards.

1.7 The Course Coordinator provides oversight of the internal verification procedures to assure academic standards and prepares annual internal verification plans at the start of each academic year. The College has trialled the use of plagiarism-detection software to support assessment procedures and will shortly implement it across the College. Teaching staff are supported in the moderation process through in-house training and new staff are further developed by engaging in double-blind marking standardisation exercises. External verifier reports confirm good assessment practice and are made available to students.

1.8 Overall the College is effective in managing its responsibilities for maintaining academic standards. It is beginning to develop formal policies and structures and does recognise the need to review policies to reflect current practice, extend the use of the Quality Code and define management responsibilities within a formal structure. Noting that ultimate responsibility rests with the awarding organisations, the team found that the College discharges its responsibilities in respect of academic standards in a competent manner and this is confirmed in the reports produced by the awarding organisations.

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 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 College fulfils its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities and demonstrates understanding of its delegated responsibilities. The College has a satisfactory set of documented mechanisms to monitor and enhance the quality of learning opportunities at programme level and this is confirmed through awarding organisation review reports.

2.2 The College's transition from using a range of informal practices to managing provision through more formal deliberative structures is incomplete. At cross-College level the specific role of management structures is insufficiently defined and recording of meetings, decisions, actions and monitoring is not systematically conducted (see paragraph 1.3).

2.3 The College has useful policies in areas such as student admissions, assessment, learning and teaching and staff development, but some do not wholly reflect the current activities of the College. Policies recently formulated, including the Learning and Teaching Strategy, are not consistently considered key drivers in managing the quality of learning opportunities with little documented evidence of monitoring practice against these. As with other recent initiatives it is too early to assess their effectiveness (see paragraph 1.2).

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

2.4 The College draws heavily upon its awarding organisations for its external reference points. As noted in paragraph 1.5, the College is beginning to use external reference points in its management and enhancement of learning opportunities.

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

2.5 The College has internal mechanisms for assuring the quality of its teaching and learning provision which include schemes of work and lesson plans with formal reflection and evaluation completed following each lesson. These are overseen by the Quality Assurance Officer who liaises with the Principal on a regular basis. Teaching staff, including the Principal, are required to participate in the lesson observation process.

2.6 The minutes from the academic and management meetings evidence discussions relating to the quality of teaching and learning and student progress, but they do not systematically record actions agreed for enhancement. The College recognises the need to explicitly evaluate its management structures and processes against the Quality Code and its own mission statement. It would be **desirable** for the College to formally record discussions and action points from management and academic meetings.

2.7 The College demonstrates high levels of student completion, retention and success, confirmed by external reports. The College is aware of difficulties with their management information system and uses manual records to support the system to track student progress. The data is presented and discussed at monthly management meetings and student non-attendance reported to UKBA. The College recently invested in a more comprehensive software package designed to record and report on progression, achievement and attendance. Although still in the early stages of implementation the College plans to use this to produce detailed student data on a regular basis and for this to be reviewed by Academic Board.

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

2.8 Students are well supported through the provision of formal and informal mechanisms including an open door policy with access to staff at every level. A key strength is the College's highly supportive environment. Each student is personally known to relevant teaching and key senior staff including the Welfare Officer who students can contact at any time. Students confirm they appreciate this support and it is recognised in external review reports.

2.9 The College is responsible for student recruitment and has clear systems in place for the allocation of students to appropriate awards. The admissions policy is informed by the requirements of the awarding organisations and UKBA. The team reviewed evidence of the recruitment practice and noted high levels of attention to detail by the Welfare Officer. The admissions process includes professional and individual dialogue supported by thorough and well documented evidence. The process is designed to select students with a

demonstrable commitment to complete their chosen programme. The review team considers the supportive admissions process tailored to individual international students to be a feature of **good practice**.

2.10 The two-day induction programme is effective and well-regarded by students. It informs them of College facilities, student support policies, course handbooks, the attendance and compliance requirements. This information is available in written and digital formats and can be made available in hard copy to the students. Induction includes completion of a learning styles questionnaire where results are made available to teaching staff to support individual learner needs. The collated results and a range of other information on students, including any declared learning disabilities, are available to staff prior to the start of programmes.

2.11 On-demand tutorials and completion of individual learning plans, conducted at least once per semester, enable the Course Coordinator and individual module staff to maintain oversight of student progress. Issues arising from the monitoring process are raised at weekly catch-up meetings and monthly management meetings. External reports confirm students receive good support to complete assessments. Students are regularly asked by teachers to review their understanding of material and teaching staff have contracts which enable staff to provide impromptu additional support sessions.

2.12 The College has introduced mechanisms to increase student participation in evaluating provision. It has various methods for gauging student satisfaction through the use of module questionnaires, open door policy and informal discussions. Feedback from students is also collected through the Student Representative who meets regularly with the Student Welfare Officer. Students confirm that the College is responsive to their feedback and informs them of actions taken.

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

2.13 The Staff Development Policy identifies the College's responsibilities for assessing and responding to staff development needs. These are identified through staff induction, regular appraisal and lesson observation procedures. The Principal, with support from the Quality Assurance Officer, collates information on staff development needs and performance, including evaluations from students and external reports to plan future training and updating sessions.

2.14 Staff are generally well qualified to teach their subjects and one criterion used to recruit staff is a demonstrable passion for teaching international students. Some members of staff are undertaking further subject-related study or teaching qualifications. Staff confirm that College support is available to them and they attend awarding organisation training. Staff also share good practice informally but this is not recorded and the College has no process to identify and share good practice across the college. It would be **desirable** for the College to implement mechanisms to recognise and share good practice.

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

2.15 The College provides students with sufficient mechanisms to access resources to enable them to achieve learning outcomes. The College's learning resources meet the awarding organisations' expectations for delivery. There is a resources and facilities document which outlines physical provision and includes aspirational statements. This is reviewed annually. Learning resources are considered at management meetings, but there



is no clear documented process for evaluating access to and the provision of learning resources. It would be **desirable** for the College to compile a resources report as part of the annual review process.

2.16 The College recognises the limitations of the physical resources in the library, the unreliable internet connection and lack of a virtual learning environment (VLE). The College has made commitments to address and progress these. Students were keen to point out the availability of other institutional libraries, additional resources through the awarding organisations, the internet and the helpfulness of the teaching staff in accessing any necessary additional resources. The College has responded to student suggestions to enhance vocational relevance of the provision by organising a recent study trip to Switzerland and another is planned to Turkey.

2.17 The team considers the College to be effective in managing the quality of learning opportunities. There are high levels of personal support offered to potential international students which makes a positive contribution to the student learning and is a feature of good practice. There are recommendations made which require further consideration by the College and these include a review of current resources, the organisation of a process which enables good practice to be shared and the introduction of processes to formally record discussions and actions arising from College committee meetings. These include preparing an annual resources plan and review, to provide opportunities to share good practice and to formally record and track actions agreed at meetings.

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

### 3 Information about learning opportunities

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

3.1 The College is effective in its communication of public information to its stakeholders. The College website is the primary means by which key information is provided about the College, including courses, fees, application and admission process and key policies. It also includes the Student Handbook and the Student Charter developed in conjunction with the Student Representative. The College provides detailed information to support potential international students, including information on how to apply for a visa and a range of cultural and economic information about living and studying in London.

3.2 The Student Handbook provides wide ranging information about studying at the College, various policies and procedures including course information and the College's obligations to report non-attendance of international students to the UKBA. It replicates information provided by the awarding organisations and places the information within the context of the College learning and teaching environment although some statements describing College resources are aspirational at this stage in the College development.

3.3 At induction the College ensures that students understand and have access to an electronic version of the Student Handbook which includes the complaints process with reference to academic appeals and local stages for College-based complaints. Students confirm the thoroughness of this process and confirmed a hard copy of the Student Handbook can be requested. Students and staff access programme specifications via links from the College website to the awarding organisations. The College publishes a programme

handbook for Pearson courses which replicates information provided by the awarding organisation.

3.4 The College does not yet have a VLE or intranet to support student learning but individual tutors do send additional learning materials by email. The College is in the process of purchasing a VLE which is compatible with the existing management information system.

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

3.5 The Principal and Marketing Director are responsible for ensuring College-wide information is accurate and clear. The Head of Administration is responsible for information regarding awarding organisations, registration and exam regulations.

3.6 The College has an effective Publishing Policy that details the processes and responsibilities for the production and maintenance of all information concerning student learning. The Principal and Marketing Director annually monitor the effectiveness and accuracy of information, in addition to periodic checks. Responsibility for management of the website lies with the Marketing Director, who is able to arrange almost instant corrections when necessary. The students were actively involved in the design of the new College website and confirm that it is helpful and accurate.

3.7 The College has a range of published handbooks, policies and procedures that are appropriate to its current size and status. Responsibilities for processes for published information are clearly understood, and do include student participation. There is a lack of consistency in the use of version control and the review team noticed some grammatical errors to various published information. It would be **desirable** for the College to enhance current procedures for version control of policies.

3.8 The College publishes an appropriate range of information and has clear arrangements for ensuring it is effective. The current arrangements are appropriate but while the College is still in the early stages of development, there is scope for enhancement to some mechanisms used to communicate information about learning opportunities which include the enhancement of version control practice and realistic descriptions of College resources.

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 Guildhall College Ltd action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight of April 2013						
Good practice	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The review team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The supportive admissions process tailored to individual international students (paragraph 2.9).</li> </ul>	Record accurately and store efficiently all interview notes taken during recruitment process	Design and implement interview forms which support individual discussions	12/09/2014	Head of Admin	Principal	Evaluate interview forms and monitor process monthly
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>revise College policies to reflect current practice</li> </ul>	Use revised policies to make informed decision	Review College policies and streamline operations to reflect current practice	20/09/2014	Management	Academic Board	Utilise the management meetings and

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

(paragraphs 1.2 and 2.3)		Remove non-relevant statements, ensure all are up to date, accurate and fully embedded in College processes				Quality Assurance Report to make informed decisions and check final versions of all published documents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>initiate a committee structure with clear terms of reference (paragraphs 1.3 and 2.2)</li> </ul>	Use terms of reference for each committee, review performance at the end of the year or when required to ensure meetings are minuted appropriately and actions discussed are tracked	<p>Create terms of reference for each committee and review annually (September)</p> <p>Define and implement a clear management structure which formalises the current approach</p>	12/12/2014	Management	Academic Board	<p>Terms of reference for all committees to be made available which defines responsibilities and are reviewed annually to assess and monitor effectiveness</p> <p>Produce a revised organogram</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>organise a systematic mapping of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraphs 1.5 and 2.4).</li> </ul>	Effective processes are in place to incorporate the Quality Code into College policies	<p>Identify external reference points to inform good practices and align existing policies</p> <p>Revise policies accordingly</p>	26/09/2014	Principal	Academic Board	Relevant policies updated which clearly evidence mapping considerations

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>formally record discussions and action points from management and academic meetings (paragraph 2.6)</li> </ul>	Annual monitoring process takes into account formalised recording of minutes of all meetings	Assign formal minute taking responsibilities for all meetings  Highlight actions agreed at the meetings	18/07/2014	Marketing Manager	Principal	Formal notes to be taken from all committee meetings to formalise decisions and planned actions which facilitate tracking of actions agreed and progressed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>implement mechanisms to recognise and share good practice (paragraph 2.14)</li> </ul>	Implement formal records which record all staff development activity to identify good practice including document standardisation meetings	Develop a strategy to implement good practice  Organise formal standardisation meeting	26/09/2014	Principal	Academic Board	Formal minutes from standardisation meetings and a record of all staff development activity undertaken  These will link to reference points and the sharing of good practice events

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• compile a resources report as part of the annual review process (paragraph 2.15)</li> </ul>	<p>Implement identified mechanism for evaluating resources and learning provision</p>	<p>Document processes for evaluating access and provision of learning resources</p> <p>Revise Resource Policy</p>	<p>31/10/2014</p>	<p>Course Coordinator</p>	<p>Principal</p>	<p>Revised Resource Policy which includes the requirement for a thorough review annually as part of the annual review cycle</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enhance current procedures for version control of policies (paragraph 3.7).</li> </ul>	<p>Approval and implementation of version control policy</p>	<p>Implement version control policies which include checks for accuracy and grammar</p>	<p>29/08/2014</p>	<p>Principal</p>	<p>Academic Board</p>	<p>Version control policy to identify the most recent policies and facilitate appropriate referencing</p> <p>This will be a regular agenda item discussed at Academic Board</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](http://www.qaa.ac.uk).

More detail about Review for Educational Oversight can be found at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/educational-oversight](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/educational-oversight).

## Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary). Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).<sup>6</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.

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

**designated body** An organisation that has been formally appointed or recognised to perform a particular function. QAA has been recognised by UKBA as a designated body for the purpose of providing educational oversight.

**differentiated judgements** In a Review for Educational Oversight, 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.

**highly trusted sponsor** An organisation that the UK Government trusts to admit migrant students from overseas, according to Tier 4 of the UK Border Agency's points-based immigration system. Higher education providers wishing to obtain this status must undergo a successful review by QAA.

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<sup>6</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx)



**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.

**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**.

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