



# Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) of Regent's University London

October 2016

## Contents

<b>About this review .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Key findings.....</b>	<b>2</b>
QAA's judgements about Regent's University London.....	2
Good practice .....	2
Recommendation.....	2
Affirmation of action being taken .....	2
<b>About Regent's University London.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Explanation of the findings about Regent's University London .....</b>	<b>4</b>
1 Judgement: The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards.....	5
2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities.....	14
3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities .....	29
4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities .....	31
<b>Glossary.....</b>	<b>34</b>

## About this review

This is a report of a Higher Education Review conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at Regent's University London. The review took place from 31 October to 2 November 2016, and was conducted by a team of four reviewers, as follows:

- Mr Liam Curran
- Emeritus Professor Ann Holmes
- Dr Libby Pearson
- Mr Raj Dattani (student reviewer).

The main purpose of the review was to investigate the higher education provided by Regent's University London and to make judgements as to whether or not its academic standards and quality meet UK expectations. These expectations are the statements in the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code)<sup>1</sup> setting out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and of each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

In Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers) the QAA review team:

- makes judgements on
  - the setting and maintenance of academic standards
  - the quality of student learning opportunities
  - the information provided about higher education provision
  - the enhancement of student learning opportunities
- provides a commentary on the selected theme
- makes recommendations
- identifies features of good practice
- affirms action that the provider is taking or plans to take.

A summary of the findings can be found in the section starting on page 2. [Explanations of the findings](#) are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 5.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.<sup>2</sup> A dedicated section explains the method for [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).<sup>3</sup> For an explanation of terms see the [glossary](#) at the end of this report.

---

<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is published at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code).

<sup>2</sup> QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us).

<sup>3</sup> Higher Education Review (Alternative Providers): [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight.aspx)

## Key findings

### QAA's judgements about Regent's University London

The QAA review team formed the following judgements about the higher education provision at Regent's University London.

- The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards **meet** UK expectations.
- The quality of student learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The quality of the information about learning opportunities **meets** UK expectations.
- The enhancement of student learning opportunities is **commended**.

### Good practice

The QAA review team identified the following features of **good practice** at Regent's University London:

- the systematic and strategic approach to the professional development of student-facing staff, which enhances learning and teaching (Expectations B3 and Enhancement)
- the tailored educational provision, which enables students to develop their academic, professional, social and personal skills in a secure and supportive environment (Expectation B4)
- the comprehensive approach to employability, which is reflected in the successful integration and enhancement of academic teaching, careers support and advice, and placement learning (Expectations Enhancement and B4).

### Recommendation

The QAA review team makes the following **recommendation** to Regent's University London.

By September 2017:

- review its condoned pass regulation to ensure that no student is awarded credit or obtains an award without having achieved the designated learning outcomes (Expectations A3.2 and B6).

### Affirmation of action being taken

The QAA review team **affirms** the following actions that Regent's University London is already taking to make academic standards secure and/or improve the educational provision offered to its students:

- steps, including in particular the introduction of a personal tutor system for undergraduates, are being taken to improve its variable progression and retention rates (Expectation B4).

Further explanation of the key findings can be found in the handbook available on the QAA webpage explaining [Higher Education Review \(Alternative Providers\)](#).

## About Regent's University London

The origins of Regent's University London (the University) lie in Rockford College of Illinois's establishment of Regent's College on the Regent's Park site of the former Bedford College, University of London in 1985. Initially a confederation of institutions, Regent's College became a unitary institution in 2006; it was granted taught degree awarding powers in 2012 and university title the following year, and is currently London's only independent, not-for-profit university.

While parts of the University's teaching portfolio continue to reflect its confederate origins, the acquisition in 2013 of the London operations of the American Intercontinental University gave the University a footprint in nearby Marylebone, and extended its teaching portfolio into fashion and design. The University took steps to meet the consequent integration challenges, undertaking a post-implementation 'Lessons Learned' review in 2014.

The University's vision for the period to 2020 includes being a leading private international university with a network of quality partners and a student population of 4,000 full-time equivalent higher education students, of whom over 80 per cent will be international. Its pedagogy will be innovative, student-centred, teaching-focused and research-informed, and it will be financially robust and continue to invest in developing its prestigious location.

Institutional governance rests with the 19-member Board of Trustees, which discharges its responsibilities through seven committees. In respect of management, the Vice-Chancellor is supported by a six-person Directorate. The University is structured academically around two faculties (Business and Management, and Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences) and the Regent's Institute of Languages and Culture. Both faculties were restructured in academic year 2015-16, with a view to improving student satisfaction, strengthening research, and achieving efficiency gains. Professional and academic support services, which are managed by the Chief Operating Officer and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, will be subject to internal review in the current academic year.

This review is the University's first institution-wide engagement with QAA since the grant of taught degree awarding powers in 2012. Since that time the University has responded to the major challenges (including financial challenges) visible across the changing higher education landscape by prioritising the quality of student learning opportunities; improving retention rates; moderating its growth ambitions; making structural changes designed to improve efficiency and effectiveness and drive down costs; delivering a common and flat management structure; aiming for a steady state of 4,000 full-time equivalent students taking their qualifications from a significantly reduced teaching portfolio; and ending a longstanding partnership with a United States-based institution, the students of which it is currently teaching out.

The University's International Partnerships Office oversees a number of study-abroad options for staff and students. Several programmes are accredited by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, and the Open University, the University of Northampton and the University of Wales are the awarding bodies for the University's research degree and professional doctoral provision. The arrangement with the University of Northampton commenced in September 2016; that with the University of Wales is being taught out.

## Explanation of the findings about Regent's University London

This section explains the review findings in more detail.

Terms that may be unfamiliar to some readers have been included in a [brief glossary](#) at the end of this report. A fuller [glossary of terms](#) is available on the QAA website, and formal definitions of certain terms may be found in the operational description and handbook for the [review method](#), also on the QAA website.

## 1 Judgement: The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards

**Expectation (A1):** In order to secure threshold academic standards, degree-awarding bodies:

**a) ensure that the requirements of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ)* are met by:**

- positioning their qualifications at the appropriate level of the relevant framework for higher education qualifications
- ensuring that programme learning outcomes align with the relevant qualification descriptor in the relevant framework for higher education qualifications
- naming qualifications in accordance with the titling conventions specified in the frameworks for higher education qualifications
- awarding qualifications to mark the achievement of positively defined programme learning outcomes

**b) consider and take account of QAA's guidance on qualification characteristics**

**c) where they award UK credit, assign credit values and design programmes that align with the specifications of the relevant national credit framework**

**d) consider and take account of relevant Subject Benchmark Statements.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A1: UK and European Reference Points for Academic Standards**

### Findings

1.1 Overall responsibility for the oversight of academic standards rests with the Senate, which devolves operational responsibility to its Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, the agenda and minutes of which confirm that this responsibility is diligently exercised. It is a condition of programme validation or revalidation that alignment with the FHEQ, Subject Benchmark Statements, other external reference points and the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) is assured. Full details are provided in the Academic Regulations, which are updated regularly. The University's credit framework is aligned with the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, though this is not consistently recorded in programme specifications.

1.2 From its scrutiny of programme validation documentation, reports from validation events, programme specifications and module outlines, and from meetings undertaken in the course of the review, the review team confirms that the University's validation and revalidation procedure is robust, that academic staff are well prepared for their validation and revalidation responsibilities, and that all qualifications are named in accordance with the titling conventions in the FHEQ and positioned at the appropriate level.

1.3 Annual monitoring, which aims to ensure continued programme alignment with external expectations, is extensive in scope and soundly implemented. The Programme Planning Panel, which approves changes to programmes and modules on behalf of the Senate Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee, is responsible for the oversight of

cumulative programme changes. External examiner reports confirm both that awards are set at the appropriate level of the FHEQ and that Subject Benchmark Statements have been addressed.

1.4 The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**

**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A2.1): In order to secure their academic standards, degree-awarding bodies establish transparent and comprehensive academic frameworks and regulations to govern how they award academic credit and qualifications.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards**

**Findings**

1.5 Academic standards are secured through the Academic Regulations, operational responsibility for which rests with the Academic Registry. At faculty level, quality officers support academic staff, including associate and assistant deans; normally, heads of programme are charged with ensuring proper and consistent local-level implementation on a day-to-day basis and attending validation and revalidation events.

1.6 The Regulations, from which only derogation required by PSRBs is normally permitted, contain comprehensive information on criteria for awards; duration of study; the executive and deliberative committee structure; and the rules on attendance, academic misconduct, extenuating circumstances, and appeals and complaints. Relevant regulatory changes are communicated to students through the Academic Registry webpages, the virtual learning environment (VLE) and email, and academic staff who met the review team demonstrated knowledge and understanding both of the Regulations themselves and of the role and operation of the committee system in ensuring their consistent implementation.

1.7 Subject assessment boards, which confirm module marks, make recommendations and review module statistical data, take advice from subject external examiners. Progression and finalist boards, which confirm student performance and the conferment of awards, have set agendas and terms of reference. The conferment of awards is reported to the Senate. These arrangements are fit for purpose.

1.8 The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A2.2): Degree-awarding bodies maintain a definitive record of each programme and qualification that they approve (and of subsequent changes to it) which constitutes the reference point for delivery and assessment of the programme, its monitoring and review, and for the provision of records of study to students and alumni.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A2: Degree-Awarding Bodies' Reference Points for Academic Standards**

**Findings**

1.9 The Academic Regulations contain a comprehensive list of qualifications awarded by the University (or, in the case of research degrees, the awarding institution concerned), and the standards, purpose and principles of assessment. The Academic Registry holds a record of all programme changes.

1.10 Programme specifications are widely available and are produced on a template that requires learning outcomes to be specified and mapped against modules and assessment criteria, and evidence to be provided of alignment with the FHEQ and Subject Benchmark Statements. They are scrutinised at validation and revalidation to ensure that all relevant internal and external requirements and expectations are met. These arrangements are satisfactorily planned and delivered.

1.11 On graduating, students receive a transcript and diploma supplement. With effect from the present academic year, students participating in the University's study period abroad scheme will receive grades as well as credit: for this purpose, a grade translation policy is in place.

1.12 The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.1): Degree-awarding bodies establish and consistently implement processes for the approval of taught programmes and research degrees that ensure that academic standards are set at a level which meets the UK threshold standard for the qualification and are in accordance with their own academic frameworks and regulations.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards***

## **Findings**

1.13 Responsibility for ensuring that all programmes have been validated or revalidated in alignment with relevant internal and external expectations rests with the Academic Registry. As noted above (see paragraph 1.2), validation and revalidation are robust and transparent. The review team also notes that revalidation reports from external academics enable the University to assure itself that its academic standards meet external expectations and are benchmarked against those of other institutions. Annual monitoring is in place and fit for purpose (see paragraph 1.3).

1.14 Programmes leading to a research degree are subject to external validation. The review team, having scrutinised the appropriate documentation, confirms that institutional procedures are aligned with the requirements of the three awarding bodies (see also paragraphs 2.49-2.52). The team noted in particular that the University's effective approach to, and use of, annual monitoring was identified as an area of good practice by one awarding body.

1.15 The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.2): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that credit and qualifications are awarded only where:**

- **the achievement of relevant learning outcomes (module learning outcomes in the case of credit and programme outcomes in the case of qualifications) has been demonstrated through assessment**
- **both UK threshold standards and their own academic standards have been satisfied.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards**

**Findings**

1.16 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy provides the framework for the institutional approach to assessment; programme specifications and handbooks contain all necessary information. The Academic Regulations define the credit required for progression; module hours are aligned with credit; module learning outcomes are mapped against assessment methods; and assessment tasks are pre-approved by external examiners. Moderation regulations are in place to ensure consistency of marking standards, with sampling conducted across classifications and covering all borderline failures and first class and distinction passes. It falls to internal moderators to ensure that marking is aligned with the criteria, that marks fit the level concerned, that the range of marks is appropriate, that student work meets the learning descriptors, and that markers' feedback is constructive. As noted elsewhere (see paragraphs 1.3 and 1.7), external examining and assessment board arrangements are in place and competently implemented.

1.17 Notwithstanding the overall satisfactory nature of the University's assessment arrangements, the wording of the regulation permitting the award of a condoned pass to marginally failed work at levels 4, 5 and 6 makes possible the award of credit in cases where defined learning outcomes have not been met. The review team **recommends** that the University reviews its condoned pass regulation to ensure that no student is awarded credit or obtains an award without having achieved the designated learning outcomes.

1.18 Doctoral-level awards are made by the University's three awarding bodies on the basis of their own regulations and procedures. The University's delegated responsibilities vary somewhat across the three partnerships, but in all cases the awarding bodies judge that it discharges them competently and reliably.

1.19 The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.3): Degree-awarding bodies ensure that processes for the monitoring and review of programmes are implemented which explicitly address whether the UK threshold academic standards are achieved and whether the academic standards required by the individual degree-awarding body are being maintained.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards***

## **Findings**

1.20 The University's programme monitoring and programme review schedule aims to ensure that programmes meet all relevant external requirements; as noted elsewhere (see paragraph 1.3), annual monitoring and quinquennial review are fit for purpose and appropriately implemented.

1.21 Annual monitoring reports are completed by programme directors; they are comprehensive in scope, analytical in content, and draw on extensive information, including data on applications, enrolments, achievement and study periods abroad. The review team, which notes that the Academic Registry has recently conducted a review of the process with a view to improving its operations and strengthening its enhancement focus, confirms that annual monitoring reports are fit for purpose and constitute a sound basis for the development, oversight and implementation of action plans.

1.22 It is a faculty responsibility to ensure that any recommendations contained in annual monitoring reports fall within the boundaries of external and internal requirements. Following faculty approval, the reports are submitted to the Annual Monitoring Committee, which is responsible for reviewing them, identifying overarching themes, and compiling an annual institutional report for the Senate Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee highlighting annual performance, good practice and areas for enhancement.

1.23 The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (A3.4): In order to be transparent and publicly accountable, degree-awarding bodies use external and independent expertise at key stages of setting and maintaining academic standards to advise on whether:**

- **UK threshold academic standards are set, delivered and achieved**
- **the academic standards of the degree-awarding body are appropriately set and maintained.**

**Quality Code, Chapter A3: Securing Academic Standards and an Outcomes-Based Approach to Academic Awards**

**Findings**

1.24 The Academic Regulations state that the University makes use of external and independent expertise at programme development, validation and review, and that due regard must be paid to the requirements of any relevant PSRB. At validation, external specialist panel members with discipline expertise are charged with considering and evaluating programme documentation. They receive extensive guidance and support on their role and responsibilities, and validation documentation seen by the review team confirms that they play an active role. Where appropriate, external specialists from business and industry are involved in curriculum design and development, and some departments operate industry advisory boards on a localised rather than centrally driven basis.

1.25 The Academic Regulations specify the criteria for the appointment of external examiners and their responsibilities. The latter include scrutinising assessment briefs, examining samples of all assessed work, and confirming the appropriateness of academic standards and quality procedures. The University employs two categories of external examiner: subject external examiners, who are involved in subject assessment boards, and external examiners serving on progression and finalist boards, whose role, which is regulatory and procedural, involves confirming the rigour and proper operation of the assessment process. External examiner reports seen by the review team demonstrate that external examiners are performing their role appropriately in confirming, respectively, subject-level standards and alignment with reference points, and that due process is being followed.

1.26 The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards: Summary of findings

1.27 The University is assiduous in ensuring the alignment of its procedures for setting and maintaining the academic standards of its awards with all relevant external requirements and expectations, and is well positioned to assure itself as to the security of the academic standards of its awards and those research degree programmes it offers on behalf of its various awarding bodies.

1.28 While this part of the report **recommends** that the University makes a specific adjustment to its condonement regulations, it is confirmed that the setting and maintenance of the academic standards of awards at Regent's University London **meet** UK expectations.

## 2 Judgement: The quality of student learning opportunities

**Expectation (B1): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective processes for the design, development and approval of programmes.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval***

### **Findings**

2.1 As noted above (see paragraph 1.24), the University gives close consideration to the advice of external specialists in programme design, as well as to the marketability of new programme initiatives. The programme validation and revalidation procedure is robust in design and execution (see paragraphs 1.2-1.3), has been redesigned to facilitate a more enhancement-led and less compliance-driven approach, and makes appropriate use of contributions from external academics, representatives of professional and other relevant bodies, and industrial and professional practitioners. Students now serve as full panel members, for which role they are duly briefed and supported.

2.2 The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B2): Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education**

**Findings**

2.3 The University's recruitment, selection and admission procedures are specified in the publicly available Admissions Policy; they are aligned with both the Expectations of the Quality Code and the institution's Strategic Plan. The University takes steps to ensure that the procedures operate in an equitable manner; mandatory training is in place for all academic and support staff involved; and the procedures are currently subject to internal review to ensure both best practice and that they are fit for the purpose of engaging with the rapidly changing admissions landscape. The review team noted that, in spite of the fact that the opportunity to lodge a complaint is widely available to applicants, no admissions-specific complaints have been received.

2.4 Admissions requirements are set and adjusted by the Directorate. The University describes its approach as cautious, the Vice-Chancellor reporting that it is reluctant to lower its requirements to meet targets. Responsibility for decision making in the case of applicants meeting standard entry requirements is normally devolved to the central admissions team, though in some cases interviews are held. In all non-standard cases decisions are taken by senior academics in the faculty concerned. The University has procedures for the recognition of prior learning, but makes only limited use of prior experiential learning, and then mainly at taught postgraduate level.

2.5 Programme leaders are provided with data on admissions, and liaise regularly with the admissions team during the cycle. Given that the large majority of students (normally around 80 per cent) are international, the International Partnerships Office works in concert with other professional services departments to ensure that applicants have the correct and necessary information and advice. Students who met the review team confirmed that the information they had received prior to admission had been helpful, and that the induction week had been key to their successful transition to UK higher education.

2.6 The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B3): Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.**

### **Quality Code, *Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching***

#### **Findings**

2.7 The University's Strategic Plan, which expresses an institutional commitment to staff development and enhancing the student experience, is supported by the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy 2015-20, the priorities of which include developing such student skills as digital literacy, research, and employability. Members of academic staff who met the review team were familiar with the Strategy and its faculty-level implementation, describing in particular how learning, teaching and assessment are discussed in programme development and approval.

2.8 An Operational Plan guides implementation of the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy within faculties and professional services, where clear structures, procedures, responsibilities and accountability mechanisms, including sound local annual operating plans, are in place. In the area of professional services, Learning Resources's Operating Plan includes appropriate and imaginative development of the VLE to embrace staff training, study skills, the delivery of massive open online courses, and lecture capture. In the faculties, teaching observations, which are locally driven and developmental in focus (therefore involving an acceptable degree of operational diversity), identify areas for development and are the subject of progress reports submitted to faculty learning and teaching committees. More consistently, faculty programme committees systematically oversee and review the student experience, giving detailed consideration to feedback and performance, and reporting ultimately to the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee for the purpose of institutional-level enhancement.

2.9 The introduction of a personal tutoring system in the present academic year is a key element in the institutional focus on improving student progression and retention rates. The system extends to all undergraduates, and involves all academic staff on a 0.5 contract or above. Mandatory training is in place, and the introduction of the system, which is in its early stages, has been well received by staff and students alike.

2.10 All academic staff are required to engage in continuing professional development. The institutional commitment to best academic practice is reflected in the introduction of a higher education teaching qualification and a continuing professional development programme accredited by the Higher Education Academy and aligned with the UK Professional Standards Framework. Both programmes are operated by the Academic Practice Hub, which is also charged with strengthening academic delivery through workshops, online support, and preparing academic staff for membership of the Academy, achievement of which is a strategic priority.

2.11 For academic staff, annual professional and development review includes reflection on the indicators in the UK Professional Standards Framework; continuing professional development is monitored; and attendance on the higher education teaching qualification is tracked at institutional level. These mechanisms contribute to the annual report submitted to the Academy and to the sharing of good practice on the University website. Members of academic staff (full-time, part-time and visiting) who met the review team described themselves as well supported, and the team also noted that developmental support and

expectations extend to all members of staff. This strategic approach to staff development is driven by an institutional commitment to ensuring that students receive high-quality support from all staff with whom they interact. The University's systematic and strategic approach to the professional development of student-facing staff, which enhances learning and teaching, is **good practice**.

2.12 The Academic Skills Department provides student support in the form of workshops and one-to-one tutorials designed to enable all students, including those with additional needs, to improve their academic practice and fulfil their potential. The review team noted that the information provided includes a skills handbook that focuses on academic study skills, and that the University's approach to information technology and management information includes delivering an improved staff and student portal, better timetabling, and a new learning and predictive analytics system. These arrangements are well designed and effectively delivered.

2.13 The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B4): Higher education providers have in place, monitor and evaluate arrangements and resources which enable students to develop their academic, personal and professional potential.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement**

**Findings**

2.14 As noted at paragraph 2.7, the University's Strategic Plan and Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy specify the institutional approach to supporting and enhancing student development and achievement. Implementation is overseen and monitored at both institutional and local levels within established executive and deliberative structures that focus increasingly on quality enhancement. These structures, supported by comprehensive student participation, develop new initiatives, and analyse, debate and respond to information sources that include assessment data, and student feedback and evaluations, some of which are provided by students returning from study abroad. These arrangements are effectively underpinned by the support, training and development available to, and in some cases required of, all members of staff.

2.15 The review team noted in particular the attention paid by the Senate Learning and Teaching Committee to such matters as variable performance on resit examinations, engagement with reassessment opportunities, and retention. On the basis of its scrutiny of extensive committee minutes and other documentation, and in the light of discussions with staff and students, the team confirms the adequacy of these arrangements, their openness to change, and the competence with which they are administered.

2.16 The University's approach to preparing students to operate successfully in the global marketplace is reflected in the provision of foreign language tuition, key life and employment skills, credit-bearing student abroad opportunities, and 20 credits provided for elective modules in all undergraduate degree programmes; collectively, these activities constitute both an integrated element of academic learning and distinctive learning opportunities in their own right. The University has also developed, and is currently reviewing and revising, a core Global Perspectives module delivered across almost all undergraduate programmes with the specific aims of encouraging reflection on individual development needs and engagement with diverse perspectives. Reference is made at paragraph 4.6 to the **good practice** in the University's comprehensive approach to employability, which is reflected in the successful integration and enhancement of academic teaching, careers support and advice, and placement learning.

2.17 The University is currently reviewing its policies and procedures with the aim of both improving quality and reducing expenditure. This includes, for example, associating improved progression and retention rates with strengthening the student experience. Therefore, a Student Hub has been put in place as a single point of information and support, and the introduction of the undergraduate personal tutoring system (see paragraph 2.9) has been supported by a comprehensive training programme and is underpinned by clearly defined rights and responsibilities.

2.18 Academic and support staff who met the review team understand the personal tutor's role in both providing early diagnostic information on student engagement and in initiating, with due regard to considerations of confidentiality, liaison with such services as Counselling, Disability and Academic Skills. Students told the team that they welcome the initiative. The review team **affirms** the steps being taken to improve the University's variable progression and retention rates, including, in particular, the introduction of a personal tutor system for undergraduates.

2.19 Induction Week, designed to ease freshers' transition to higher education, includes a programme-specific element, a welcome page for new students with general information about the University, and a pre-induction module to prepare freshers to secure optimal benefit from the VLE. The review team confirms the satisfactory nature of these arrangements. Students have access to English for Academic Purposes classes and to academic skills and other workshops, and receive extensive and appropriate information and employability advice; a confidential Counselling Service is also available. A Student Charter, developed in conjunction with the Student Union, articulates clearly the mutual rights and responsibilities involved.

2.20 Students with additional needs are encouraged to declare them; those who do, as well as those whose optional initial screening report identifies undiagnosed issues, have access to support delivered by, or on behalf of, the Disability Support Officer. The Disability Services Committee monitors the impact of policies, procedures and practices on students with disabilities, and a Student Support Agreement system aims to ensure an approach that is both inclusive and equitable. The Attendance and Lateness Policy is used to monitor student engagement; the Cause for Concern Guidelines and Fitness to Study Policy are supported by staff training and may include special examination arrangements and one-to-one support sessions; and extenuating circumstances boards consider applications on a confidential basis.

2.21 These arrangements are both satisfactory and comprehensive, and students who met the review team described themselves as well supported throughout, and spoke enthusiastically about the institutional responsiveness to meeting and anticipating their needs. The tailored educational provision that enables students to develop their academic, professional, social and personal skills in a secure and supportive environment is **good practice**.

2.22 The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B5): Higher education providers take deliberate steps to engage all students, individually and collectively, as partners in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B5: Student Engagement**

**Findings**

2.23 The University's commitment to engaging students in the assurance and enhancement of their educational experience is reflected in its Strategic Plan (where such engagement is the first key performance indicator); in its comprehensive representation system in governance and management; in the manner in which it permits Student Union officers informal access to the Vice-Chancellor and other senior executives; in its establishment of the Senate Student Experience Committee to complement the Board of Trustees' Student Experience Committee; and in its appointment of a Student Engagement Manager. The review team noted that student engagement has demonstrably enhanced students' educational experience in areas that include extended library opening hours, the funding of a sabbatical Student Union President (to take effect in the next academic year), and a 'We Listened' intranet page designed to exemplify institutional responsiveness to student suggestions and concerns.

2.24 Senior higher education managers, acknowledging the view expressed in the student submission that the University's communications with students had on occasion been problematic, described recent and planned enhancements as attempts to remedy the matter. Students with representative functions spoke positively of their relationship with the University, identifying their current contributions to strategic planning, the strengthening of their representative function, and their recently established participation in programme validation and revalidation as both welcome and effective. Student Union officers expressed complete satisfaction, referring to the University's response to communication concerns; its technological solution to a timetabling problem to which they had drawn attention; its support for a Film Society; and its remodelling of classrooms in response to representations made. Students without representative functions reported similarly, while academic staff particularly highlighted the importance of the personal tutoring system as a means of engaging with and supporting students identified as 'hard to reach'.

2.25 The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B6): Higher education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning**

**Findings**

2.26 The University's Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy aims to ensure the variety, effectiveness and development of assessment approaches, for which purpose guidance is provided in areas such as assessment design, feedback, marking, and assessment monitoring and review. Heads of programme are responsible for ensuring the fitness for purpose of their programme's assessment regime, and the review team confirms that they discharge this responsibility in a competent manner.

2.27 The Strategy also aims to promote a culture wherein the provision of good quality and timely feedback on assessed work is geared to enabling students to maximise their potential. Academic staff who met the review team were familiar with, and supportive of, this approach, and students confirmed that they normally receive assessment feedback in a timely manner. They spoke positively about the assessment methods used, demonstrated their understanding of the assessment criteria in place, and valued the formative assessment opportunities provided. The University also provides clear advice on matters such as academic integrity, assessment literacy, appeals and extenuating circumstances at induction and study skills workshops.

2.28 Appropriate procedures for the recognition of prior learning are in place, with mapping against intended programme learning outcomes. Relevant information is available through the intranet as well as in student handbooks and programme specifications. Students with recognised prior learning receive initial support from the Admissions Team, and thereafter from the head of programme concerned. A review of institutional procedures has recently been undertaken, as a result of which arrangements will in future be made for the incorporation of transferred grades as well as credit into the final classification of internal transfer students only.

2.29 As noted elsewhere (see paragraphs 1.7 and 1.25), institutional assessment arrangements are sound and appropriate, with student achievement confirmed through a competent assessment board system supported by external examiners, ratified by the Academic Registry and overseen by the Senate Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee. Nevertheless, the University is **recommended** to review its condoned pass regulation to ensure that no student is awarded credit or obtains an award without having achieved the designated learning outcomes.

2.30 The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B7): Higher education providers make scrupulous use of external examiners.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B7: External Examining**

**Findings**

2.31 The University has clear procedures for the appointment, induction and support of external examiners; these are specified in the Academic Regulations and cover such matters as sign-off responsibility for approving nominations, the wording of letters of appointment, length of service, conflicts of interest and reciprocity. The Academic Registry maintains an external examiner database, and students are informed of the identity of their external examiner in programme handbooks (though there is some slippage here, and students' interest and awareness are limited). These responsibilities (which in respect of research degrees fall to the awarding body concerned) are fit for purpose and properly executed.

2.32 Subject specialist external examiners serve on subject assessment boards. They are guided in the discharge of their responsibilities for approving assessments, examining samples and submitting an annual report by programme handbooks, the VLE and the intranet. External examiners sitting on progression and finalist boards have procedural responsibility for confirming due process (see paragraph 1.25) and are similarly supported by relevant information. These arrangements are satisfactory.

2.33 The responsibility for responding to subject external examiner reports and ensuring that they contribute to annual monitoring rests with faculties; it falls to the Academic Registrar to respond to reports from external examiners on progression and finalist boards. The subject external examiner report template requires confirmation that academic standards are appropriate, that awards are aligned with all relevant external reference points, and that the standards achieved are comparable with those of other institutions known to the examiner; comments on good practice and the quality of learning and teaching are also invited. All external examiners have the right to raise matters of serious concern with the Vice-Chancellor. The review team confirms, from its scrutiny of a sample of the agenda and minutes of subject boards and of progression and finalist boards, both that external examiners meet their obligations and that the University responds appropriately to their comments and advice.

2.34 The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B8): Higher education providers, in discharging their responsibilities for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities, operate effective, regular and systematic processes for monitoring and for review of programmes.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review**

**Findings**

2.35 As noted above (see paragraphs 1.2-1.3), the University's validation, revalidation and annual monitoring procedures are fit for purpose, enhancement-oriented and robustly and reliably operated. Institutional overview reports produced as a result of annual monitoring make a significant contribution not only to the oversight of academic standards but also to the assurance and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities. The University operates a thorough revalidation process and complies in full with awarding body requirements for the annual monitoring of research degrees.

2.36 A module change process in place outside the validation and annual monitoring cycle enables programme teams to propose such changes to the University Programme Planning Panel. The review team confirms that this system operates effectively. Changes successfully implemented include module aims, learning outcomes, learning and teaching strategy, assessment strategy or weightings, and new arrangements for collaborative provision.

2.37 The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B9): Higher education providers have procedures for handling academic appeals and student complaints about the quality of learning opportunities; these procedures are fair, accessible and timely, and enable enhancement.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints**

**Findings**

2.38 The University's procedures for academic appeals and complaints are clear and widely available, and have been mapped against the Quality Code. Their underpinning principles are independence and confidentiality, and they are designed to assure students that they may raise issues without fear of repercussion.

2.39 Both complaints and appeals involve staged procedures with a defined time for resolution, which complies with guidance from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator. The University, which extracts the outcomes from annual monitoring reports, summarising them in an institutional overview report for the Senate Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (and ultimately the Senate) with the aim of identifying and addressing learning points arising, acknowledges that scope exists to improve the granularity of the retrieved data.

2.40 The review team noted that, while the grounds for complaints and appeals and the ensuing procedures are clear, the avenues for students to seek advice on making a complaint or appeal are less so: one handbook, for example, gives accurate information but only brief advice, and offers little clarity as to where potential complainants and appellants might turn for authoritative advice from trained personnel. Nevertheless, the team heard of the existence of different routes to advice, and in future the newly operational Student Hub is likely to be a starting point. Students with representative functions described their involvement in advocacy, reporting that while informal resolution is frequently achievable, in one difficult case the Academic Registrar's advice had facilitated student representation. Students were aware of the availability of the relevant policies on the VLE and of the role of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator.

2.41 The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B10): Degree-awarding bodies take ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them. Arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations other than the degree-awarding body are implemented securely and managed effectively.**

**Quality Code, Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others**

**Findings**

2.42 The University manages four categories of provision with others: collaborative arrangements; study period abroad; placement learning; and delivery of validated provision by others. With effect from the current academic year, the Senate Portfolio Scrutiny Panel oversees collaborative arrangements and study period abroad, while the quality of placement learning is, operationally, a faculty responsibility discharged initially by the programme committee concerned. Responsibility for validated provision, which encompasses three professional doctorates and the PhD, rests with the awarding institution, to which reports are made in accordance with the relevant regulatory framework.

2.43 The University's Internationalisation Strategy guides collaborative provision, including data on articulation arrangements and double degrees. As the University does not engage in transnational education it has adopted a low-risk approach to collaborative partnerships. It is, however, keen to ensure diversity across the student body and this is factored into the evaluation and approval of any new collaborative partnerships. Thus far, the University has concentrated on articulation arrangements and double degrees, and has five active collaborative arrangements. All current partnerships are listed in the University's official Collaborative Register.

2.44 The International Partnerships Office oversees study abroad activities, some of which are mandatory elements of undergraduate programmes while others are optional. In all cases the University integrates placement and career opportunities, providing careers advice and support as appropriate. The University acknowledges that scope exists to strengthen the evaluation of placement learning: arrangements are in place to ensure that this takes place from the next academic year. Partnership arrangements for articulation and double degrees are governed by a Memorandum of Agreement that specifies the respective responsibilities of both partner and University.

2.45 For study period abroad, which includes inbound and outbound ERASMUS+ students, the University maintains and develops partnerships that it reviews on a continuing basis and formally every three years. Inbound students receive an induction programme which will, from the next academic year, be integrated into the standard programme for all freshers; outbound students receive academic, linguistic, administrative and pastoral preparation and support. The arrangements are mapped against the Quality Code and are compliant with all external expectations.

2.46 Employability is central to the University's strategic vision, and extensive offerings of careers education, information, advice and guidance for students were evident to the review team. The University manages placement learning, which is provided on the BA International Business and BA International Events Management degrees, through its Careers and Business Relations Department. Students on these degrees are required to complete 30 weeks of work experience in 10-week blocks. On completion of the placement the company provides a formal feedback form to the University stating (if such is the case) that the placement has been completed to a satisfactory level. The form, once validated, is uploaded for inclusion on the student's transcript.

2.47 The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

**Expectation (B11): Research degrees are awarded in a research environment that provides secure academic standards for doing research and learning about research approaches, methods, procedures and protocols. This environment offers students quality of opportunities and the support they need to achieve successful academic, personal and professional outcomes from their research degrees.**

**Quality Code, *Chapter B11: Research Degrees***

**Findings**

2.48 As the University does not hold research degree awarding powers, its responsibilities involve adhering to the expectations of its three awarding bodies, the Open University, the University of Northampton and the University of Wales, and properly discharging any responsibilities delegated to it - in some cases this also involves alignment with the requirements of PSRBs. The review team noted that the level of autonomy granted to the University is variable across awarding bodies.

2.49 The partnership with the Open University is longstanding and was subject to successful reaccreditation visits from the Open University and British Psychological Society in January 2016 and subsequently from the Health and Care Professionals Council. The arrangement with the University of Wales is being taught out, appropriate exit arrangements are in place and the University undertakes to provide the students remaining with maintained and enhanced facilities and support.

2.50 The validation arrangement with the University of Northampton commenced in September 2016. The University of Northampton undertook an institutional approval visit in December 2015, and the University had met all associated conditions and recommendations by February 2016. A signed Memorandum of Cooperation is in place. The University's Joint Delivery Research Degree Programme Student Handbook contains details of the study arrangements and links to University of Northampton policies, and students have access to the University of Northampton's online toolkits, as do supervisors and external examiners. The review team confirms that the University discharges all activities devolved to it in an effective manner.

2.51 The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The quality of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings

2.52 This part of the report contains three features of good practice and one affirmation, and one cross-reference to the recommendation primarily located in Section A. The good practices cover the systematic and strategic manner in which the University ensures the professional development of its student-facing academic and support staff; the way in which it supports the development of students' academic, professional, social and personal skills; and its comprehensive approach to student employability. The review team affirmed the steps the University is taking to address the causes of its variable progression and retention rates.

2.53 The review team was mindful of the University's status as a small, privately funded, not-for-profit organisation attracting students of numerous nationalities and cultures: some 80 per cent of its students are from overseas, and the University takes pains both to address and to celebrate this reality. It does so by an individualised approach supported by small-group teaching and relatively generous staff:student ratios, and by providing a holistic experience for a very diverse student group, many of them new to higher education and also visiting London for the first time. The team noted particularly the University's facilitative and supportive ethos, and the extent to which academic and support staff embrace its values and approach.

2.54 The review team concludes that the quality of student learning opportunities at the University **meets** UK expectations.

### 3 Judgement: The quality of the information about learning opportunities

**Expectation (C): UK higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the higher education they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.**

#### Quality Code, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision

##### Findings

3.1 The University emphasises the importance of ensuring that all the information it disseminates, whether publicly or internally, is current, clear and accurate. Its primary communication channel is its website, which contains extensive but targeted information for prospective applicants, current students, employers, partner organisations and the general public. This information ranges from mission, strategic goals and organisational values to granular details about applications and academic offerings. The website, which conforms to the University's Brand Guidelines, is a valuable and well presented entity.

3.2 The website contains comprehensive information about programmes of study and application procedures for home and international students, with dedicated webpages and webinars; this information also appears in a suite of prospectuses, available both as downloads and as printed copy. The prospectuses include a profile page for each programme. These were sampled by the review team and were found to contain wide-ranging and relevant information, from entry (including language) requirements to fees, and from modes of study (including, where relevant, study abroad) to provisions for students with a disability.

3.3 Ensuring the accuracy and currency of information is ultimately the responsibility of External Relations, which receives contributions as appropriate from Marketing and Communications, Student Recruitment, Admissions, the International Partnerships Office and the Academic Registry, as well as the two academic faculties, whose responsibility for ensuring that changes to the academic offering are reliably captured is of particular relevance to this review. These arrangements appear clearly planned and are, according to students who met the review team, effectively delivered.

3.4 For current students, the main information sources are the general, programme and module handbooks; the Student Charter; the intranet; and the VLE. Together, these provide extensive information on programme content and the most student-relevant regulations and procedures, including complaints and appeals, extenuating circumstances and assessment. The newly operational Student Hub will be a central repository for, and single source of, information, including programme handbooks, assessment information, Academic Regulations and policies, careers advice, external examiner reports, student survey results, Student Services facilities and the role and responsibilities of the various committees.

3.5 The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## The quality of the information about learning opportunities: Summary of findings

3.6 The University operates robust procedures for ensuring the accuracy and trustworthiness of the information it publishes. This includes online information for the public, external stakeholders and potential applicants, and internal information for students, whether produced online or as hard copy. The University ensures that the information is presented clearly and in alignment with its Brand Guidelines; the responsibilities for operationalising this commitment are clearly defined and effectively implemented.

3.7 The students whom the review team met spoke positively of the information available to them. The review team confirms that the information provided by the University is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy, and therefore **meets** UK expectations.

## 4 Judgement: The enhancement of student learning opportunities

### Expectation (Enhancement): Deliberate steps are being taken at provider level to improve the quality of students' learning opportunities

#### Findings

4.1 The University describes enhancement as operating at three levels: institution-wide, faculty-level, and local or module level. The Student Union is also actively involved in the enhancement agenda and particularly values the greater focus on the student experience brought about by the establishment of the Senate Student Experience Committee.

4.2 The Strategic Plan is the main institutional vehicle for specifying the steps being taken to improve the quality of student learning opportunities. In the plan the University sets out its commitment to enhancement, placing particular emphasis on such matrices as the National Student Survey, and highlighting the student experience priorities identified in a review undertaken by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. These include creating a sense of belonging with students, addressing poor staff performance, making better use of key metrics, introducing a personal tutor system, graduate employability and a one-stop shop for students to obtain information and advice, or raise concerns.

4.3 The Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and its associated Operational Plan underpin the University's strategic intentions and provide a clear direction for faculties and departments as deliverers of enhanced academic provision. The priorities include providing a personalised student experience, interactive and inclusive learning opportunities, assessment for learning, opportunities for the development of student skills and attributes, a programme of professional development for staff, and emphasising an approach based on graduates achieving cultural agility and flexibility.

4.4 The University considers the continuing professional development of all staff critical to the delivery of effective teaching and learning. Accordingly, it has put in place an Academic Practice Hub to ensure and strengthen the professional activities of academic and support staff through accredited programmes, professional development opportunities, professional recognition, and peer mentoring and support. Of particular note is the University's Effective Academic Practice programme, accredited by the Higher Education Academy and comprising a fully taught, 60-credit Postgraduate Certificate in Higher Education, as well as an experiential recognition route to Fellowship. The programme has been designed as a work-based initiative that aims to enhance the pedagogic practice of staff in line with the UK Professional Standards Framework and the University's own Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy. The qualification, which emphasises such distinctive characteristics of the University as its diverse overseas student population, is mandatory for all full-time academic staff; visiting lecturers are required to take the first module. As indicated at paragraph 2.11, the University's systematic and strategic approach to the professional development of student-facing staff, which enhances learning and teaching, is **good practice**.

4.5 The University takes a strategic approach to strengthening students' employability skills. Initiatives in this area include the work of the Careers and Business Relations Team in offering bespoke employability workshops as well as embedding into the curriculum careers education, including advice on writing a curriculum vitae, interview preparation and the use of social media. Students also have access to personalised careers guidance and career coaching sessions from employers with whom the University maintains close ties, not least through its support for departmental industrial advisory boards. Students confirmed also the

value of the Careers Hub Board and Global Vision International, which offer, respectively, opportunities to develop skills by involvement in charity work at home or abroad.

The University has also very recently launched its Student Hub, a one-stop shop for advice and guidance on issues such as employment opportunities, and immigration and accommodation.

4.6 The University also offers many placement opportunities, ranging from specialised and clinical elements of programmes to 16-week ERASMUS+ experiences. Placements are aligned with the Quality Code and were reported by staff and students alike as well supported, highly valued and, in many cases, critical to securing subsequent employment. The University's comprehensive approach to employability, which is reflected in the successful integration and enhancement of academic teaching, careers support and advice, and placement learning, is **good practice**.

4.7 Two other enhancement initiatives to which attention is drawn elsewhere are the personal tutor system (see paragraph 2.18), in which tutors work with tutees on an individual personal development plan designed to help students set and achieve their personal goals, and the first-year Global Perspectives module (see paragraph 2.16), which is designed to facilitate interpersonal, intercultural and cross-disciplinary learning.

4.8 The University's approach to improving the quality of students' learning opportunities is **commended**. The Expectation is met and the risk is low.

**Expectation: Met**  
**Level of risk: Low**

## **The enhancement of student learning opportunities: Summary of findings**

4.9 This part of the report contains one feature of good practice and a cross-reference to a second one, which lies primarily in Part B. The good practice relates to the University's comprehensive approach to employability, as reflected in its successful integration and enhancement of academic teaching, careers support and advice, and placement learning.

4.10 The enhancement of student learning opportunities is central to the University's structure, purpose and ethos. Its Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy provides a clear direction for the delivery of enhanced academic provision, including providing a personalised student experience, interactive and inclusive learning opportunities, opportunities for the development of student skills and attributes, a programme of professional development for staff, and an approach based on graduates achieving cultural agility and flexibility.

4.11 The University's approach to enhancement is commended.

## Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. Definitions of key operational terms are also given on pages 30 to 33 of the [Higher Education Review handbook](#).

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality: [www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality).

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **Glossary** on the QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Pages/GlossaryEN.aspx).

### Academic standards

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

### Award

A qualification, or academic credit, conferred in formal recognition that a student has achieved the intended **learning outcomes** and passed the assessments required to meet the academic standards set for a **programme** or unit of study.

### Blended learning

Learning delivered by a number of different methods, usually including face-to-face and e-learning (see **technology enhanced or enabled learning**).

### Credit(s)

A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education **programmes of study**, expressed as numbers of credits at a specific level.

### Degree-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).

### Distance learning

A course of study that does not involve face-to-face contact between students and tutors but instead uses technology such as the internet, intranets, broadcast media, CD-ROM and video, or traditional methods of correspondence - learning 'at a distance'.

See also **blended learning**.

### Dual award or double award

The granting of separate awards (and certificates) for the same **programme** by two **degree-awarding bodies** who have jointly delivered the programme of study leading to them. See also **multiple award**.

### e-learning

See technology enhanced or enabled learning.

### **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 our review processes.

### **Expectations**

Statements in the **Quality Code** that set out what all UK higher education providers expect of themselves and each other, and what the general public can therefore expect of them.

### **Flexible and distributed learning**

A programme or module that does not require the student to attend classes or events at particular times and locations.

See also **distance learning**.

### **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: *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FQHEIS).

### **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 audit and review processes.

### **Learning opportunities**

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

### **Learning outcomes**

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

### **Multiple awards**

An arrangement where three or more **degree-awarding bodies** together provide a single jointly delivered **programme** (or programmes) leading to a separate **award** (and separate certification) of each awarding body. The arrangement is the same as for **dual/double awards**, but with three or more awarding bodies being involved.

### **Operational definition**

A formal definition of a term, establishing 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.

### **Public information**

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

### **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.

### **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.

### **Technology enhanced or enabled learning (or e-learning)**

Learning that is delivered or supported through the use of technology.

### **Threshold academic standard**

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** and **Subject Benchmark Statements**.

### **Virtual learning environment (VLE)**

An intranet or password-only interactive website (also referred to as a platform or user interface) giving access to **learning opportunities** electronically. These might include such resources as course handbooks, information and reading lists; blogs, message boards and forums; recorded lectures; and/or facilities for online seminars (webinars).

### **Widening participation**

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

## **QAA1805 - R5095 - Jan 17**

© The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2017  
Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB  
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

Tel: 01452 557 050  
Website: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)