Nazarene Theological College

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

March 2012

Key findings about Nazarene Theological College

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in March 2012, 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 awards 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 accuracy and completeness of the information that the provider is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Good practice

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

- the recent refinement of the management systems (paragraph 1.2)
- the inclusive engagement of students in committees (paragraph 1.2)
- the close and constructive working relationship with the awarding body (paragraph 1.3)
- the integration of placements within the curriculum (paragraph 1.5)
- student support and pastoral contact throughout the annual cycle (paragraph 2.6)
- the nature and amount of development available to all staff (paragraph 2.10).

Recommendations

The team has also identified two **recommendations** for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

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

- consider the arrangements for returning annotated scripts at levels 5 and 6 to students (paragraph 2.8)
- develop a strategy to build closer links with the Higher Education Academy (paragraph 2.9).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)[1] (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Nazarene Theological College (the provider; the College). 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 review was carried out by Mr John Holloway, Mr Richard Samuels (reviewers) and Ms Penny Blackie (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the *[Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#)*.[2] Evidence in support of the review included academic regulations and quality assurance documentation provided by The University of Manchester and by the College, meetings with staff and students, reports of reviews by QAA, The University of Manchester, the British Accreditation Council and the International Board of Education (Church of the Nazarene).

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

- the Academic Infrastructure
- the National Youth Agency guidance and validation documentation
- The University of Manchester Manual of Academic Procedures and other quality assurance documentation and regulations.

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

Nazarene Theological College (the College) was formed by the union of Hurlet Nazarene College and Beech Lawn Bible College. Hurlet was founded by the British Isles District of the Church of the Nazarene in 1944 and was situated near Glasgow. Beech Lawn was founded in 1947 by the Calvary Holiness Church and was situated in Stalybridge, Cheshire. The combined colleges became British Isles Nazarene College, and relocated in January 1959 to the current Didsbury campus in Manchester. In 1990, the Board of Governors approved a change in name from British Isles Nazarene College to Nazarene Theological College.The campus includes teaching, learning, research and residential accommodation.

In 1992, the College became a partner institution of the Victoria University of Manchester, building on a 20-year tradition of awarding degrees, first through a sister institution in Canada, and then through the Council for National Academic Awards. Through partnership with The University of Manchester, the College now offers a number of programmes from level 4 to level 8 to 97 full-time equivalent students. This number is made up of 74 full-time and 109 part-time students, who all study at the Didsbury campus.

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

University of Manchester
Undergraduate-level programmes
- Certificate in Theology
- Certificate in Theology (Urban Ministry)
- Diploma in Theology

---

[1] www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4.
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx.

- Diploma in Youth Ministry
- BA Theology and BA (Hons) Theology
- BA Practical Theology and BA (Hons) Practical Theology
- BA (Hons) Theology: Youth Work and Ministry

Postgraduate (taught) programmes:
- MA (PGDip) in Theology
  Streams: Aspects of Christian Holiness
  Mission Studies
  General (Discipline-based)

Postgraduate (Research) programmes:
- PhD
- MPhil

The provider's stated responsibilities

Nazarene Theological College has a collaborative agreement with The University of Manchester which validates all the programmes offered. The agreement sets out to 'ensure that the quality, standard and content of the programmes is acceptable' to the awarding body. The College designs its quality assurance processes to be consistent with the Manual of Academic Procedures published by The University of Manchester. This is the key point of reference for quality assurance policy and informs the College's own documentation. The University of Manchester works in close partnership with the College and carries out a periodic review every five years. An academic adviser and a validation adviser offer guidance and attend meetings, such as programme committees, Academic Board and examination boards. Staff at the College are approved by the University, which also appoints external examiners. The College has full responsibility for assessment, student admissions and guidance, but monitoring quality assurance and most other responsibilities are shared with the awarding body. There is also a partnership agreement with the National Youth Agency, which will be reviewed in 2012-13.

Recent developments

Over recent years the College has invested in development of the physical plant. The Emmanuel Centre, a new library and classroom unit, was opened in 2004, and each subsequent year has seen further developments: the opening of a new research space for postgraduate students, a renovated residence space for MA students, a major renovation of apartments for PhD students, single-study rooms for undergraduates, and renovated office space.

The College has invested in new permanent members of staff: one appointment reinforced the strength in Wesley studies. Two appointments in biblical studies underscore long-term planning in this area. The College has been fortunate to secure transitional funding, to allow the development of new academic staff as senior staff reach retirement age.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the College were invited to present a submission to the review team. Led by the members of the Student Council, an anonymous survey was made available to all students. Forty-five responses were received and the team received a very helpful set of charts and graphs analysing the result. At the preparatory meeting, the coordinator briefed a group of students and a larger group of

students from a range of programmes and levels attended a useful meeting during the review visit.

Detailed findings about Nazarene Theological College

1   Academic standards

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

1.1   The College has an effective management system that enables information and the outcomes of management decisions to be disseminated to all teaching and administrative staff. Committees and working groups are identified, along with their terms of reference, in the Academic Regulations. The Academic Board ratifies all major strategic decisions. It comprises all members of the academic staff, elected student representatives and the awarding body's adviser. The Board of Governors oversees the operation of the Academic Board. The Academic Office has a central role in overseeing and coordinating the higher education provision. It ensures that the Academic Regulations are explained, observed and academic processes adhered to. For instance, the Academic Office collates unit syllabuses each semester, ensuring these remain consistent with approved format and content, and centrally monitors assessment and submission dates.

1.2   The management structure is evolving to achieve greater efficiency in its operation. The College has recently recognised that some elements of the reporting structure caused the same agenda to be considered by multiple committees. Consequently, the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Course Committees have been reformed into working groups. This is a significant change that has facilitated key enhancements, such as reducing the working group membership to enable effective debate. The rewriting of the working groups' terms of reference ensures that their recommendations are approved, not reconsidered, by committees higher in the structure. This has led to a number of practical and strategic improvements, such as recent enhancements to the postgraduate curriculum that have occurred much more quickly than was previously possible. The presence of student representatives on all committees enhances their engagement with the decisions made. The team considers the recent refinement of the management systems and the inclusion of students in the committee structure to be good practice.

1.3   The College has a close and constructive working relationship with the awarding body, helpfully supported by an adviser and a validation officer, which is good practice. This relationship has enabled the College to develop strong research and postgraduate cohorts. Formal reporting lines for academic and administrative issues are clear. The University of Manchester devolves responsibility to the College for many aspects of student admissions, monitoring and support, assessment, collecting student feedback, annual review, employer liaison, resourcing, staffing and staff development, and the creation and distribution of information relevant to applicants and students. The University of Manchester carried out a rigorous quinquennial periodic review of the College in October 2011. The report included a statement from the Panel that 'the College had robust quality assurance systems in place... It was clear that both parties greatly value the relationship and the programmes.'

How effectively are external reference points used in the management of academic standards?

1.4   Through collaboration with the awarding body, the College has validated original programmes that fully comply with the Academic Infrastructure. The College's awards reflect the levels of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and the programme design and approval elements of the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code*

of practice), *Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review.* Following validation, the Faculty proposes any revisions to programme specifications and new and revised course unit descriptors. These are initially approved by the Faculty (with the support of the Academic Office), and then the Academic Board, which includes the University adviser, approves the changes.

1.5   There is strong evidence that appropriate aspects of the *Code of practice* have informed the development of many of the College's approaches and procedures. The College's research degree regulations are informed by the *Code of practice*, *Section 1: Postgraduate research programmes.* Other sections on external examining, assessment, and placement and work-based learning are reflected in the College's Academic Regulations. The curriculum is designed effectively to accommodate placements, which students find very rewarding. This is good practice. Where responsibility for the Academic Infrastructure lies with the awarding body, the College makes thorough and regular use of the University's Manual of Academic Procedures to assure its provision.

1.6   The College also works effectively with the National Youth Agency and with the Regional Course of Study Advisory Committee of the International Board of Education of the Church of the Nazarene, to ensure the delivery of core competencies in Youth Work and in Pastoral Ministry respectively. These organisations help the College to embed professional occupational standards and set targets.

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

1.7   Quality assurance processes related to assessment are comprehensively designed to be consistent with regulatory and guidance aspects of the Manual of Academic Procedures. While this manual is the main source of information, the College also refers to specific protocols in other documents, such as those contained within the Framework for Validated Research Degrees.

1.8   External examiners verify new programmes or course units, and revisions to existing units, to ensure that assessment design draws on models of good practice from across the sector. Once approved, the College involves its external examiners in ensuring that its assessment processes and outcomes are consistent. All student work from level 5 upwards is reviewed by external examiners, following anonymised internal moderation. Any grades or feedback given to students before the external examiners' confirmation are regarded as provisional. This is a particularly robust process.

1.9   Formal evaluation of academic standards relating to assessment occurs efficiently through the Academic Office. Here the outcomes of internal assessment and moderation, the external examiners' comments, reports from the undergraduate and postgraduate working parties, the annual monitoring reports and feedback from the awarding body are brought together. Following review of this material by the Dean and the Academic Board, changes designed to enhance academic standards may be sought through the awarding body. This detailed process is effective in assuring standards and sharing good practice. However, the lack of an annual verification process for assessments means that it is possible for the same essay titles to be retained across several years.

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

---

2   Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1   Clear responsibilities and reporting mechanisms, in place for the management and enhancement of learning opportunities, are described in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2. Delivery methods, student concerns and student progress are among the responsibilities of the two working groups.

How effectively are external reference points used in the management and enhancement of learning opportunities?

2.2   The productive partnership with The University of Manchester results in compliance with its regulations. Subsequently, elements of the Academic Infrastructure, including the *Code of practice*, are clearly aligned with the College provision. Procedures meet the University standards and expectations in key areas of the *Code of practice*, such as the sections on admissions, disabled students, career education, information, advice and guidance and work-based and placement learning.

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

2.3   The College has a robust system of internal and external evaluation, involving staff and students, to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. Internal evaluation is accomplished through the annual review process and regular assessments of staff. Student feedback (see also paragraph 2.5) supplements this process. External evaluation of teaching and learning is mainly based on the external examiners' reports. The College's Academic Board considers and, where appropriate, ensures the implementation of recommendations suggested by external examiners.

2.4   College staff are well qualified and many are extremely experienced. There is an effective cycle of recruitment, appropriate to a monotechnic college, with PhD students joining the staff and two visiting lecturers appointed as full-time members of staff this year. The team considers that the careful staff appointment policy is well implemented. A staff review process maintains and enhances the quality of staff performance. The process includes a combination of self-evaluation, student written evaluation and teaching observation, followed by comprehensive feedback on classes observed, which the staff find constructive. One example was the adjustment of assessment deadlines, following an acknowledgement that several deadlines had been clustered together. The Student Council is the representative student body in the College, and student representatives have a further presence at relevant boards, including the Board of Governors. The Student President submits a valuable report to the two governors' meetings each year. Module feedback systems enable students to comment on the delivery of their study, and the results feed into the staff review process.

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

2.6   Effective processes for student support from level 4 to level 8 promote a culture of accessibility throughout the student cycle, which the team considers to be good practice. Prior to students' arrival, the College formally interviews all undergraduate students in person or on a web-link to assess their suitability and manage their expectations of the

College. An understanding of what to expect is further strengthened by the involvement of student representatives in Open Days and in the design of the induction programme. During the academic year, the College provides structured weekly academic and pastoral support to students. At an informal level, lecturers encourage an open door policy and students appreciate their approachability.

2.7 The College continuously sets out to strengthen the level of academic support available to students. Weekly skills classes are provided to support students who need additional skills, such as academic writing, and a Style Guide for Essays and Plagiarism is available to all students. Providing support for core academic skills can be of benefit to students at all levels, and, in particular, international students. To encourage students to attend skills classes, the College has replaced an opt-in approach with the opportunity to opt out.

2.8 The College provides a standard feedback cover sheet for staff to respond to students' work, which leads to consistency of presentation. Although the quality of written feedback is variable, the best and most detailed feedback is clear and typed, and allows for a constructive impact on student learning by asking probing questions and making suggestions. Students receive initial feedback sheets within the College target and in sufficient time after the marking, although some students expressed concern over the time it took for the College to return annotated scripts as part of the external examining process. The team considers it desirable for the College, in discussion with the awarding body, to consider the arrangements for returning annotated scripts at levels 5 and 6 to students. Following a recommendation in the University of Manchester's periodic review, the Academic Office is drafting a revision to the undergraduate and postgraduate handbooks that will make explicit the three-week grading period for internal assessment. Separate personal development planning schemes operate for undergraduate and postgraduate students. The schemes are designed to help students identify analytical and transferable skills, reflect on their study skills and goals, and record skills and strengths.

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

2.9 The College provides a comprehensive range of internal training opportunities to staff. Academic and professional development is through targeted staff development days that include the training of line managers and effective research supervision. The College runs internal events, such as the Didsbury Lectures, and a one-day Theological Conference. The College acknowledges that staff would benefit from increased opportunities to discuss pedagogy, such as the day on assessment, and to share good practice. The team considers it desirable that the College acts on its intention to strengthen links with the Higher Education Academy and it also supports the fact that the College is planning to access the Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education soon to be available at The University of Manchester.

2.10 The nature and amount of development available to all staff and its support through funding and allocated time is good practice. The College is committed to promoting individual professional development, with funding available to develop new academic staff. Unusually, the College makes available a Professional Development Fund for conferences and research projects, a book allowance, a Doctoral Research Fund, a Sabbatical Leave Policy and a Study Leave Policy. Members of staff have access to funded in-service opportunities delivered by the University of Manchester, and the College successfully encourages staff to engage in external examining and validation. An effective mentoring system supports new and visiting lecturers. This includes training and support for inexperienced assessors.

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

2.11   The College is committed to building up its learning resources by extending library and other learning resources, such as electronic journals. Due to the size of the College, the library is limited in its resources, so external relationships with other libraries are important for students to be able to access required materials for undergraduate and, in particular, postgraduate study. The College is a member of the British Library's Inter-library Loan Scheme. The College has reciprocal borrowing arrangements with the John Rylands Library at the University of Manchester, which is particularly important to postgraduate students. Temporary administrative difficulties with obtaining library cards have discouraged some students from using the John Rylands Library and the College has responded by actively organising visits.

2.12   The College is also committed to strengthening electronic resources by widening the use of web-based learning and the virtual learning environment. The virtual learning environment is being used as the repository for general resources, such as timetables and handbooks, and for discussion boards, but is not equally used by all lecturers. The College has responded by promoting the virtual learning environment among lecturers through training and the provision of a staff user guide. Students confirmed that the usage of the virtual learning environment is improving.

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   Public Information

How effectively does the provider's public information communicate to students and other stakeholders about the higher education it provides?

3.1   The College has an effective process for producing and distributing a wide range of high quality public information. Much of the information is on its own website, which is well designed and very easy to navigate. Prospective students can gain a range of useful information from the website. A prospectus and a range of handbooks for programmes and for staff, as well as booklets and leaflets, cover all aspects of applicant and student need comprehensively. Useful information is available to students throughout their studies, despite the size of the College. Students receive generic information, such as the Essential Guide and the Library Handbook, and course specific information, such as a Placements Handbook, for those whose course includes a placement. A periodic electronic newsletter provides a regular flow of information for College staff and students and stakeholders. Guidelines are distributed to other relevant stakeholders. An example of this is the Placement Guide for employers considering hosting youth work students. The College is moving towards the electronic distribution of its publicity and teaching materials. This is of advantage to all students, especially distance learners. The use of the virtual learning environment is being extended to incorporate a greater range of modules and content. To support the dissemination of electronic documentation, the College is to employ a 0.2 technical staff member to supplement the work of its contracted IT consultants.

How effective are the provider's arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information it has responsibility for publishing?

3.2   The College is clear about its responsibilities in respect of published material. It rigorously carries out the agreed arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of the information published. The production of printed and web-based promotional material is coordinated by the Publicity Committee. The Registrar checks the accuracy of information to be placed on the UCAS website. Executive responsibility for ensuring published information is accurate and complete rests with the Academic Office and the Dean formally signs off all documents. As part of the annual review process, copies of all academic and promotional material the Colleges produces are forwarded to the University Academic Board.

3.3   Clear, documented procedures are in place to ensure compliance with current data protection regulations, based on the University's Data Protection Guidance and Records Retention Schedule. Senior staff are familiar with the College's own version of these policies and documents outlining these policies are circulated to all new staff.

The team concludes that **reliance can be placed** on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the provider is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Action plan[3]

Nazarene Theological College action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight March 2012						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The review team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
• the recent refinement of the management systems (paragraph 1.2)	Continue to review effectiveness of systems	July 2012 Faculty awayday	Faculty	Improved efficiencies in committee functions: minutes of committees and action plans	Academic Board; Board of Governors	Annual Review; Reviewed by Board of Governors
• the inclusive engagement of students in committees (paragraph 1.2)	Continue to value and use students, particularly in enhanced course review and course boards	September 2013	Working groups; Youth Course Board; Student Council	Minutes of Meetings (carry forward attendance at meetings, inclusion in minutes of student initiated matters)	Board of Governors; University	Student Body President report to Board of Governors; University Review; Student Council review; student evaluations
• the close and constructive working relationship with the awarding body (paragraph 1.3)	Work hard to maintain personal and institutional (academic and administrative) links	September 2013	All Faculty and academic administrators	Successful addressing of issues raised in periodic reviews or annual reports; collaborative publishing or	Academic Subcommittee of Board of Governors; University advisor and academic panel	Board of Governors; University Annual and periodic review

[3] The provider 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 provider's awarding body.

					supervision	
• the integration of placements within the curriculum (paragraph 1.5)	Continue to value and review this integration; Youth Course to consider this in National Youth Agency revalidation	May 2013 National Youth Agency review	Youth Course Board; Undergraduate Working Group; Faculty	Successful National Youth Agency revalidation event; satisfaction in student evaluations	National Youth Agency; University Academic Panel; Youth Course Board (Nazarene Theological College)	National Youth Agency validation panel; Employers (via Youth Course Board); student evaluations
• student support and pastoral contact throughout the annual cycle (paragraph 2.6)	Sustain and improve pastoral care, especially by revision of personal development plans, making them more user-friendly for students and pastoral care teams	Sept 2013	Faculty; Chaplaincy Committee	Minutes of Faculty discussion of this issue; feedback from students (programme evaluation and annual chaplaincy survey); Pastoral Care Group leaders' response (see Faculty minutes)	University (Annual Review); Faculty	Faculty review of pastoral care; student feedback on Chapel Committee; Annual review
• the nature and amount of development available to all staff (paragraph 2.10).	Continue to resource professional development support; develop annual timetable of internal professional development events, particularly to support pedagogy	Jan 2013	Dean and Faculty	Scheduled professional development events; records of professional development; record of sabbatical leave	Academic Board; University (Annual Review)	Faculty Subcommittee; Academic Board; University (Academic Panel)

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is **desirable** for the provider to:						
• consider the arrangements for returning annotated scripts at levels 5 and 6 to students (paragraph 2.8)	Reviewed by Undergraduate Working Group and Faculty: agreed to (1) give students access to scripts before they are sent to external examiners and (2) to consider electronic annotation to allow a copy to be given to the student	Sept 2012	Policy by Faculty and Undergraduate Working Group: implementation by Dean	Recorded in Minutes of Faculty (27 April 2012) and Working Group (20 April 2012)	University (via Annual Review); Academic Board (via Dean's Report)	Annual Review via student evaluation processes; Faculty will evaluate effectiveness; Dean's Report to Academic Board
• develop a strategy to build closer links with the Higher Education Academy (paragraph 2.9).	Faculty to dedicate part of Sept 12 professional d evelopment event to discussing strategies for engagement with Higher Education Academy.	Sept 2012	Faculty	Increased (and recorded) faculty involvement with Higher Education Academy, for new and existing Faculty	University Academic Panel; Academic Board	Annual Review; Dean's Report to Academic Board; Dean's report to Governors

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 for Educational Oversight can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/tier-4.

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: Handbook*[4]

Academic Infrastructure Guidance developed and agreed by the higher education community and published by QAA, which is used by institutions to ensure that their courses meet national expectations for academic standards and that students have access to a suitable environment for learning (academic quality). It consists of four groups of reference points: the **frameworks for higher education qualifications**, the **subject benchmark statements**, the **programme specifications** and the **Code of practice**. Work is underway (2011-12) to revise the Academic Infrastructure as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

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

academic standards The standards set and maintained by institutions for their courses and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

awarding body A body with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the **framework for higher education qualifications**, such as diplomas or degrees.

awarding organisation An organisation with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the Qualifications and Credit Framework for England and Northern Ireland (these qualifications are at levels one to eight, with levels four and above being classed as 'higher education').

Code of practice *The Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, published by QAA: a set of interrelated documents giving guidance for higher education institutions.

designated body An organisation that has been formally appointed to perform a particular function.

differentiated judgements In a Review for Educational Oversight, separate judgements respectively for the provision validated by separate awarding bodies.

enhancement Taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of **learning opportunities**. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

feature of good practice A positive aspect of the way a higher education institution manages quality and standards, which may be seen as exemplary to others.

framework A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

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:

---

[4] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx.

The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) and *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland.*

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

learning opportunities The provision made for students' learning, including planned **programmes of study**, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios) and staff development.

learning outcome 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 reports.

programme (of study) An approved course of study which 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 An institution that offers courses of higher education, typically on behalf of a separate **awarding body or organisation**. In the context of REO, 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').

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.

quality See **academic 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 standard The minimum standard that a student should reach in order to gain a particular qualification or award, as set out in the **subject benchmark statements** and national qualifications frameworks. Threshold standards are distinct from the standards of performance that students need to achieve in order to gain any particular class of award, for example a first-class bachelor's degree. See also **academic standard**.

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