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

Nova Centric Ltd t/a Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies

December 2013

Contents

Key findings about Nova Centric Ltd t/a Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies

As a result of its Review for Specific Course Designation carried out in December 2013 the QAA review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of De Montfort University and Nottingham Trent University.

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 these awarding bodies.

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**:

- active engagement with local creative industries to enhance student learning opportunities (paragraphs 2.5 and 2.12)
- the use of Industry Week in supporting staff development and underpinning student learning (paragraphs 2.6 and 2.13)
- the systematic process for the renewal of technical resources (paragraph 2.15).

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:

- ensure detailed recording of discussions, decisions and actions at institutional-level meetings (paragraphs 1.5 and 3.9)
- review its institutional-level deliberative structures to ensure appropriate student representation (paragraph 1.6).

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

- continue developing and documenting its own policies and procedures (paragraph 2.4)
- Implement formal training of student representatives in line with *Chapter B5: Student engagement* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 2.8).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Specific Course Designation](#)[1] conducted by [QAA](#) at Nova Centric Ltd t/a Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies (the Institute), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the Institute 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 Institute delivers on behalf of De Montfort University and Nottingham Trent University. The review was carried out by Dr Glenn Barr, Ms Erika Beumer, Miss Elizabeth Dobson-Mckittrick (reviewers) and Ms Ruth Stoker (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the Institute and in accordance with the [*Review for Educational Oversight (and for specific course designation): Handbook, April 2013*](#)[2] Evidence in support of the review included minutes of meetings; external examiner reports; meetings with staff, students and employers; examples of student work; student handbooks; programme and module evaluations; and a student video submission.

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

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code)
- the regulations of its awarding bodies.

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

Nova Centric Ltd t/a Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies is part of the Confetti Media Group based in Nottingham. It was launched in 1994 and works with around 1,300 full-time students, including more than 300 on higher education programmes, delivering vocational education and training in music technology, television and film production, and games production at a single site in the city centre. It is based in a complex owned by the Confetti Media Group which also houses the group's commercial media and external business tenants, including specialist film and audio post-production, games development, record label and artist management, and related creative industries businesses. The Institute integrates with the group's companies, where the associated organisations offer work-based learning opportunities and specialist tuition to higher education students within the business complex. The Institute is part of a consortium that successfully bid to hold a public service broadcasting licence to run Notts TV, a community television station which will begin broadcasting in April 2014.

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

De Montfort University

- FdSc Games Technology (75)
- FdSc Music Technology (97)
- FdSc TV and Film Production Technology (57)
- Two modules at levels 4 and 5, and one optional module at level 6 as part of a BSc Audio and Recording Technology (66)

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[1] www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

Nottingham Trent University

- One level 4 module as part of FdA Media Creatives (18)

The Institute's stated responsibilities

The strategic development of higher education is the responsibility of the Institute, which also takes responsibility for setting and marking assessments, feedback to students, academic tutorials, staff development and employer liaison. Responsibility for matters relating to curriculum development, programme specifications, moderating student work, student recruitment and retention, annual monitoring processes, learning resources and information about learning opportunities are shared with the awarding bodies.

Recent developments

The Institute is in the process of applying to the Higher Education Funding Council for England for Specific Course Designation to become a recognised alternative provider of higher education programmes.

Students' contribution to the review

Students on all higher education programmes at the Institute were invited to present a submission to the review team, and student representatives coordinated the production of a video which addressed key aspects of the student experience with the Institute. Student representatives from each programme and level of study met the review coordinator at the preparatory meeting, and also met reviewers during the review visit where they took part in full and frank discussions. Both the video submission and the meetings provided valuable input into the review.

Detailed findings about Nova Centric Ltd t/a Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies

1   Academic standards

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

1.1   The management of academic standards, which is a shared responsibility between the Institute and its awarding bodies, is effective, and the role of each partner, as set out in collaborative agreements with both De Montfort University and Nottingham Trent University, is clearly understood.

1.2   The relationship with De Montfort University is established and works well. For the science Foundation degree (FdSc) programmes and the Bachelor of Science (BSc) programme the overall responsibility for academic standards and quality of learning opportunities rests with De Montfort University. Students on FdSc programmes are entirely based at the Institute's Nottingham premises while students on the BSc Audio and Recording Technology programme work across two sites, at the Institute and at the University.

1.3   Discussions relating to academic standards and quality enhancement of De Montfort University programmes begin at module level with weekly staff meetings. These inform annual Module Evaluation Plans, which are prepared by module leaders and identify actions arising from external examiner reports, industry feedback, and student performance. The Module Evaluation Plans are used to develop Programme Enhancement Plans which the Head of Higher Education receives and incorporates into an Education Board Report for discussion at one of the Institute's internal board meetings. De Montfort University Programme Management Boards take place twice per year and are the main forum for dialogue around quality and standards. Module Evaluation Plans and Programme Enhancement Plans are scrutinised at the University's November Programme Management Board. Student feedback on programmes is gathered through questionnaires and a student forum, and is included in reports to the University's Programme Management Board at which student representatives are present.

1.4   The Institute also delivers a 10-week module in the first year of an arts Foundation Degree (FdA) Media Creatives programme on behalf of Nottingham Trent University and the roles of the Institute and the University are clearly articulated. The module is delivered at the Institute, while the remainder of the programme is delivered at the University and at New College Nottingham. Nottingham Trent University has overall responsibility for the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities of this programme and its University Academic Board has ultimate authority for all academic matters. The Institute contributes to the preparation of an annual monitoring report on the module it delivers, though responsibility for the writing of the report lies with the University. Student feedback on this module is gathered through questionnaires and a student forum and is reported to the course committee at the University, at which students' representatives are present.

1.5   The Institute's main deliberative forum at institutional level is the Internal Board, which is not fully effective in the oversight of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. Minutes from this meeting lack formality, are brief and do not record discussions of matters relating to quality and standards. In particular, consideration of the Education Board Report and identification of trends are not described. It is **advisable** for the

Institute to ensure detailed recording of discussions, decisions and actions at institutional-level meetings.

1.6   Students are not appropriately represented at internal institutional-level meetings in line with *Chapter B5: Student engagement* of the Quality Code. It is **advisable** for the Institute to review its institutional-level deliberative structures to ensure appropriate student representation.

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

1.7   The Institute has made effective use of a range of external reference points, including awarding body guidelines. A key part of the validation process is the production of programme specifications which show how and where a programme links to subject benchmark statements and *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). For example in the development of an FdSc in Games Technology there was clear mapping to the engineering subject benchmark statements and the FHEQ.

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

1.8   The awarding bodies are responsible for the appointment of external examiners. External examiner reports are used effectively in quality management to assure academic standards, and their comments are integrated into Module Evaluation Plans and Programme Enhancement Plans by the Institute. During the summer programme review and planning period, industry experts are actively involved in the curriculum review of each programme and the evaluation of programme materials to ensure that the provision is current and relevant to the industry.

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

2   Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1   The management and enhancement of the quality of the student learning experience and outcomes are comprehensive. Effective monitoring processes are in place to ensure that the Institute responds to the requirements of its validating universities. For programmes validated by De Montfort University, the Programme management Board, which is a University faculty board, considers matters relating to the quality of learning opportunities. External examiner reports, Module Evaluation Plans, Programme Enhancement Plans and the National Student Survey results are standing agenda items. The University board has academic and student representation, is deliberative and produces detailed minutes which allow tracking of actions.

2.2   The Institute reports through the committee processes of Nottingham Trent University on matters relating to the module delivered on the FdA Media Creatives programme.

2.3   At institutional level, an effective data management system has been developed to enhance the quality of learning opportunities by monitoring information on student attendance, punctuality, tutorials, marking and feedback. The system is unique to the Institute, and staff reported they found it very useful. The data it provides informs discussions at module, programme and institutional level, and becomes incorporated in Programme Enhancement Plans and the Education Board report.

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

2.4   There is strong and growing engagement with the Quality Code. The Institute is currently seeking Specific Course Designation and its own student allocation and is in the process of developing its own policies independently of its awarding bodies, though drawing on the De Montfort University templates as their basis. It has developed a timetable for their adoption, and those policies which have so far been completed - on admissions, careers education, information and guidance, and equal opportunities - map clearly to the precepts of the Quality Code. An institutional quality manual, incorporating the policies and their associated procedures, is under development for the forthcoming academic year. It would be **desirable** for the Institute to continue developing and documenting its own policies and procedures.

2.5   Excellent links to the creative industries allow the Institute to enhance student learning. Programme design aligns with the requirements of the *Foundation degree qualification benchmark*, involvement of employers, and the provision of work-related learning. Employers provide advice on programme content, act as visiting speakers, provide live briefs and observe assessment presentations. The Institute has links with the local Sector Skills Council and is a focus for local creative industries, through providing seminars, facilities, student volunteers for employer-led events and links to potential employers. The active engagement with local creative industries to enhance student learning opportunities is **good practice**.

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

2.6   Effective processes assure the quality of teaching and learning in accordance with awarding body requirements. The Institute has clear expectations of teachers set out in its Teaching and Learning Strategy and the Teaching Competency Framework. The recent appointment of higher education teaching and learning coaches reinforces the Strategy. Coaches encourage teachers to reflect on their management of learning in order to enhance practice. The Head of Teaching and Learning meets monthly with subject leaders to discuss good practice and areas requiring support. Well-qualified staff, experienced in their profession, employ a broad range of teaching methods. Student learning is enhanced by an extensive programme of guest lecturers, live briefs and an Industry Week. Industry Week is a notable and innovative event in the academic life of the Institute, where industry professionals discuss current issues or demonstrate latest practice for the benefit of students and staff, and is highly valued by students and industry partners. The use of Industry Week in supporting staff development and underpinning student learning, is **good practice**.

2.7   Oversight of teaching is thorough, with all staff being observed annually on a formal basis. Completed observations, conducted by the Head of Teaching and Learning, are detailed and useful, containing practical suggestions for improvement. Informal and peer observations supplement the formal process to further share good practice. Work-based learning is central to the curriculum, and practical assignments and live briefs allow students to link theory to workplace practice.

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

2.8   Significant monitoring of student opinion takes place. The Institute seeks student views on the induction programme, after each module, at twice yearly forums and through the National Student Survey. Students have an opportunity to feed back on their experience at programme evaluation sessions, culminating in a report that identifies actions for improvement. Student surveys and students who met the team show a high degree of satisfaction with teaching and the variety of methods employed by staff. Responses to student requests are prompt, for example providing increased access to rooms, extra sessions and improved wireless internet access. Elected student representatives attend the De Montfort University Programme Management Board. Student representatives report to peers through seminar sessions. The Institute feeds back through 'you said we did' posters and on the virtual learning environment. Student representatives meet and sit on the De Montfort University Management Board, but do not attend the Institute's committees. Preparation of student representatives is informal. However, there is a plan to introduce formal training in line with the Expectations of *Chapter B5: Student engagement* of the Quality Code. It would be **desirable** for the Institute to implement the formal training of student representatives in line with *Chapter B5: Student engagement* of the Quality Code.

2.9   Preparation for study at the Institute is thorough. Masterclasses, Showcase and Industry Week are open to students holding offers of a place. A detailed student induction programme includes programme and module learning outcomes, the assessment timetable and inputs on study skills and awarding body regulations. Students confirmed the effectiveness of induction arrangements. Admission and induction processes are clearly articulated and reviewed using student feedback data to secure improvements.

2.10   The minimum entitlement to a tutorial is one per term, with requests for additional tutorials met promptly. A bespoke student data management system tracks and supports students throughout their programme. It provides up to date information about a wide range of indicators, and tutorial records, generated through the system, provide detailed feedback to students on their performance. A learning support team assists students with declared support needs and offers scheduled drop-in sessions for all students. A recently introduced early warning system allows tutors to identify students who may need support from the team. Learning support tutors with specific skills now support all three curriculum areas, for example working alongside students in recording studios or assisting them with television production technology. Students confirmed they feel well supported.

2.11   Processes supporting students through assessment are robust. Assignment briefs are clear, with practical tasks related to intended learning outcomes. Briefs include the awarding bodies' generic grading criteria. Students, staff and an examination of written work provide examples of the comprehensive use of formative feedback. Annotated assignments with supportive feedback demonstrate a clear focus on linking theory to practice. External examiners identify a variety of assessment types, comprehensive feedback, well-supported students and a high level of academic enquiry.

2.12   Successful measures to encourage and reward high student involvement and achievement are in operation. A student mentoring scheme in the music technology area has students mentoring those at lower levels. This helps develop skills and knowledge beneficial to both mentor and mentee and the Institute intends to extend it to all programmes in the next academic year. Training and a mentoring handbook supports students taking part in this scheme. Student ambassadors represent the Institute at external events and help students link to the awarding bodies' students' unions. A student of the year scheme offers a paid internship with a partner employer for the successful candidate. Support available to students on progression to employment or further study is integral to the programme. Live briefs provide a constant employment focus to assessment, and modules studied develop

employability skills. Employers who met the review team confirmed that students have excellent skills and attitudes to prepare them for employment.

How effectively does the Institute develop its staff in order to improve student learning opportunities?

2.13   Extensive processes support staff development. Detailed procedures for managing staff are set out in the Employee Handbook. Staff appointed to the Institute are expected to have a relevant qualification, professional experience and appropriate teaching qualifications. Mentoring and induction of new staff is thorough. Criteria for the appointment of staff to teach on awarding body programmes are set out in the collaborative agreement. Many staff maintain the currency of their professional skills through freelance work. Some staff have higher academic qualifications and publications while others are studying for higher qualifications, and most staff have teaching qualifications or are working towards them. Staff conferences held twice a year and the Industry Week both contribute to updating and sharing good practice. The Institute does not have an explicit programme of academic research and scholarly activity, but it has a strong commitment to the professional development of staff. A newly introduced scheme for the annual performance review of full-time staff clarifies training and development priorities. Analysis of observation and appraisal reports informs staff development processes and the sharing of good practice.

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

2.14   High quality facilities and resources support student learning. Up to date, industry-standard equipment is available for sound recording, video production and games development. A well-used online booking system provides students with easy access to facilities up to midnight. Library facilities received a relatively low score in the National Student Survey. However, the library contains core reading materials and a wide range of electronic learning resources are available through the awarding bodies. Students who met the team were satisfied that they could access sufficient resources, either through the Institute or awarding body libraries. The virtual learning environment is effective as an interactive learning tool as well as a means of communication and repository for information.

2.15   A thorough process of procurement and renewal provides excellent technical resources to support student learning. The Institute reviews and renews its resources annually with input from external industrial partners. The wider infrastructure of the parent group of companies supports the process with expertise from specialist areas. Module and programme reviews identify resource needs. Analysis of usage and fault logging statistics, student requests and employer suggestions also inform the resource improvement process. The systematic process for renewal of technical resources is **good practice**.

The review team has **confidence** that the Institute 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 Institute communicate information about learning opportunities to students and other stakeholders?

3.1   The Institute has an extensive range of published information for students available in printed and electronic formats. There is a website which holds up to date information about the Institute, a Higher Education Prospectus, course information, leaflets on Industry Week and guidance and information aimed at parents. There is a newsletter which is made available to all students and stakeholders, and a Student Charter. However, information about the Institute's library is not made available to prospective students. The Institute's website holds the most up to date information about its programmes, but this is not consistently signposted in printed material. The website clearly articulates essential information for prospective students in alignment with *Part C: Information about higher education provision* of the Quality Code. However, information on Student Union arrangements is not available on the website though it is present in printed format. Students found the range of publications and online information useful. They also stated that the programmes were what they expected from the published information and as described at open days.

3.2   On enrolment, students on De Montfort University programmes are provided with a comprehensive induction pack from the Institute and the University, which includes key information in printed format. They have access to the University's virtual learning environment which is the main portal through which current students receive information. It is populated by both the University and the Institute and includes a Higher Education Student Handbook, module handbooks, external examiner reports, regulations and policies, information on libraries at the awarding bodies, the Student Charter, and current course materials. Students found it useful and up to date, with all the relevant information and resources they needed.

3.3   Nottingham Trent University is solely responsible for information on the module delivered at the Institute from its FdA Media Creatives programme. Information about this module available on the Nottingham Trent University virtual learning environment is controlled by the University and students access this through the University's portal.

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

3.4   Responsibility for marketing and student recruitment is well understood. For De Montfort University's foundation degree programmes, the Institute shares responsibility for marketing and recruitment, but the marketing and recruitment to the BSc Audio and Recording Technology is solely the responsibility of the University. A clear flow chart for designing, checking and approving marketing information also includes consideration of equality and diversity. The Institute's Managing Director is responsible for the final approval of internal marketing information. De Montfort University requires any publications that refer to one of their programmes or the University to be approved by its External Relations Department or Faculty Marketing Manager.

3.5   The Institute routinely checks its website to ensure information is complete, accurate and up to date. The virtual learning environment used by students on De Montfort University programmes is audited by programme leaders to ensure it complies with the minimum expectations set by the University.

3.6   There is a comprehensive system in place to check module information for De Montfort University programmes. Programme leaders audit module handbooks annually by following a checklist provided by the University. The final versions of the module handbooks and Higher Education Handbook are approved by the University before being given to students.

3.7   The checking of programme information and the virtual learning environment used by students on the Nottingham Trent University module is the responsibility of the University, and the Institute has no role in this process.

3.8   Marketing focus groups, induction surveys and the higher education forums allow students to give feedback on the information they receive about learning opportunities. Exit interviews and Industry Week 'debrief' meetings are also used to evaluate information about learning opportunities.

3.9   Updates on marketing are incorporated in the Education Board report which goes to the Internal Board, though minutes of this meeting give no indication that matters relating to marketing were discussed.

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

Action plan[3]

Nova Centric Ltd t/a Confetti Institute of Creative Technologies action plan relating to the Review for Specific Course Designation December 2013						
Good practice	**Intended outcomes**	**Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes**	**Target date(s)**	**Action by**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation (process or evidence)**
The review team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the Institute:						
• active engagement with local creative industries to enhance student learning opportunities (paragraphs 2.5 and 2.12)	Increased number and range of local businesses engaging with the Institute

Formal Industry Panel consults with the Institute on curriculum | Review current employer engagement, highlight areas for development and engage with new employers

Arrange schedule for panel meetings - annual panel per subject area

Identify membership and send invites

Agree scope and guidelines for how the panel engages with course materials | June 2014

July 2014, and then once every year | Subject leaders

Head of Higher Education | Head of Higher Education

Managing Director | Industry log and database of business links

Meeting minutes

Scope and guideline documentation |

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[3] The Institute 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 Institute's awarding bodies.

• the use of Industry Week in supporting staff development and underpinning student learning (paragraphs 2.6 and 2.13)	Strong link between Employability Week and the Institute's Industry Week	Alignment of Employability Week with Industry Week 2014, to enhance student experience Develop Employability Week to ensure relevancy, based on student feedback Formulate clear marketing to enhance the distinctiveness of both events Implement student survey to highlight learning and career development as a result of Industry Week	April 2014	Head of Higher Education	Managing Director	Staff and student feedback
	Formalised log of staff development undertaken during Industry Week	Develop a staff development log to track engagement with Industry Week seminars	May 2014	Head of Higher Education and Human Resources Manager	Managing Director	Tutor continuing professional development logs Appraisal documentation Staff feedback
• the systematic process for the renewal of technical resources (paragraph 2.15).	Renewal process is shared across the wider Confetti Media Group	Plan and implement process for 2014-15 with detailed tracking	October 2014	Head of IT/ Technical/ Research and Development	Managing Director	Industry Panel, Staff and student feedback

Advisable	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The team considers that it is **advisable** for the Institute to:						
• ensure detailed recording of discussions, decisions and actions at institutional-level meetings (paragraphs 1.5 and 3.9)	Robust minuting and tracking processes for institutional-level meetings show that all action points are tracked until completed and closed	Develop institution-wide agenda and minuting template Assign formal minute-taking responsibilities for meetings and committees Implement system of recording and tracking all actions and outcomes Develop secure intranet location for minutes	May 2014	Head of Higher Education	Confetti Media Group Management Team	Organised secure storage location for minutes Completion of tracked actions
• review its institutional-level deliberative structures to ensure appropriate student representation (paragraph 1.6).	Effective deliberative structures in place Student representation at key meetings	Create terms of reference for each meeting, including Student Ambassador input and review annually Define standing items for each meeting and review annually Review and disseminate deliberative structure across the Institute to ensure clarity	May 2014	Senior Education Team	Confetti Management Group Management Team	Track of complete and closed agenda items Student feedback Updated meeting structure documentation

Desirable	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date/s	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The team considers that it is **desirable** for the Institute to:						
• continue developing and documenting its own policies and procedures (paragraph 2.4)	Complete range of policies and procedures, as planned, to reflect QAA Quality Code recommendations, available on intranet	Schedule of policy development, reviewed annually Add standing item to key oversight meetings to review new and updated policies	January - October 2014, monthly	Senior Education Team	Confetti Management Group Management Team Partner institutions	Policies and procedures in place Tracking of sign off and review
• implement the formal training of student representatives in line with *Chapter B5: Student engagement* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 2.8).	Annual formal training for student representatives	Develop and schedule formal training for student representatives, and review annually	February 2014	Head of Higher Education	Managing Director	Training plan Feedback from student representatives Meeting minutes (student input to relevant meetings)

About QAA

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

QAA's aims are to:

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

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

More information about the work of QAA is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk.

More detail about Review for Specific Course Designation can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx.

Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary. Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the
*Review for Educational Oversight (and for specific course designation): Handbook,
April 2013*.[4]

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

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

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

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

differentiated judgements In a Review for Specific Course Designation, separate
judgements respectively for the provision validated by separate awarding bodies.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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[4] www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

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

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

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

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

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

quality See **academic quality**.

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

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

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

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

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