



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

Luther King House Educational Trust

April 2014

Contents

Key findings about Luther King House Educational Trust	1
Good practice	1
Recommendations	1
About this report.....	2
The provider's stated responsibilities.....	3
Recent developments	3
Students' contribution to the review.....	3
Detailed findings about Luther King House Educational Trust	4
1 Academic standards	4
2 Quality of learning opportunities.....	6
3 Information about learning opportunities	8
Action plan	9
About QAA	13
Glossary	14

Key findings about Luther King House Educational Trust

As a result of its adapted Review for Specific Course Designation 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 the University of Manchester.

The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the quality and enhancement of the learning opportunities it offers on behalf of this awarding body.

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**:

- facilitating student engagement with higher education and career advancement through the provision of different modes of study (paragraph 2.2)
- the integration of student learning in an effective ecumenical and collegiate structure (paragraph 2.6)
- the inclusion of externally endorsed community work modules within the BA programme (paragraph 2.7).

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:

- identify formal terms of reference and reporting lines for committees (paragraph 1.3)
- develop a system to analyse in detail statistical data on student performance (paragraph 1.4).

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

- develop a learning and teaching strategy (paragraph 2.3)
- increase staff engagement with the Quality Code (paragraph 2.5)
- review its student representation arrangements (paragraph 2.8).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the adapted [Review for Specific Course Designation](#)¹ conducted by [QAA](#) at Luther King House Educational Trust (the Trust) 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 University of Manchester (the University). The review was carried out by Dr Colin Fryer, Mr Millard Parkinson (reviewers) and Mrs Brenda Hodgkinson (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 copies of policies and procedures, minutes of meetings, awarding body reports, teaching materials, handbooks, the Trust's website and virtual learning environment, and meetings with staff and students.

QAA carries out an adapted review for providers who are also reviewed by another approved body. The *Review for Educational Oversight (and for specific course designation): Handbook, April 2013* provides further details.

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

- policies and procedures of the University of Manchester
- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)
- the Endorsement and Quality Standards Board for Community Development Learning
- denominational church requirements.

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

The Luther King House Educational Trust is a company limited by guarantee and is registered as a charity with the Charity Commission. It is a federal institution of four denominational colleges: the Northern Baptist Learning Community, Hartley Victoria College, the Northern College and the Unitarian College. In addition, there is an Open College that recruits students from a variety of church backgrounds. Students used to take their degrees at the University of Manchester, but in 1994 the Trust became an affiliated college of the University, teaching its own degree programmes validated by the University. The constituent colleges work together to deliver common academic programmes on behalf of the Trust.

The Trust provides the governance structure for the constituent colleges, for the Trust purposes. It ensures that the buildings meet present and future needs, monitors financial performance, oversees the educational activities, and enables strategy and vision to develop.

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

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

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

University of Manchester

- BA in Contextual Theology (64 students)
- MA in Contextual Theology (57 students)
- Doctor of Philosophy by research (13 students).

The provider's stated responsibilities

The Trust's responsibilities are for the strategic development of its higher education programmes. It is responsible for curriculum development (subject to the University's validation), delivery of the programmes and the setting and marking of assignments. The University oversees academic standards through the appointment of external examiners and attendance at assessment boards. Public information is effectively under the control of the Trust, although there are procedures in place for the University to approve information.

Recent developments

The Trust had been in partnership with the University of Chester to deliver a foundation degree but this relationship ended in 2012. The collaboration with the University of Manchester had never been terminated with some students continuing to the completion of their programmes throughout the period of the partnership with the University of Chester. When the partnership with the University of Chester was ended the relationship with the University of Manchester was restored to its former status and in 2012 the Trust's programmes were revalidated by the University.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. Guidance was given to the students in the preparation of their submission by staff. It was compiled by the students through focus group meetings, feedback from questionnaires and input from student representatives. The coordinator met students at the preparatory meeting. The review team met students during the review and engaged in a useful discussion.

Detailed findings about Luther King House Educational Trust

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 Luther King House Educational Trust (the Trust) has an effective but complex system for the management of academic standards and this applies equally to the management of learning opportunities. The Trust is a federation of four individual denominational colleges and an Open College. The latter recruits students with no specific denominational allegiance. The Trust Board has responsibility for financial and operational matters with day-to-day responsibility for the provision undertaken by a management team led by the President. Each college is also managed by a College Principal who is part of the management team. The responsibilities of the Trust and of the individual colleges are outlined in a memorandum of understanding. College principals meet the Trust President regularly and, although not formally minuted, these meetings deal with operational matters and a record is kept of issues discussed. Responsibilities delegated to the Trust by the University of Manchester (the University) are clearly defined in a partnership agreement and are understood by staff.

1.2 Programme committees provide satisfactory management at programme level with oversight of student progress and achievement, and consideration of student feedback on taught courses. The committees meet termly and actions are identified from annual monitoring for review. There is a similar Research Committee with oversight of research degrees. An overview is provided through annual reports produced by the President for the BA and MA taught programmes and for the research programmes. The Programme and Research Committees' minutes, feedback from the Registry, external examiner reports, the University Collaborative Academic Adviser reports and from student feedback inform these annual reports. The reports include progress on the previous year's action plan and future actions planned. Issues from programme committees, meetings of principals and annual reports are also discussed at staff away days.

1.3 There are no formal terms of reference and lines of reporting are not formalised within the Trust's committee structure. Institutional level oversight is underdeveloped with no clear point of responsibility for the consideration of the learning and teaching strategy, Assessment Policy, staff development, student engagement and enhancement. Similarly, the consideration and approval of policies and procedures to support quality are not clearly specified within the committee structure. In order to provide comprehensive institutional oversight for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities it is **advisable** for the Trust to identify formal terms of reference and reporting lines for committees.

1.4 Student data currently compiled is not detailed. Overall numbers are recorded but there is no overview analysis of student cohorts, level or mode of attendance. Staff explained that because of small student numbers and the close contact with students, they are fully aware of performance. The Trust is investigating the means to produce better statistical data. It is **advisable** for the Trust to develop a system to analyse in detail statistical data on student performance.

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

1.5 A range of external reference points are used in the development and delivery of the provision. Each denomination provides reference points regarding specific requirements for training for ministry. The degree programme has a pathway that equips students for church-related community work. This pathway is approved by the England Standards Board for Community Development Work Training and Qualifications. The modules comprising this pathway are designed to comply with these professional standards and are open to all students (see paragraph 2.7).

1.6 The Trust is subject to inspection by the Quality in Formation Panel, a formal review process operated by a collaboration of UK churches to assess the fitness for purpose of institutions in preparing students as future ministers of religion. The last inspection in July 2012 was positive, resulting in a judgement of overall confidence. Several strengths were identified and a small number of recommendations made, which resulted in an action plan, progression against which has been completed.

1.7 Engagement with the Quality Code is largely through the Trust's relationship with the University. Programme specifications reflect the appropriate subject benchmark statements. The programmes are validated and amended as required when changes are made to the University's regulations. There is no specific reference in Trust documents to the Quality Code and staff awareness of its implications for day-to-day management is limited (see paragraph 2.5).

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

1.8 The University appoints external examiners to each of the programmes. Examiners are nominated by the Trust on the basis of their understanding and experience of the vocational nature of the training offered for ministry and community work rather than theoretical approaches to theology. The Trust relies on the University to ensure that the external examination process complies with the Quality Code.

1.9 All summative assessment is double-marked and markers meet to agree final marks. There is no further internal moderation of marking or feedback at institutional level before work is submitted to external examiners. Samples of marked work are submitted to external examiners in line with University regulations. External examiner reports are processed by the University and shared with the Trust. Reports are considered by staff and students at Programme Committee meetings and responses produced in relation to any issues raised.

1.10 In conclusion, the Trust has a system through its programme committees and staff away days for monitoring provision at programme level. This broadly works effectively as the President provides coherence and an overview in his annual report. However, there is no deliberative forum for complete management oversight of all aspects of the Trust's provision. Further improvement of the committee structure with specific responsibilities identified should ensure more explicit institutional oversight of all aspects of academic standards and learning opportunities. Although the numbers of students are small and the staff are well informed about student progress, analysis of student data could be further developed.

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 body.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 As noted at paragraph 1.1, the Trust manages all areas of the quality of learning opportunities appropriately given the complexity within which it is working. The Trust has identified a necessary change to its management processes to ensure that the review and monitoring of the quality of learning opportunities is effective. It plans to use the three staff away days held each year for checking progress using a comprehensive map of actions. While this will strengthen the management of the quality of learning opportunities, the internal systems are over-reliant on the programme committee structure. As noted in paragraph 1.3, institutional level oversight is underdeveloped.

2.2 There is a defined admissions procedure undertaken by the individual colleges. All students are interviewed. The student's qualifications and current level of English are checked, with additional support requirements being made available as required. Students are given appropriate induction. In response to the needs of both individual students and church denominations, the Trust provides a weekend programme of learning for levels 4 and 5 on the honours degree. This involves blended learning and six intensive weekends of tuition. The provision of different modes of study to facilitate student engagement with higher education and career advancement is **good practice**.

2.3 The Trust does not have a learning and teaching strategy, but the programme handbooks and specifications set out how programmes are taught and assessed. A variety of learning and teaching methods are employed, including lectures, one-to-one tutorials and small group work. Teaching practice is inclusive, with disabled access to all teaching rooms. Students undertake formative and summative assessment, and receive both oral and written feedback from their tutors. The absence of a strategy restricts the Trust's ability to promote fully to all its stakeholders an understanding of the planned approach it takes to teaching and learning. It would be **desirable** for the Trust to develop a learning and teaching strategy.

2.4 The Trust has satisfactory resources. The library is a modern, well equipped resource. Opening hours are long, enabling maximum use of this resource by students. All teaching rooms are equipped with appropriate technology, including digital projectors and interactive whiteboards, and there is a loop system for the hard of hearing. The Trust maintains a virtual learning environment that provides access to programme information, teaching materials, library resources and timetables. The virtual learning environment provides a means of communication and discussion between staff and students. In addition, it is used for submitting all summative assignments for assessment. The Trust is committed to developing its use further and staff development sessions are planned to support this initiative. Students comment positively on the virtual learning environment and on the improved access to lecture notes and course materials.

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

2.5 As noted in paragraphs 1.5-1.7, external reference points play an important part in validation and annual monitoring procedures. However, there is little explicit recognition by the Trust of their relevance to the provision of learning opportunities. The Trust is aware of the importance of engaging further with the Quality Code, but has yet to fully embed the Expectations of *Chapters B2: Recruitment, selection and admission to higher education, B3: Learning and teaching* and *Chapter B6: Assessment of students and accreditation of prior learning* into its learning and teaching and assessment practices. The implications of the Quality Code for delivery have not been discussed in detail in the Trust's committees or

with teaching staff. It would be **desirable** for the Trust to increase further staff engagement with the Quality Code.

2.6 The engagement of the Trust with the different sponsoring churches enhances the learning environment. As noted in paragraph 1.6, the Trust is monitored by some of the churches and the findings of their reviews are effectively followed up through actions developed, implemented and reported. The churches' activities complement and enhance the University's expectations. Both students and staff see the ecumenical nature of the Trust, with students training for ministry from different denominations as a unique strength. This integration of student learning in an effective ecumenical and collegiate structure is **good practice**.

2.7 The opportunity for students on the BA programme to select a combination of modules to equip them for church-related community work is an example of innovative curriculum design. Recognised by the Endorsement and Quality Standards Board for Community Development Learning (ESB) and noted in paragraph 1.5, the programme incorporates the Community Development National Occupational Standards. In its recent review of the programme, ESB noted the potential and distinctive contribution of the programme towards learning about and sharing practice. The inclusion of externally endorsed community work modules within the BA programme is **good practice**.

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

2.8 The Trust collects student feedback in a variety of ways, which are generally effective. Student representatives are appointed for each programme. At the institutional level, student representation is dependent on the constituent college they attend. For example, Northern Baptist Learning Community and Northern College have students present and contributing to meetings of their respective Governing Boards. However, this does not apply to the other colleges, although there are student representatives on their key oversight committees. There is no student representation on the Trustee Board even though this was a recommendation made by the Quality in Formation Panel inspection report and acknowledged by the Trust as requiring review. It would be **desirable** for the Trust to review its student representation arrangements.

2.9 End-of-term questionnaires provide an opportunity for students to evaluate each module and make suggestions for future improvement. Questionnaires are considered by each module tutor and the programme leader when preparing the annual monitoring report. The module questionnaires are also made available to the external examiner who is able to raise issues in the examination board.

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

2.10 The Trust does not have a formal staff development policy but it does provide cross-college staff development opportunities. The constituent colleges are responsible for individual staff needs, which are linked to the staff appraisal system and formal peer reviews. All tutors are encouraged and supported to have a regular period of sabbatical to engage with learning and personal development. Staff are also encouraged to undertake research in their chosen field. Currently, three are studying for higher degrees with both study time and financial support being provided by the Trust or their constituent college. The Trust organises three staff development sessions a year focused on pedagogical practice. Staff support and professional development is informed by student representation on programme committees, module questionnaires completed by students and comments made by the external examiner. Recent sessions have covered deaf awareness, peer review and assessment practice to ensure parity.

2.11 In conclusion, the Trust is effective in fulfilling its responsibilities for managing the quality of the learning opportunities it provides. It has developed a learning and teaching environment within which students feel well supported and are highly motivated to learn. Widening participation is actively promoted through the provision of different modes of study. The ecumenical partnership incorporating different denominations fosters the development of students as reflective practitioners. The academic committee structure needs to be developed further to take account of cross-college oversight. As acknowledged by the Trust, student representation on its committees needs to be reviewed to increase the opportunities for engagement. Further staff engagement and mapping the Quality Code against policies and processes would support and enhance the management of learning opportunities. The provision of a learning and teaching strategy would provide a framework to support the Trust's approach to contextual learning and theological reflection.

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

3 Information about learning opportunities

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

3.1 The Trust has effective means of communicating information about learning opportunities and assuring that it is fit for purpose and accurate. The main source of information to prospective students and stakeholders is the Trust website. This contains programme and module details, information about the Trust and colleges, fees and details of the application process. The Trust does not currently produce a prospectus but has plans to do so in the near future. Information booklets are produced for the BA and MA programmes with concise information. The website is monitored by the Registrar and Learning Resources Manager with final responsibility for accuracy and appropriateness of content lying with the Trust President. Programme details are checked by programme committees prior to publication on the website and booklets. The President signs off approval of all published information. Reference to the University and use of its logo are subject to guidelines contained in the Partnership Agreement and approved by them prior to publication.

3.2 Programme handbooks are produced for the BA and MA programmes. These are produced by the programme teams and considered by staff and students at programme committees. These handbooks contain general information and programme specifications and are based on the University template. A separate information handbook is produced for students of the Open College and by each of the constituent colleges.

3.3 Students met by the team confirmed that information provided prior to application, at enrolment and during their studies is accurate. They agreed that handbooks contained all relevant information and were useful. They felt that the virtual learning environment was a very effective means of communication and information.

3.4 The Trust provides sufficient information to all its stakeholders. Information is updated regularly and monitoring by key members of management assures that it is accurate and complete.

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

Action plan³

Luther King House Educational Trust action plan relating to the Review of Specific Course Designation April 2014						
Good practice	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the Trust:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> facilitating student engagement with higher education and career advancement through the provision of different modes of study (paragraph 2.2) 	<p>Weekend programme is reviewed and strengthened</p> <p>Students are enabled to complete level 6 in all modes of study</p>	<p>Staff consultation and discussion</p> <p>Proposals for any revision and extension of the weekend programme to be discussed and agreed with students</p>	<p>Agreement on proposals by March 2015</p> <p>Implement from September 2015</p>	President	Programme Committee	Staff meeting and Programme Committee minutes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the integration of student learning in an effective ecumenical and collegiate structure 	Enhance student understanding of different church traditions	Induction process that introduces the different church traditions represented in a way that reflect the agreed Ethos Statement	September 2014	College Principals	President	<p>Induction programmes</p> <p>Principals meeting minutes</p>

³ The Trust 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 Trust's awarding body.

(paragraph 2.6)						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the inclusion of externally endorsed community work modules within the BA programme (paragraph 2.7). 	Enable greater numbers of students to study community work modules	<p>Integration of the community work modules into the timetable, with validation at both levels 4 and 5</p> <p>Improved communication of options to students</p>	September 2014 and September 2015	Registrar	Staff meeting and Programme Committee	<p>Timetable</p> <p>Staff meeting and Programme Committee minutes</p>
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 Trust to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identify formal terms of reference and reporting lines for committees (paragraph 1.3) 	Clear terms of reference for Staff Meetings and Programme Committees, including the ways they relate to each other	<p>In consultation with Board and staff, draw up terms of reference for all committees where these do not exist</p> <p>Prepare an organisational diagram that shows lines of accountability</p>	January 2015	President	Board	<p>Documentation in place and reported in minutes of all relevant committees</p> <p>Board minutes</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a system to analyse in detail statistical data on student performance 	Detailed statistics on student performance, including their level and mode of attendance	<p>Clarify data required</p> <p>Develop and implement a system of collection, compilation and analysis</p>	January 2015	Registrar	President and Finance and Monitoring Committee	<p>Statistical data reports</p> <p>Staff, Finance and Monitoring Committee, and</p>

(paragraph 1.4).		Timetable reflection on data at Staff and Board meetings				Board minutes
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 desirable for the Trust to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop a learning and teaching strategy (paragraph 2.3) 	<p>An agreed learning and teaching strategy</p> <p>Evaluate and review strategy annually</p>	<p>A draft strategy to be prepared and then discussed by staff and Board; a final version to be prepared</p> <p>Regular review of strategy</p>	<p>Final agreement at the meeting of the Board in April 2015</p> <p>To be reviewed April each year from 2015 onwards</p>	President	Board	<p>Strategy in place and publicly available</p> <p>Discussions and decisions by staff and Board in minutes of meetings</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> increase staff engagement with the Quality Code (paragraph 2.5) 	<p>Staff awareness of the Quality Code and its importance</p> <p>Expectations of the Quality Code fully embedded in policies and practices</p>	<p>Timetable the review and discussion of sections of the Quality Code at Staff Meetings</p> <p>Identify and implement necessary changes to policy and practice</p>	<p>Major review: 9 October 2014</p> <p>Subsequent engagement timetabled for meetings in January 2015 and May 2015</p>	Staff Development Officer	President and Staff Meeting	<p>Documented changes in policies and practices (eg changes to programme handbooks)</p> <p>Programme Committee and Staff Meeting minutes</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review its student representation arrangements (paragraph 2.8). 	<p>Student representation on the Board</p> <p>Clear terms of reference for students serving on Programme Committees</p> <p>Opportunities for students to review the institutional life of the Trust</p>	<p>Board to discuss and agree representation arrangements</p> <p>A briefing paper, including terms of reference, to be drawn up for all Programme Committee representatives</p> <p>Institutional review process to be discussed, agreed and implemented</p>	<p>Board discussion and decision: July 2014</p> <p>Briefing paper for Programme Committee reps: Sept 2014</p> <p>Institutional review: April 2015</p>	<p>President</p>	<p>Board</p>	<p>Board minutes</p> <p>Changes to student handbooks, giving relevant information</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.

More detail about Review of Specific Course Designation can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/RSCD.aspx.

Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/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 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).

⁴ At the time of publication of this report, the Handbook has been republished as *Review for Specific Course Designation: Handbook, May 2014*, available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2707

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

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

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

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

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

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

quality See **academic quality**.

Quality Code Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of reference points for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the Expectations that all providers are required to meet.

reference points Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured. Internal reference points may be used by providers for purposes of self-regulation; external ones are used and accepted throughout the higher education community for the checking of standards and quality.

subject benchmark statement A published statement that sets out what knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are expected of those graduating in each of the main subject areas (mostly applying to bachelor's degrees), and explains what gives that particular discipline its coherence and identity.

threshold academic standards The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national **frameworks for higher education qualifications** and **subject benchmark statements**. See also **academic standards**.

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

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