



# **Mont Rose College of Management and Sciences Ltd**

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

October 2013

## Key findings about Mont Rose College of Management and Sciences Ltd

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

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

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

### Good practice

No areas of good practice were identified by the team.

### Recommendations

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

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

- review its approach to quality assurance against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 1.4)
- review its approach to annual monitoring (paragraph 1.7).

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

- formalise the recording of meetings and actions of the Academic Quality Assurance Board (paragraph 1.2)
- consistently make available to students external examiner reports and responses to them (paragraph 1.6)
- continue the review of its Teaching and Learning Strategy (paragraph 2.3)
- continue to develop its system for sharing good practice (paragraph 2.5)
- implement a more formal mentoring process for teaching staff (paragraph 2.6).

## About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)<sup>1</sup> (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Mont Rose College of Management and Sciences Ltd (the College), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of Pearson. The review was carried out by Mrs Claire Blanchard, Ms Brenda Eade and Mr Mike Slawin (reviewers) and Mr Philip Markey (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: a self-evaluation by the College, annual monitoring reports, progression data, student feedback, minutes of key meetings and one external examiner report. It also included documents available to students such as programme and module handbooks, and a sample of student work with assignments briefs and staff feedback forms. Reviewers were able to use reports from the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) and the Accreditation Service for International Schools (ASIC).

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

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- Pearson specifications.

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 2006. It is located in Leyton in East London and occupies part of a former town hall in a multicultural area. It is an accredited college of the Accreditation Service for International Colleges and is authorised to recruit Tier-4 students and was awarded Highly Trusted Status in November 2012. In June 2012, the College passed an inspection by the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI) and started delivering higher education programmes in March 2010, offering programmes awarded by the Institute of Administrative Management (IAM), the Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality (CTH) and Pearson to international students. Starting in 2013, the College offers three Pearson programmes. Currently there are no students recruited to IAM or CTH programmes. There are a total of 583 full-time students. There are 13 full-time administrative staff and 14 part-time teaching staff.

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

### Pearson

- HND Business Marketing (362)
- HND Hospitality Management (207)
- HND Business Accounting (14)

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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)

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

The College is responsible for the strategic development of higher education; setting, marking, moderating and providing students with feedback on assignments; student recruitment and monitoring student retention and completion; staff development for teaching and subject updating at higher education level; student support and guidance, the provision of learning resources; gathering and acting on student feedback and student appeals; and the accuracy of programme and module information. It is expected to review and respond to annual monitoring and module evaluations.

## **Recent developments**

In 2013, the College decided not to offer the programmes awarded by IAM and CTH and to concentrate on three Pearson awards. It extended its accommodation in November 2012 by occupying three more classrooms and developing two more computer laboratories to meet the expected rise in student numbers.

## **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 submission took the form of a survey which indicated that students were satisfied with their experiences. The review team also met students during the visit. They were very positive about all aspects of the provision and provided articulate responses to questions, which the team found very helpful.

## Detailed findings about Mont Rose College of Management and Sciences Ltd

### 1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The College effectively manages academic standards, but there is scope for improvement. The College clearly identified its responsibilities for its provision as part of its self-evaluation for this review. The Principal and the Academic Manager have oversight of the management of standards, while responsibility for the management of individual programmes is delegated to programme managers. There is a close informal relationship between senior management and teaching staff who are able to raise issues at programme meetings. The minutes of these meetings indicate that action is taken. For example, the procedure for uploading student assignments onto the virtual learning environment was changed to include checking through plagiarism-detection software.

1.2 The College has a clear committee structure and reporting system. The relationship between the various committees is well managed. The Academic and Quality Assurance Board (the Board) meets at least quarterly and has overall responsibility for the management of academic standards. The Assessment Board is a subcommittee and thoroughly considers the outcomes of student assessment. Issues raised at HND team meetings, the Senior Staff Committee and by the Class Representatives Committee are referred to the Board for discussion and action. Minutes of meetings from the Academic and Quality Assurance Board identify action to be taken, but do not indicate completion dates or how the action will be monitored. To make the Board more effective it would be **desirable** for the College to formalise the recording of meetings and actions of the Academic and Quality Assurance Board.

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

1.3 The College uses the specifications of the awarding organisation as an external reference point for managing academic standards and confirms this for the HND Business Marketing. Inspection reports from ISI and ASIC confirm that reference points have been used and that standards are being maintained.

1.4 The Academic Manager and the Principal are aware of the content of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) and are taking action to ensure that staff apply the Quality Code to their practices. For example, staff development has taken place to encourage staff to use the Quality Code, Part B: 'Assuring and enhancing academic quality', *Chapter B9: Academic appeals and student complaints*, to enhance teaching and assessment. The Student Complaints and Appeals policies have been revised to align with the indicators in this chapter of the Quality Code. The College plans to map all its policies to the Quality Code by December 2013. It is **advisable** for the College to review the approach to quality assurance against the Quality Code.

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

1.5 The College has a rigorous system for internal verification which includes standardisation of assessment briefs and the verification of marking. The College has introduced a standard form for writing assignments in response to the recommendations of

the external examiner for the HND Business Marketing. Standardisation meetings provide an opportunity for staff to share good practice in the writing of assessments.

1.6 The College has responded effectively to the external examiner's report for the HND Business Marketing indicating action to be taken. The report and responses have been shared with staff, but not with students. The external examiner's report for the Hospitality and Management pathway has not been received by the College. It would be **desirable** for the College to consistently make available to students external examiner reports and responses to them.

1.7 The policies which support the annual monitoring process, including assessment, are available in a variety of documents. For example, there is an Internal Verification Policy, an Assessment Policy and an Assessment Malpractice Policy. The external examiner has recommended that all documentation should be reviewed and contained in a single handbook. The College undertakes annual monitoring for each student cohort. Reports include reference to various aspects of the provision, including recruitment. However, the content of the reports lacks depth and require a more detailed analysis of the provision, for example, student retention and progression. It is **advisable** for the College to review its approach to annual monitoring.

1.8 The College has yet to fully evaluate the effectiveness of its own processes and procedures for managing academic standards as these have only been in place since 2012. College management and staff demonstrate a positive approach to developing the policies and practices for managing academic standards and quality.

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

## 2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 The College's processes for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities are similar to those for managing academic standards as stated in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2. The key reports and minutes of meetings demonstrate that the College is scrutinising student support, learning and teaching, and learning resources. There are instances of how the College has enhanced the quality of learning opportunities, such as the provision of key texts and information technology.

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

2.2 As noted in paragraphs 1.3 and 1.4 the College is making effective use of external reference points.

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

2.3 The College has an established Teaching and Learning Strategy which is shared with, and understood by, teaching staff. The Strategy clearly sets out to provide teaching staff with guidance on delivery, the use of learning materials and meeting the needs of students. However, the Principal and Academic Manager recognise that the current Strategy requires review and updating using the relevant chapters of the Quality Code, such as

*Chapter B3: Learning and teaching.* This activity is planned for completion by December 2013. It would be **desirable** for the College to continue the review of its Teaching and Learning Strategy.

2.4 The College recognises that developing links with industry will enhance the students' experience, and this is noted in its annual monitoring reports. As a result, it is now considering introducing work placements and internships to enrich the curriculum. Students are keen to take up these opportunities and the College is responding to their needs.

2.5 The College has an established teaching observation system. Teaching staff are observed annually and observations are comprehensively recorded. Teachers find the observations useful and supportive. Staff informed reviewers of how their teaching practices have been enhanced as a result of observations. Students provide extensive feedback about the appropriateness of teaching and learning through formal and informal feedback methods. Students reported that their learning experiences are challenging and engaging, with staff making suitable use of learning materials and information technology. Teaching staff were able to demonstrate their approaches to learning and teaching. However, the opportunity for sharing good practice among teaching staff is not formally available. It would be **desirable** for the College to continue to develop its system for sharing good practice.

2.6 New staff are observed soon after starting their employment and are well supported informally. The reviewers agree with the College management that one way to enhance learning and teaching would be to formalise this support through the use of a mentoring system for all staff. It would be **desirable** for the College to implement a more formal mentoring process for teaching staff.

2.7 Student views are considered for all aspects of teaching and learning through questionnaires and membership of the Academic Board. There is also a system of student representatives at programme level. The College has responded to student feedback, for example, students confirmed that learning opportunities have been expanded with an additional pathway in accounting.

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

2.8 The College provides comprehensive academic and personal tutorial support for students at all stages of their studies. The student advisers check students' qualifications at the interview stage and offer advice. There is a well-organised induction process. Students undergo a diagnostic test for literacy and numeracy when they enter the College. Support is in place for these students and they are monitored as they continue through their studies. Students are asked to disclose any additional learning needs at the application stage.

2.9 Each teaching session is supported by a tutorial session and students confirmed that these are worthwhile and supportive in enabling them to complete assignments. The College uses a virtual learning environment (VLE) for the submission of work and feedback to students. Students told reviewers that they are well supported for all stages of the assessment process, including plagiarism. Students are aware of the Student Assessment Malpractice Policy. They also confirmed that staff are accessible on the VLE and outside college opening times. If any other support needs are identified these are addressed by the College. The College uses student feedback to assess the effectiveness of its support for students.

2.10 The College is aware of student needs regarding assessment, in particular those who struggle because of learning difficulties. For example, where students would benefit from differentiated assessment methods, these are agreed with the internal verifier and then offered to the student to enable them to complete learning outcomes effectively. The use of individual learning plans provide staff with information on student progress and students with a record of their achievements.

2.11 The College has experienced retention problems with students who have not been able to finance their studies. The College has addressed this through their updated approach to admissions which requires an assurance from students before they are formally enrolled of them being able to finance their studies.

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

2.12 Teaching staff are well qualified, most with higher degrees. All staff have teaching experience and most have industrial and commercial backgrounds which they are able to use in their teaching. Half the staff have teaching qualifications. The College recognises that there is value in staff undertaking scholarly activity in their subject area and funds are made available and taken up. There is a Staff Professional Development Policy, agreed by the Board, which identifies staff training needs and supports them as appropriate. College management captures information for staff development needs from a number of sources, which includes teacher observation, student feedback, and staff meetings. The College supports teaching staff who wish to undertake the Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector programme.

2.13 The College has a clear staff development plan which prioritises training needs for all staff. Activities cover a wide range, including VLE training, plagiarism-detection software training, customer service skills, and presentation skills. The plan itself identifies the location, deliverer, monitoring and completion date.

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

2.14 Learning resources are well managed and are adequate to enable students to achieve the intended learning outcomes. There is a small library with librarian support. Several open access computer rooms allow access to the internet, as well as a wireless network for students' own computers. The Media Manager is on hand to assist students. Lecture rooms are large and well appointed and provide opportunity for small group and supplementary sessions to complement lectures.

2.15 The well-used VLE is popular with both staff and students. For all programmes, staff upload lecture notes and links in the same week the session has taken place. The Media Manager undertakes a weekly audit to ensure that everything that should be on the VLE has been uploaded. Assignment briefs are accessible and there are electronic links to websites and open education resources. Students find this facility very useful and those students who have been at the College for over 12 months recognise the improvement that has been made since its introduction.

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 has a well-organised system for communicating information about learning opportunities at all stages in students' careers. Entry requirements are clear for all

programmes. Programmes have their own entry requirements for academic qualifications and include the level of English language proficiency. All details are listed under the programme specifications on the website.

3.2 In the College's prospectus, individual programme information clearly describes the content and assessment of programmes. The College has taken action to ensure that programme costs are made clear to students before acceptance of a place. Information on interviews and undertaking diagnostic tests is made clear to students.

3.3 When students are accepted they receive an induction which provides all relevant information. Students receive a range of well-produced handbooks, including a general student handbook and specific programme and module handbooks. These are available in hard copy and online. Students confirm that the information contained in the handbooks is accurate and support their learning.

3.4 Students receive an assessment schedule and are clear about what they have to do to achieve a particular grade. Students are well informed of the appeals and complaints procedures which are clearly articulated in handbooks and on the website. Assessment briefs provide students with accurate information on what is expected and refer to learning outcomes. Students are aware of programme specifications.

3.5 The College provides information on progression opportunities which are articulated at induction and at the end of the programme. The College intends to employ a counsellor to advise students on career and progression opportunities, but this post has not been filled yet. While no formally agreed progression arrangements currently exist, the College is exploring opportunities with local universities.

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

3.6 The College has a clearly written communications policy which provides a basis for efficient arrangements for assuring that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. The Principal and Admissions Manager have a special responsibility for coordinating and producing all major publications. There are two calendars of publication revision which provide guidance on the timing for checking information. The Principal and Media Manager make clear in each case of publication revision whether the operation belongs to the short cycle (weekly) or long cycle (monthly). The Principal commissions new and revised long cycle materials by supplying the author with a brief of any currently published material that is to be revised. The Principal has responsibility for signing off the version for publication.

3.7 The Principal checks the virtual learning environment for accuracy and a web designer checks that all links are working. The Principal also produces the information for the prospectus and the Quality Manager checks it for accuracy. The Academic Quality and Assurance Board checks the content. Teaching staff write module handbooks and the Academic Manager checks them for accuracy.

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>

Mont Rose College of Management and Sciences Ltd action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight of October 2013						
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>review its approach to quality assurance against the Quality Code (paragraph 1.4)</li> </ul>	Assurance that the College meets the requirements of the Quality Code	Review of all current College policies against the Quality Code  'Changes in external reference points' to be an item of Academic/Quality Assurance Board discussion and action at least twice each year  A Standards and Quality Assurance Manager role to be formalised	December 2013, for a first pass through policies  May 2014 for completion of a second pass and all actions	Academic/Quality Assurance Board	Board of Governors	After continuous monitoring, final evaluation will be completed by the Academic/Quality Assurance Board meeting in September 2014
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review its approach to annual monitoring (paragraph 1.7).</li> </ul>	Annual monitoring to cover more themes, and to be more analytical and action-oriented	To make changes in annual monitoring reports to make them more comprehensive (for example inclusion and strengthened discussion of	January 2014	Academic Manager	Academic/Quality Assurance Board	Board of Governors following scrutiny of papers of the Academic/Quality

<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 organisation.

		learning, student retention and progression)				Assurance Board
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Intended outcomes</b>	<b>Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes</b>	<b>Target date/s</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation (process or evidence)</b>
The team considers that it would be <b>desirable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>formalise the recording of meetings and actions of the Academic and Quality Assurance Board (paragraph 1.2)</li> </ul>	Enhanced formality and security in the timely and monitored taking of actions that derive from meetings of the College	<p>Revision of minutes template to include completion date and monitoring activity</p> <p>Reinforcement of the conduct of matters arising items on all committee agendas</p>	December 2013	Academic/ Quality Assurance Board	Board of Governors	Continuous evaluation in the meetings of Academic/ Quality Assurance Board, plus scrutiny by the Board of Governors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consistently make available to students external examiner reports and responses to them (paragraph 1.6)</li> </ul>	Creation of a strengthened system in which students are more aware of external examiner comments and of the actions taken by the College as a consequence	Placing reports and College responses in reception and on the virtual learning environment, and as items for discussion with student representatives	February 2014	Academic/ Quality Assurance Board	Board of Governors	The student feedback will be taken by the Academic Manager to be discussed in the HND Team Committee meeting and Academic/ Quality Assurance Board meeting

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continue the review of its Teaching and Learning Strategy (paragraph 2.3)</li> </ul>	Enhancement of teaching and learning through a critical and action approach to College practice viewed in the light of external reference points	Developing the Learning and Teaching Strategy in line with <i>Chapter B3: Learning and teaching</i> of the Quality Code and continually reviewing it	March 2014	Academic/ Quality Assurance Board	Board of Governors	The Strategy will be reviewed annually by the Academic/ Quality Assurance Board, and progression scrutinised by the Board of Governors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>continue to develop its system for sharing good practice (paragraph 2.5)</li> </ul>	Creation of a system in which individual good practice is melded into a strengthened system of strategic college enhancement	Best practice to be shared among the teachers in the HND Team Committee meetings  Standards and Quality Assurance Manager to facilitate dissemination and implementation of good practice under supervision of the Academic Manager	March 2014	Academic Manager	Academic/ Quality Assurance Board and Board of Governors	This strategy will be on the agenda of the HND Team Committee meetings permanently to be reported by the Academic Manager in the Academic/ Quality Assurance Board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>implement a more formal mentoring process for teaching staff (paragraph 2.6).</li> </ul>	More rapid and more effective induction and development of teachers through improved mentoring	The Academic Manager will develop the formal mentoring process for teaching staff to be used from January 2014 onwards	February 2014	Academic Manager	Academic/ Quality Assurance Board, and Board of Governors	This approach will be evaluated in the Academic/ Quality Assurance board meetings annually

## 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>4</sup>

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

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

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

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

**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

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<sup>4</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)

immigration system. Higher education providers wishing to obtain this status must undergo a successful review by QAA.

**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.

**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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