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

London School of Academics Ltd

December 2013

Contents

Key findings about London School of Academics Ltd

As a result of its Review for Specific Course Designation carried out in December 2013, the QAA review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of the City and Guilds of London Institute.

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 the awarding organisation.

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

Good practice

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

- the supportive environment and identification of students' specific needs through the admissions and induction processes (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:

- make more effective use of unit and course statistics, and student feedback, to enhance academic standards and learning opportunities (paragraphs 1.2 and 2.8)
- align its policies and procedures and published information with the Quality Code to enhance academic standards, learning opportunities and increase staff awareness (paragraphs 1.5 and 2.6)
- formalise the recording and tracking of assessments and mitigation and extension decisions (paragraph 2.3)
- introduce a formal policy for checking and signing off published information and ensuring its accessibility (paragraph 3.5).

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

- include formal student representatives in meetings within its organisational structure (paragraphs 1.1 and 2.7)
- develop the Student Handbook and website to include more details of programmes, policies and procedures and links to associated forms (paragraphs 1.4, 3.2 and 3.3)
- use the individual learning plans to more effectively capture student progress and achievement (paragraph 2.2)
- track student employability and use the outcomes to inform annual monitoring and future curriculum delivery (paragraph 2.4)
- develop procedures for providing feedback to students, to include more annotation on all scripts and also comments by the Internal Quality Assurer (paragraph 2.10)
- develop a more formal process for sharing good practice identified through peer review and teaching observations (paragraph 2.11)

- develop the resources policy to support the upgrading of library and multimedia facilities (paragraphs 2.12 and 2.13)
- develop a virtual learning environment, including an effective student portal (paragraph 3.4).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Specific Course Designation](#)[1] conducted by [QAA](#) at London School of Academics Ltd (the School), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of the City and Guilds of London Institute. The review was carried out by Dr Elizabeth Briggs, Ms Brenda Eade (reviewers) and Ms Jacqueline Young (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 documentation supplied by the provider and meetings with staff and students.

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

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code)
- standards and programme guidance from the City and Guilds of London Institute.

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

The School was established in 2010. Its teaching room and facilities are located in a modern building on the Centre for Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence campus in east London. The School aims to provide guidance and expert tuition to enable its students to improve on their existing academic and vocational skills. The School currently offers programmes in Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) and the Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS) as well as Assessor's Awards level 3 and an Emergency First Aid at Work course level 2.

The School is run as a family business and has a strong focus on diversity and inclusivity in teaching and learning, particularly encouraging disadvantaged learners and those with disabilities. It also has a strong ethos of care and support and provides information, advice and guidance on developing vocational skills and employability. A total of 54 students were enrolled at the time of the review with a further 40 due to commence study in January 2014. The age range of students is between 19 and 65. Students are almost exclusively UK nationals and there are similar numbers of male and female students.

The scope of this review was restricted to PTLLS (level 4) and DTLLS (levels 4 and 5) programmes. All current students are enrolled on the DTLLS programme and also undertake the PTLLS programme as their first unit. No students were enrolled on any other programmes at the time of the review.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath their awarding organisation:

City and Guilds of London Institute:
- Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector (PTLLS) (level 4)
- Diploma in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector (DTLLS) (levels 4 and 5)

The provider's stated responsibilities

The School is responsible for student recruitment and selection; monitoring of admission, retention and completion; setting, first marking and moderation of assessments; student admission guidance and induction; student feedback; tutorials; and academic and progression guidance. It conducts annual monitoring and quality review, develops staff teaching and assessment skills, and provides for staff subject updating and scholarship. It is also responsible for providing programme and module information to students, ensuring that information on learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy and for library and learning resources provision. It liaises with employers and coordinates arrangements for placements. The awarding organisation is responsible for setting the curriculum and assessments.

Recent developments

The School has recently developed a new library facility in conjunction with the Ford Motor Company that is based in the same building.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the School were invited to present a submission to the review team. The student representatives, assisted by the Student Welfare Officer, compiled a report based on the 2012-13 student survey and a student focus group. Students also participated in both the preparatory meeting and the review visit. The students' contribution was informative and valuable.

Detailed findings about London School of Academics Ltd

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The School has extensive responsibilities for the management of academic standards of the provision, which are fulfilled effectively through its organisational structure with central oversight by the Managing Director. The small team of lecturers and internal assessors hold weekly staff meetings and monthly review meetings attended by the Internal Quality Assurer. Student representatives have been appointed for each cohort, and they confirmed that they are able to raise issues of concern to the management on an informal basis. However, there are no formal committees with approved terms of reference including student representation. It would be **desirable** for the School to include formal student representatives in meetings within the School's organisational structure.

1.2 Quality assurance procedures to ensure full engagement with the management of academic standards for the awards are guided by the City and Guilds Handbook, and monitored by internal and external quality assurers. Assessors conduct internal standardisation and attend an annual standardisation meeting organised by the awarding organisation. Annual programme monitoring is conducted with information on student retention and achievement. Annual reports are forwarded to the awarding organisation and include responses to action plans on academic standards issues. For example, the School has clarified its admissions policy to ensure that all students have enhanced criminal records checks prior to registration, to comply with professional teaching requirements. However, there is no analysis of individual unit performance or overall tracking of student performance analysed by intake cohort. It is **advisable** for the School to make more effective use of unit and programme statistics to enhance academic standards.

1.3 The School has a strong ethos to promote opportunities for mature, underprivileged and disadvantaged students to pursue a teaching career. Prospective students are assessed carefully for their suitability to study the PTLLS programme, which is a requirement for further study on the Diploma course. There is a policy on the Accreditation of Prior Learning for the Diploma course. The minutes of monthly review meetings include evidence of evaluation of individual student performance in written and practical teaching assessments and observations. Detected academic malpractice is dealt with robustly, and the School has acquired plagiarism-detection software to reduce potential threats to maintaining academic standards. Students confirmed that they receive detailed guidance about the correct use of referencing, avoiding plagiarism and breach of copyright.

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

1.4 The School makes indirect use of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* through reference to the programme specification and level descriptors provided by the awarding organisation on its website.
The Diploma award enables successful students to apply to the Institute for Learning to achieve the Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills status. The Student Handbook does not provide customised programme specifications, assessment details or submission dates. It would be **desirable** for the School to develop the Student Handbook and website to clearly outline the programme specifications, unit content, assessment details and submission dates.

1.5   Policies and procedures relevant to the management of academic standards include: the admissions policy, accreditation of prior learning policy, appeals policy, complaints policy and assessment policy. However, these policies have not been mapped for alignment with the relevant section of the Quality Code to ensure that they are fit for purpose and to increase staff awareness. Student representatives are aware of the complaints and appeals policies but the relevant form can only be accessed by personal request. While the School already has a quality assurance mechanism for annual programme monitoring, it would be beneficial for the process to be checked for alignment with the Quality Code. It is **advisable** for the School to align its policies and procedures with the Quality Code to enhance academic standards and to increase staff awareness of the Quality Code.

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

1.6   The School is responsible for setting, marking and moderation of assessments and has several trained assessors. Marked student work is scrutinised at the monthly internal quality assurance meetings, which include the Internal Quality Assurer. Minutes of the meetings demonstrate the deliberative process for assessing student performance at the correct level and appropriate consideration of lesson observations and placement activities. Students are invited to some meetings to meet the Internal Quality Assurer.

1.7   The External Quality Assurer visits the provider to sample student work, including teaching practice portfolios, and to comment on student achievement. External quality assurance reports are detailed and raise issues that the School needs to address in order to maintain academic standards. Recent matters to which the School has responded through action plans include a plagiarism policy, enrolment and registration procedures and the policy on student referrals.

The review team has **confidence** in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the programme it offers on behalf of its awarding organisation.

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2   Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1   The School effectively fulfils its responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities but there is scope for further enhancement. The curriculum is set by City and Guilds of London Institute (City and Guilds) and the School is responsible for teaching, learning and assessment and uses the assessment tasks that are provided by the awarding organisation.

2.2   Individual learning plans clearly set out a code of conduct for students and are used by staff to record students' progress. Students undertake a one-day induction programme, which includes an initial assessment and requires them to write a personal statement. The support that students will receive during their course is then recorded on their individual learning plan. Although staff indicated that they referred back to the individual learning plans, they did not make full use of them to track student achievement and students were not sufficiently aware of the relevance of these documents. It would be **desirable** for the School to use the individual learning plans more effectively to capture student progress and achievement.

2.3   The learning, teaching and assessment of the course, which is managed over 40 weeks, requires a more formal tracking process. The same assessments are given to each cohort of students but the School indicated that the personal nature of the assessment tasks, and the use of anti-plagiarism software, help to ensure that students produce their own work. However, student absence from classes, and the high number of students seeking extensions to the submission dates, have been raised as causes for concern by the Internal Quality Assurer and are noted in the minutes of staff meetings. There is currently no formal process for considering and tracking mitigating circumstances and it is unclear how evidence to support claims for mitigation is verified. It is **advisable** for the School to formalise the recording and tracking of assessments and mitigation and extension decisions.

2.4   The School does not currently make full use of the annual monitoring process to enhance the quality of learning opportunities. First destination data is not collected and consequently the School is unclear about how many graduates have achieved QTLS status and cannot be sure that the training offered fully meets the needs of employers. It would be **desirable** for the School to track student employability and use the outcomes to inform annual monitoring and future curriculum delivery.

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

2.5   The School makes effective use of City and Guilds as its main external reference point. Staff are introduced to the requirements of City and Guilds during induction and given further training when changes are made to the curriculum. The City and Guilds Handbook provides a further reference point. Staff indicated that over the past two years the City and Guilds' curriculum had been changed twice and they are fully cognisant with the revised requirements. Members of staff have attended training events organised by the awarding organisation.

2.6   The School is in the early stages of using the Quality Code to inform its policies and procedures. The senior managers are aware of some of the indicators of the Quality Code and have revised the Student Handbook to include a complaints procedure in accordance with the indicators. However, there is little evidence of how the Quality Code informs the School's policies and procedures. Teaching staff are not familiar with the indicators of the Quality Code, and consequently have not used the relevant Chapters to inform their teaching and assessment.

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

2.7   The School has a variety of methods for obtaining feedback relating to the quality of learning opportunities but these could be developed further. Student representatives have been appointed but they do not attend Senior Management or staff meetings. The close relationship between tutors, the Managing Director and the small number of students enables feedback to be given informally and action to be taken immediately. Students indicated that they receive prompt email responses from the Managing Director to their feedback and requests. However, this informal method of obtaining feedback may not be sustainable with the planned growth of the School and more effective use could be made of student representatives on the relevant committees.

2.8   Feedback collected through the general student survey, which relates to expectations and satisfaction with the course, and the content of the student submission are both positive. The School does not formally collect feedback relating to the learning, teaching and assessment for each of the units but students are given opportunities to provide informal feedback and this is effective for the small cohort sizes. The External

Quality Assurer's reports confirm that students are generally satisfied with the quality of teaching and learning on their course. However, it is unclear how the outcomes of student surveys are used to inform the monitoring and enhancement of learning opportunities and what action the School intends to take in response to some of the suggestions put forward by students. For example, students indicated that they would like a more extensive induction programme and also expressed concerns about how effectively some students coped with presentations.

How does the School assure itself that students are supported effectively?

2.9   The School provides a supportive environment for all its students and takes care to identify their specific needs through the admissions and induction processes, which is **good practice**. The small group teaching and tutorial systems ensure that students are effectively supported both academically and pastorally. This was confirmed by both students and staff.

2.10   The School supports students in the assessment process through feedback on both formative and summative tasks, but this could be further developed to ensure that students are clear about what they need to do to improve. The main feedback is written on the front assessment cover sheet and emailed to students. Verbal feedback is given in tutorials and when requested by students. Some annotations are written on student scripts but this could be more detailed identifying specific areas for improvement. Further feedback is provided in the Internal Quality Assurer's reports, but this is not always included in the feedback given to students. It would be **desirable** for the School to develop procedures for providing feedback to students, to include more annotation on all scripts and also comments by the Internal Quality Assurer.

How effectively does the School develop its staff in order to improve student learning opportunities?

2.11   The School has an effective policy for staff development and continuing professional development but this could be further enhanced through the sharing of good practice. Staff appraisals and staff development are linked to teaching observations which take place three times during each teaching period and are carried out by the Internal Quality Assurer, who gives immediate feedback to the teacher. Detailed observation reports are also completed. Teachers have the opportunity to peer review one another and new staff are mentored by more experienced members of the teaching team. All staff complete comprehensive records of their continuing professional development. However, the School does not have a formal process for summarising the outcomes of the observation schemes and although there is evidence of good practice being discussed in one of the Internal Quality Assurer reports, it is unclear how teaching observation encourages staff to share best practice. It would be **desirable** for the School to develop a more formal process for sharing good practice identified through peer review and teaching observations.

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

2.12   The School has limited resources both in terms of library and information technology provision. The brief resources policy outlines how students can access resources but does not make provision for increasing, or monitoring the adequacy of the resources available. A limited number of books, kept in the School Office, are available for reference purposes and students can use the general library on the Centre for Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence campus for study purposes. Students indicated that they would like their own library with borrowing rights.

2.13   Additional information for each unit is emailed to students by staff. Students indicated that they were able to make use of the School's information technology facilities to search for web resources and other information relating to their assessment. However, there is no platform through which staff can provide links to more specific resources for students. Students also indicated that information technology facilities could be developed to support more creative methods of teaching such as multimedia. It would be **desirable** for the School to develop the resources policy to support the upgrading of the library and multimedia facilities.

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.

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3   Information about learning opportunities

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

3.1   The School website contains information about its business as a provider of programmes in Teaching in the Lifelong Learning Sector, and emphasises its strong equality and diversity ethos. The website contains outlines of the programmes in its prospectus which is also available in paper format. These list the relevant unit titles as well as information on entry requirements and course fees. Further information is also available from members of staff. Prospective applicants are informed of the awarding organisation through clear display of the City and Guilds' logo. An easily accessible online application form is available on the website which can also be completed in paper format. For the DTLLS, there is a statement about the student finance available. Assessment information makes clear that students must complete all coursework for the units and a portfolio demonstrating 150 hours of teaching practice as well as undergo work placement observations.

3.2   The Student Handbook is the main document for supporting students attending the School. It provides a general overview of the programmes and includes the City and Guilds' specifications for the units that students are required to complete. However, it does not contain a clear structure for the programmes or a schedule indicating the assessment submission dates, although this information is provided during induction, together with a teaching timetable.

3.3   The School has a range of policies relating to the management and enhancement of learning opportunities. These include a Code of Conduct, Health and Safety Awareness and appeals and complaints procedures. These are outlined in the student and staff handbooks, but the forms to support these procedures are not readily available to staff or students.

3.4   Information for registered students on the website is limited as the School does not use a virtual learning environment to facilitate communications and to support learning. Currently, communications between staff and students are conducted using emails. Although student representatives commented that email communications are effective, given the current size of the School, future learning opportunities would be enhanced through better use of electronic channels. It would be **desirable** for the School to develop a virtual learning environment, including an effective student portal.

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

3.5   Website and printed information is updated with the final approval of the Managing Director but there is not a formal system for checking in place. The prospectus includes links to both the City and Guild's website, for programme information, and the government website for relevant information on teaching qualifications. Arrangements for checking that School information about learning opportunities is accurate and trustworthy need to be formalised to ensure that all information is fit for purpose for prospective and current students. It is **advisable** for the School to introduce a formal policy for checking and signing off published information and ensuring its accessibility.

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[3]

London School of Academics Ltd action plan relating to the Review of Specific Course Designation, December 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 area of **good practice** that is worthy of wider dissemination within the School:						
• the supportive environment and identification of students' specific needs through the admissions and induction processes (paragraph 2.9).	Effective and supportive learning environment which helps to identify student specific needs	Effective use of information gathered through admissions and induction processes to identify and meet the needs of students One to one student tutorials/discussion	Twice per academic year, September and January At least twice per term	Recruitment team and Director Teaching staff	Director Director	Admissions and induction procedures and policies Individual learning plan forms

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

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 School to:						
• make more effective use of unit and course statistics, and student feedback, to enhance academic standards and learning opportunities (paragraphs 1.2 and 2.8)	General unit and course statistic is used to enhance academic standards and learning opportunities All staff are to record data of submission and pass/refer of each unit on spreadsheet	Data to be collected at beginning of each new term, for previous term At this stage learners will be able to make comments on delivery, resources, support and feedback for each unit Reflection on data during staff meetings	Data will be collected at the beginning of each new term End of term staff evaluation and reflection meeting	Teaching staff All staff	Director Director	Unit/course tracking and statistics report Minutes from staff meeting
• align its policies and procedures and published information with the Quality Code to enhance academic standards, learning opportunities and increase staff awareness	Policies, procedures and published information are aligned to the Quality Code All staff have a good awareness of the Quality Code	Policies and procedures to be mapped and aligned to Quality Code Implement staff development and training day on Quality Code	June 2014 February 2014 and September each academic year	Director and course coordinator All staff	Director Director	Policies and procedures Training materials, attendance records and notes

(paragraphs 1.5 and 2.6)						
• formalise the recording and tracking of assessments and mitigation and extension decisions (paragraph 2.3)	All assessments are recorded and tracked formally	A formal and comprehensive assessment tracking system will be developed to capture all relevant information	April 2014	Director and course coordinator	Director	Tracking system
	All mitigating circumstances are evidenced to support claims	A formal mitigating circumstances form will be developed and evidence collected to support all claims	April 2014	Director and course coordinator	Director	Mitigating circumstances forms
• introduce a formal policy for checking and signing off published information and ensuring its accessibility (paragraph 3.4).	A formal process is used to check and sign off all website and printed information	A formal policy and process will be implemented for checking and signing off all published information	April 2014	Director	Director	Policy for published information
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 is **desirable** for the School to:						
• include formal student representatives in meetings within its	Student representatives are included in formal student/staff meetings	Student representatives to meet with members of staff in a formal meeting once a term	February 2014 and end of each term thereafter	Student Welfare Officer	Director	Minutes from staff/student meetings

organisational structure (paragraphs 1.1 and 2.7)						
• develop the Student Handbook and website to include more details of programmes, policies and procedures and links to associated forms (paragraphs 1.4, 3.2 and 3.3)	All details of programmes, policies, procedures and appropriate forms are included in the Student Handbook and on the website	All relevant forms, policies and procedures will be made more accessible to students by including them in the handbooks and made available to download on the website	September 2014 Ready for new intake	Director	Director	Student Handbook and website
• use the individual learning plans to more effectively capture student progress and achievement (paragraph 2.2)	Individual learning plans aim to capture student progress and achievement with regards to short term and long term goals	Independent learning plans to include 'actions' needed to be taken by student in order to meet their goals and to be reviewed together with the student at certain times during their training	From February 2014 Reviewed six monthly	All teaching staff	Director	Individual learning plans
• track student employability and use the outcomes to inform annual monitoring and future curriculum delivery	Student employability is effectively tracked and used in annual monitoring and curriculum delivery	An alumni database will be developed to capture all the employment statuses of ex-students; information gathered will be used effectively to inform curriculum development and annual monitoring	September 2014	Admin staff	Director	Alumni database and summary

(paragraph 2.4)						
• develop procedures for providing feedback to students, to include more annotation on all scripts and also comments by the Internal Quality Assurer (paragraph 2.10)	A formal procedure of marking is used which provides detailed annotation on assessment scripts as well as comments by the Internal Quality Assurer	Procedures have been put in place to include more annotation on assessment scripts	July 2014	All teaching staff	Director	Marking and feedback procedures for assessors
		Teaching staff training day on marking and providing feedback	July 2014	All teaching staff	Director	Attendance register and notes from training day
		The Internal Quality Assurer is to mark at least three assignments per learner and provide comments and feedback on scripts	July 2014 End-of-year standardisation	Internal Quality Assurer	Director	Internal Quality Assurer report/notes
• develop a more formal process for sharing good practice identified through peer review and teaching observations (paragraph 2.11)	Staff maintain a formal process for sharing good practice identified through peer review and teaching observation	Develop and approve teaching and learning policy to include peer review and teaching observation process	From April 2014	Director	Director	Teaching and learning policy/ observation forms
	Good practice is disseminated among staff	Review good practice at staff meeting	From July 2014	Director	All teaching staff	Staff meeting minutes
	All teaching staff undergo observation at least once per each academic year	Implement and embed teaching observation process	From September 2014	Director	Director	Observation forms
• develop the resources policy to support the	A resources policy is developed to support the upgrade of the	Develop and approve a resources policy	1 April 2014	Director	Director	Resources policy

upgrading of library and multimedia facilities (paragraph 2.12 and 2.13)	library and multimedia facilities					
• develop a virtual learning environment, including an effective student portal (paragraph 3.4).	A virtual learning environment with an effective student portal is created to enhance learning	Review the feasibility of developing a virtual learning environment, including a student portal	September 2014	Director	Director	Feasibility report/decision quotation from IT specialists

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/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx.

Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary. Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the *Review for Educational Oversight (and for specific course designation): Handbook, April 2013*.[4]

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

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

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

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

differentiated judgements In a Review for Specific 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.

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[4] www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

operational definition A formal definition of a term, which establishes exactly what QAA means when using it in reviews and reports.

programme (of study) An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

programme specifications Published statements about the intended **learning outcomes** of **programmes** of study, containing information about teaching and learning methods, support and assessment methods, and how individual units relate to levels of achievement.

provider(s) (of higher education) Organisations that deliver higher education. In the UK they may be a degree-awarding body or another organisation that offers programmes of higher education on behalf of degree-**awarding bodies** or **awarding organisations**. In the context of Review for Specific Course Designation the term means an independent School.

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.