



# **Portsmouth International College Ltd**

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

June 2014

## Key findings about Portsmouth International College Ltd

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in June 2014, the QAA review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of ATHE Ltd.

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

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

- the rapid and effective response to issues raised by students (paragraph 2.6)
- the academic and pastoral support provided by helpful, approachable and supportive staff (paragraphs 2.7-2.10).

### 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:

- implement a policy and procedure for the central oversight of assessment and internal verification (paragraph 1.10)
- monitor tutorial attendance (paragraph 2.9)
- ensure that its staff development encourages scholarly updating of both subject-specific knowledge and pedagogic practice (paragraphs 2.11-2.12)
- extend its range of books and provide access to e-journals (paragraph 2.13).

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

- formalise its quality cycle by including a list of key dates and other critical points in the College calendar (paragraph 1.4)
- examine ways of formalising the dissemination of good practice generally, but especially in relation to teaching and learning (paragraph 2.5)
- adopt a more formal and systematic mechanism for checking and approving its published information (paragraph 3.3)
- check and monitor the contents of the virtual learning environment and promote its use as an active educational tool (paragraph 3.4).

## About this report

This report presents the findings of the Review for Educational Oversight<sup>1</sup> (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Portsmouth International College Ltd (the College), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of ATHE Ltd. The review was carried out by Mrs Claire Blanchard, Mr Jonathan Doney (reviewers) and Mr Robert Jones (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 documentation supplied by the provider and awarding body, meetings with staff and students, and reports of reviews by the Independent Schools Inspectorate.

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

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)
- the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)
- the regulations of ATHE Ltd.

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 is a small family-run business privately funded by the Director, incorporated in 2010. It is located in the centre of Portsmouth, where it operates on a single campus. Its primary mission is to be a leading international college in the region, by providing excellent education, learning opportunities and choice. It is committed to value all individuals equally, while celebrating their diversity.

There are currently 21 students at the College, all of whom are full-time international students. There are nine members of staff, two of whom are teaching staff (one full-time equivalent).

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

### ATHE Ltd

- QCF Level 4 Diploma in Management
- QCF Level 5 Diploma in Management
- QCF Level 6 Diploma in Management
- QCF Level 7 Diploma in Management

## The provider's stated responsibilities

The College teaches and assesses its students. It monitors the quality of its teaching and the standards of its assessment through an internal verification process. ATHE Ltd oversees the College's standards through moderation of its assessments and through external verifiers'

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<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2669](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2669)

visits, which also check whether the College manages and enhances the quality of the learning opportunities of its students. ATHE Ltd is also responsible for curriculum development.

## **Recent developments**

In the past the College was accredited by BCS, The Chartered Institute for IT and the London Centre of Marketing (LCM) and ran programmes from both providers. However, the College decided not to continue with the BCS programmes as student demand fell. The students who were enrolled for the BCS programmes asked to be transferred to the LCM. However, in July 2013, LCM was first suspended and later closed down because of issues with its regulatory body, Ofqual. The College then obtained approval to be an approved centre for Pearson (July 2013) and for ATHE Ltd (October 2013). All its students are currently enrolled on ATHE Ltd programmes. The College does not yet offer any Pearson programmes.

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

Students studying on the higher education programme at the College were invited to present a submission to the review team. Two students wrote the submission, based on input from questionnaires and informal focus groups. It was carefully constructed and was very helpful to the review team. Students met the coordinator during the preparatory meeting and the team during the review visit. Both meetings were highly productive.

## Detailed findings about Portsmouth International College Ltd

### 1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The College has a compact and effective management structure, with well defined roles and responsibilities. Reporting to the Director and Chief Executive Officer, the Principal has overall responsibility for the management of academic standards.

1.2 The College's Quality Assurance Policy provides terms of reference and an operational framework for the Quality Assurance Committee, which meets three times a year. The function of this committee is to ensure that the College meets the requirements of ATHE Ltd for the programmes it provides. Membership of the committee comprises the senior management team, namely the Director, Chief Executive Officer, Principal, Registrar and an external consultant.

1.3 The Chief Executive Officer and the Principal are responsible for the day-to-day running of the College and they meet on a regular basis. They are supported by an appropriate committee structure which includes a regular College Team Meeting, sometimes weekly, sometimes monthly, depending on the volume of business. This involves all operational staff. The Principal meets teaching staff at least three times a year to discuss matters such as the curriculum, assessment, students, and information from the awarding organisation.

1.4 Information from these committees and meetings is fed into a College action plan which is continuously updated. This provides an effective method for monitoring the management of academic standards across the College. By the end of the current academic year (2013-14) the College plans to introduce an annual monitoring report of which the action plan will form an integral part. This is a welcome development. However, the College would benefit from further refinements for monitoring the management of academic standards and it would be **desirable** for it to formalise its quality cycle by including a list of key dates and other critical points in the College calendar.

1.5 Currently, the only awarding organisation for which the College offers programmes is ATHE Ltd. This is a very recent relationship and the College has yet to go through a full examination cycle. The Chief Executive Officer is the main point of contact with ATHE Ltd. The College also has accreditation from Pearson to deliver its programmes. None are offered at present but the College has plans to recruit to these in the near future as part of its planned expansion.

1.6 The College collects student performance data but does not yet collate or analyse this information. As part of its new annual monitoring report, the College plans to adopt a more comprehensive and systematic approach to the use of this data which will be included in the report.

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

1.7 ATHE Ltd is the main external reference point and the College follows the definitive guidelines provided by ATHE Ltd to ensure that it meets its obligations. Within the College, the Principal has overall responsibility for assessment. The curriculum and associated

learning outcomes are determined by ATHE Ltd. Initially, the College intended to produce its own assignment briefs. However, as a result of time constraints imposed during the transfer from LCM to ATHE Ltd, the College uses standard ATHE Ltd assignment briefs for their students. The College is not currently responsible for the design of assessment, the outcomes of which are approved by the ATHE Ltd external verifier.

1.8 The College has been mapping effectively the chapters of the Quality Code that are applicable to it. These have been prioritised by the Principal, with the current focus being on *Chapter B5: Student engagement* and on *Chapter B3: Learning and teaching*. The College realises this is an ongoing process which will impact on its current policies and procedures. It plans to complete the mapping of the relevant chapters by August 2014.

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

1.9 The ATHE Ltd external verifier is responsible for reviewing the College's internal verification processes and academic management of the programmes. The College's Assessment, Internal Verification and Malpractice Policy provides detailed guidance for its assessors and internal verifiers.

1.10 Internal verification and second marking takes place across all programmes but the amount and level of developmental feedback is inconsistent. It is **advisable** for the College to implement a policy and procedure for the central oversight of assessment and internal verification. The first full report from the ATHE Ltd external verifier cited a number of issues which the College must address in order to bring its assessment and internal verification practices into line with the expectations and standardisation requirements of ATHE Ltd. The College has acknowledged these and included them in its latest action plan as areas for improvement.

1.11 Generally, the College's management of academic standards is satisfactory but could be enhanced by introducing greater oversight and formalisation of a number of processes.

<p>The review team has <b>confidence</b> in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of its awarding organisation.</p>
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## **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 is committed to providing a high quality learning experience for its students. It currently uses to good effect a range of appropriate policies and procedures to enhance the quality of learning opportunities. The College acknowledges that these will require revision if its expansion plans are implemented.

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

2.2 The reference points described in paragraphs 1.7 and 1.8 apply equally to managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, with particular reference to the Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and teaching*.

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

2.3 The College has a policy on teaching and learning, which was jointly written by the Principal, tutors and a consultant. The policy is fully implemented and embedded in the College's practices. The teaching and learning policy is in the process of being mapped against the Quality Code. This is planned to be completed by August 2014 (see also paragraph 1.8).

2.4 Staff are well qualified and knowledgeable about their subject area. Students confirmed that the quality of teaching is good and that all tutors use a variety of teaching methods in the classroom. Students appreciate the interactive and flexible nature of the teaching and the fact that if they need extra academic help, it is readily available.

2.5 One of the main ways in which the College assures itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced is its lesson observation process. The lesson observation sessions form an integral part of the College's quality assurance processes and directly inform the teaching and learning policy to enhance the overall learners' experience. The tutors confirmed that they are observed every term by the Principal. This process provides a mechanism of feedback for teachers and the Quality Assurance Committee. It addresses teaching and learning styles, teaching methodologies, formative and summative assessment and teacher-student inclusion. Good practice identified in lesson observation is disseminated through team meetings, which are often informal and not minuted. It would be **desirable** for the College to examine ways of formalising the dissemination of good practice generally, but especially in relation to teaching and learning.

2.6 There is a well established system of student representation. Meetings of student representatives are held at least three times a term. Students have the opportunity to give feedback on their programme directly to tutors and managers. Student views are considered for all aspects of teaching and learning through anonymous questionnaires. Students are also directly asked their views on teaching by the Chief Executive Officer, when he sits in on lessons. Students emphasised that their views are taken seriously and that the College responds rapidly and effectively to any issues that they raise. This was particularly highlighted when the College was flooded and made rapid and effective arrangements for the students so that their learning was not adversely affected. The rapid and effective response to issues raised by students is **good practice**.

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

2.7 Students praised the high quality of the academic and pastoral support provided by the College. All students are interviewed before enrolment and the requirements of the programme are fully explained to them. They are asked to disclose any additional learning needs at the application stage and appropriate strategies are put in place to address those needs. Students have an induction and are provided with a student handbook which clearly provides information on plagiarism, complaints, appeals and progression opportunities.

2.8 After enrolling on the course, all students complete a learning styles questionnaire which forms part of their personal learning plan. The use of personal learning plans provides staff with information on student progress and helps inform a record of their achievement. The College is then able to check students' progress through personal learning plans and formative assessments.

2.9 Tutorials are provided for all students, either in a group or individually. However, the latter are not formally timetabled. Instead, tutors emphasise that students can approach

them whenever they are free. Students appreciate this approach. At these tutorials, students have the opportunity of receiving formative feedback and further guidance on assessment submissions. Students can request as many tutorials as they require. However, as the College grows, this informal, open-ended commitment is likely to be under strain. In addition, it would be more difficult to identify students who are not availing themselves of this opportunity. It is **advisable** for the College to monitor tutorial attendance.

2.10 Staff are helpful, approachable and supportive. They readily provide support and guidance to students and help them with any pastoral problems. In particular, the College has a Welfare Officer, assisted by a Student Support Worker, who offers information, support and guidance in relation to pastoral issues. If required, the Welfare Officer may also refer students to other local support services. The Welfare Officer has close links with local community groups and specialised agencies and is able to make use of external contacts to offer bespoke help, advice and guidance to students on a range of issues such as mental health and legal advice. The academic and pastoral support provided by helpful, approachable and supportive staff is **good practice** (see also paragraphs 2.7 to 2.9).

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

2.11 The College has a staff development policy, but with only two part-time members of teaching staff, the extent and depth of its implementation is difficult to measure. The staff spoke positively about the support they receive from the College and considered the training provided to be of benefit to them. However, it has been limited in extent. Currently, there is no formal induction process for new staff, but the College recognises the need for this and plans to introduce one in the near future.

2.12 A small, dedicated budget has been allocated to staff development in 2013-14. Staff can apply to attend events, as well as having them proposed by the Principal as part of their appraisal. The College is aware of the need for a more formal staff development policy, covering a wider range of activities, in line with the planned growth of programmes and staff and student numbers. It is **advisable** for the College to ensure that its staff development encourages scholarly updating of both subject-specific knowledge and pedagogic practice (see also paragraph 2.11).

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

2.13 Students are generally very positive about the College. Their only significant reservation concerns the library, on the grounds that its book stock is limited and that it does not provide access to e-journals. Students are encouraged to use other libraries in the vicinity, but in practice make very little use of them. References and citations in the student work are often both dated and limited. The College has a ring fenced budget available to increase the available learning resources. It is **advisable** for the College to extend its range of books and provide access to e-journals.

2.14 The College has well equipped classrooms with internet connections and a well equipped information technology suite. Lecture rooms have either projectors or monitors to help enhance the learning process. The students confirmed that they have sufficient information technology resources for their studies.

2.15 Overall, the College provides varied and interesting teaching, its academic and pastoral support are good, and it responds to the needs of its students. However, its library requires improvement and some of its procedures need to operate on a more formal basis.



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 website is the main communication vehicle for prospective students and other stakeholders. It provides information on all aspects of academic and non-academic provision. It is easy to navigate and contains all the relevant information needed to make an application to the College, such as programme information, programme fees and information about how to apply to the College. Entry requirements are clear for all programmes. The students confirmed that the information on the website is helpful and accurate.

3.2 All students receive a comprehensive student handbook. They described it as especially useful and appreciate the fact that it is available both electronically and in hard copy. They are also provided with an assessment schedule which clearly indicates when assessments are due to be submitted. Students confirmed that they understand the key requirements of each assessment and that the information they receive enables them to understand what they have to do to pass a module.

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

3.3 The information for the website is written by the administration manager and is approved and checked by all College staff at team meetings. All changes to the website must be agreed by the Principal and the agreement is recorded in a log book. The prospectus, staff and student handbooks and College policies and procedures are updated by the administration manager and checked by all staff to ensure they remain current and accurate. This process is monitored by means of the College's action plan. The College is starting to implement the systematic checking of material but this process has not yet been completed. It would be **desirable** for the College to adopt a more formal and systematic mechanism for checking and approving its published information.

3.4 Although the College does not currently have a fully functional and operational virtual learning environment (VLE), the College plans to have the VLE in operation by the new academic year (2014-15). However, no one has yet been identified to be responsible for checking the contents of the VLE or for reviewing its long-term strategy. It would be **desirable** for the College to check and monitor the contents of the VLE and promote its use as an active educational tool.

3.5 In summary, the College transmits items of information accurately and effectively, but it needs to formalise its procedures for checking their contents and reviewing their function.

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>

Portsmouth International College Ltd action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight of June 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 <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the rapid and effective response to issues raised by students (paragraph 2.6)</li> </ul>	<p>Respond promptly and effectively to all student issues raised</p> <p>Feedback to and from students to be introduced</p>	<p>Issues to be reported to and reviewed in teachers and Quality Assurance Committee meetings</p> <p>Develop an end-of-term Qquestionnaire</p> <p>Continue with good practise</p> <p>Maintain Welfare Log (anonymously)</p> <p>Feedback from students</p>	Start with new intake and continue monthly	Welfare Officer, teachers and Quality Assurance Committee	Principal and Quality Assurance Committee	<p>Develop a student feedback report so that students are kept informed of actions agreed or any other outcome</p> <p>To be updated in student newsletter, Welfare Log and minutes of students' meetings</p> <p>Analyse feedback from students</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the academic and pastoral support provided by</li> </ul>	Maintain support and build on and develop respectful relationships between students and	<p>Academic support at regular tutorials</p> <p>Pastoral support as and</p>	Dates to be set at end of each module	<p>Tutors</p> <p>Welfare</p>	Principal and Quality Assurance Committee	Evaluation of support, for example through minutes of

<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.

helpful, approachable and supportive staff (paragraphs 2.7-2.10).	staff	when required  Analysis of support provided to Quality Assurance Committee		Officer		Teacher/student meetings  Analyse feedback from students
<b>Advisable</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 is <b>advisable</b> for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>implement a policy and procedure for the central oversight of assessment and internal verification (paragraph 1.10)</li> </ul>	To ensure standardisation of marking and the feedback given to obtain consistency throughout	<p>Produce an assessment and internal verification policy for the standardisation of all marking and feedback by the Principal</p> <p>To be produced in line with awarding body requirements</p> <p>Arrange training for tutors with awarding bodies</p>	<p>Policy produced July 2014 - awaiting approval</p> <p>Oct 2014</p>	Administrative staff, tutors and Quality Assurance Committee	Quality Assurance Committee	External verifier's feedback report on submitted assignments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>monitor tutorial attendance (paragraph 2.9)</li> </ul>	Introduce tutorial dates for each student before the end of each module	<p>All dates to be included in the Academic Year Planner disseminated to all staff</p> <p>Tutorial Calendar to be given to all students and log their attendance</p>	<p>Year Planner by Sept 2014</p> <p>Attendance</p> <p>Log at the end of each module</p>	Tutors	Principal	<p>Tutorial attendance, logs and personal learning plans</p> <p>Feedback from students</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that its staff development encourages scholarly updating of both subject-specific knowledge and pedagogic practice (paragraphs 2.11-2.12)</li> </ul>	Tutors to receive training from awarding bodies and external academic training	Tutors to join Higher Education Academy and other relevant organisations  To attend assessor training with ATHE Ltd	Jan 2015  Booked for Oct 2014	Tutors	Principal	Attendance and certification from training providers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>extend its range of books and provide access to e-journals (paragraph 2.13).</li> </ul>	To achieve registration with e-journal providers and purchase of relevant reading materials	Source appropriate providers of e-journals and subscribe  Release of funds for purchase of up-to-date relevant books	Jan 2015  Dec 2014	Admin  Chief Executive Officer	Chief Executive Officer  Quality Assurance Committee	Access to online e-journals  Availability of books in the library  Feedback from students
<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 its quality cycle by including a list of key dates and other critical points in the College</li> </ul>	To log all events on one document  Regular timed feedback for students and staff to be aware of meeting dates	Create a year planner chart with all key dates, that is staff, teacher and Quality Assurance Committee meetings, training dates, annual internal verification, off-site	To be set up by Sept/Dec 14 intake  Monitor at monthly staff meetings	Administrative staff	Principal	Academic Year Planner and minutes of staff meetings

calendar (paragraph 1.4)		visits and so on  For students' tutorial dates, submissions dates, holidays and so on				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>examine ways of formalising the dissemination of good practice generally, but especially in relation to teaching and learning (paragraph 2.5)</li> </ul>	<p>Ensure all staff and students are kept fully up to date and well informed</p> <p>Logs to be published on staff section of the virtual learning environment and copies on staff notice board</p>	<p>Develop a communication log to disseminate good practice throughout the College</p> <p>Develop a newsletter to be posted on student section of the virtual learning environment notice boards</p>	<p>Dec 2014</p> <p>Update quarterly at staff and student meetings</p> <p>Newsletter published quarterly</p>	<p>Administrative staff and virtual learning environment consultant</p>	<p>Principal and Chief Executive Officer</p>	<p>Minutes of meetings</p> <p>Documentation and newsletter on the virtual learning environment</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>adopt a more formal and systematic mechanism for checking and approving its published information (paragraph 3.3)</li> </ul>	<p>Review log item to be added to agenda for quarterly Quality Assurance Committee meetings</p> <p>Ensure log is kept current and accurate</p>	<p>Maintain the Review Log to show policy and procedure review dates are met</p> <p>Administrative staff to record any changes made and disseminate to academic staff for checking and accuracy</p> <p>Quality Assurance Committee to approve before publication</p>	<p>Review log already in place</p> <p>To be updated after Quality Assurance Committee meetings</p>	<p>Accuracy to be checked by Administrative staff and signed off by the Principal</p> <p>Website log to be kept updated and signed off by the Principal</p>	<p>Senior Management Team</p>	<p>Review dates are current and relevant</p> <p>Quality Assurance Committee minutes of meetings</p> <p>Log current and accurate</p> <p>Feedback to students via quarterly newsletter</p>

						Analyse feedback from students
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>check and monitor the contents of the virtual learning environment and promote its use as an active educational tool (paragraph 3.4).</li> </ul>	<p>To ensure that all information on the virtual learning environment is current and relevant to students and staff</p> <p>Students to be familiar and confident with the use of virtual learning environment</p>	<p>Obtain information from tutors to create a list of documents required to be delivered on the virtual learning environment that is module content, learning outcomes, submission dates and so on</p> <p>Administrative staff to check consistency and comprehensiveness</p> <p>Principal to check use as an educational tool and sign off</p> <p>Students to be given demonstration at induction with their login details</p>	Sept 2014	All academic staff, virtual learning consultant, Principal and Administrative staff	Senior Management Team	<p>Track student use as recorded on the virtual learning environment</p> <p>Promote the use of the virtual learning environment in the quarterly student newsletter with bulletins about submission dates, information about tools and resources to support and enhance their educational delivery and social activities</p> <p>Feedback from students</p>

## About QAA

QAA is the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. QAA's mission is to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education.

QAA's aims are to:

- meet students' needs and be valued by them
- safeguard standards in an increasingly diverse UK and international context
- drive improvements in UK higher education
- improve public understanding of higher education standards and quality.

QAA conducts reviews of higher education institutions and publishes reports on the findings. QAA also publishes a range of guidance documents to help safeguard standards and improve quality.

More information about the work of QAA is available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk).

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

## Glossary

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

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

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

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

**enhancement** The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in QAA's review processes.

**external examiner** An independent expert appointed by an institution to comment on student achievement in relation to established academic standards and to look at approaches to assessment.

**framework for higher education qualifications** A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks: *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland*.

**good practice** A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's review processes.

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

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<sup>4</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2669](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2669)



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

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

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

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

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

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

**quality** See **academic quality**.

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

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

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

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

#### QAA937 - R4010 - Sept 14

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