

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

## Royal Academy of Dance

May 2014

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## Key findings about Royal Academy of Dance

As a result of its Review for Specific Course Designation carried out in May 2014, the QAA review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the programmes it offers on behalf of the University of Surrey.

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

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

## Good practice

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

- the support for placement mentors (paragraph 2.5)
- research activity and extensive links with the dance industry, which are reflected in the programmes (paragraph 2.9).

## 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:

- map learning outcomes to marking criteria on assessment briefs (paragraph 1.7)
- develop a process to confirm the accuracy of assessment translations for distance learning students (paragraph 1.8).

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

- clarify the committee structure (paragraph 1.3)
- schedule meetings when students are able to attend (paragraph 2.2)
- formalise the procedure to ensure consistency of programme handbooks (paragraph 3.4).

## About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Specific Course Designation](#)<sup>1</sup> conducted by [QAA](#) in the Faculty of Education at the Royal Academy of Dance (the RAD), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study which are validated by the University of Surrey. The review was carried out by Mr Shahban Aziz, Dr Victoria Lindsay and Mr Dan Morgan (reviewers) and Mrs Catherine Fairhurst (Coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight \(and for specific course designation\): Handbook, April 2013](#).<sup>2</sup> Evidence in support of the review included documentation supplied by the provider and awarding body, meetings with staff and students.

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

- UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

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

The RAD is a company incorporated by Royal Statute. It was founded in 1920 as the Association of Teachers of Operatic Dancing of Great Britain. It delivered its first full-time degree programmes validated by the University of Durham in 1992. The Faculty of Education within the RAD was established in 1999 and now delivers a range of dance teacher programmes to over 1,000 students of whom 220 are registered on higher education programmes. Of these 220 students, 97 are studying by distance learning. It became an Accredited Institution of the University of Surrey in 2011 with delegated powers to validate, modify and review undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes. It is located in Battersea, South West London, with a range of facilities including library, information technology suites and performance space. There are 19 full and part-time teaching staff.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes, on behalf of the University of Surrey and with full-time student numbers in brackets:

- BA (Hons) Dance Education by distance learning (89)
- BA (Hons) Ballet Education (76)
- Master of Teaching (Dance) by distance learning (34)
- Postgraduate Certificate in Education: Dance Teaching (21)

## The provider's stated responsibilities

The management of standards and the quality of the majority of the higher education provision are set out in the Instrument of Accreditation by the University of Surrey. The RAD, through its Faculty of Education, can approve new and modify existing taught programmes leading to University of Surrey awards. The RAD is responsible for the management of standards and the monitoring of the quality of learning opportunities, subject to conditions as specified within the Instrument of Accreditation. This includes admissions, tuition and assessment.

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

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2707](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2707)

## **Recent developments**

The partnership with the University of Surrey will terminate with the last student intake in September 2014. The RAD's arrangements with a new potential validating partner are well advanced. Students currently on University of Surrey validated programmes will be given the option of transferring registration to this new potential validating partner. Appropriate arrangements are in place to facilitate this transfer

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

Students studying on higher education programmes at the RAD were invited to present a submission to the review team. They did not present a written submission but a group of students met the Coordinator at the preparatory meeting in advance of the visit. Eleven students from programmes of different levels and modes of study, including the elected student representative, participated in a meeting during the review. Their contribution was constructive and helpful.

## Detailed findings about Royal Academy of Dance

### 1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The RAD effectively fulfils its responsibilities for the management of academic standards as shown in a 2014 Institutional Review Report by the University of Surrey (Institutional Review) and the external examiners' reports. There are coherent line management structures in place. The Director of Education has ultimate responsibility for higher education within the Faculty of Education. Staff have a clear understanding of their specific roles and responsibilities.

1.2 The Education Sub-Committee, a committee of the RAD Board of Trustees, is responsible for strategic decisions relating to all education provision. The RAD is clarifying the committee structure responsible for higher education provision in response to a University of Surrey recommendation from the Institutional Review. The emerging committees do not yet have clear channels of responsibilities and communication.

1.3 The RAD effectively fulfils its responsibilities for the management of academic standards at programme level. Each programme annual review considers data relating to student enrolment progression and achievement. Programme teams consider the external examiners' reports and develop robust action plans. There is no institutional monitoring to ensure consistency of decisions at cross-programme level, for example, decisions regarding extenuating circumstances are dealt with at programme level. It would be **desirable** for the RAD to clarify the committee structure responsible for higher education provision in order to identify cross-programme issues and to share best practice.

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

1.4 The RAD engages with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) through its partnership with the University of Surrey. The awards reflect *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). The subject benchmark statement on dance, drama and performance informs the academic programmes. The RAD designs and reviews the programmes which are validated by the University.

1.5 Procedures and practices are in line with the values of the Quality Code although terminology is not always used consistently across all the provision. For example, the terms for the grievance, appeals and complaints procedures in the programme handbooks are not all consistent with those in *Chapter B9: Academic appeals and student complaints* of the Quality Code.

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

1.6 The assessment procedures are fair and effective; this is confirmed by the external examiners who express satisfaction with academic standards. The RAD staff design the assessments, which are then approved by the external examiner before being issued to students.

1.7 The process for internal moderation and second marking ensures the quality of marking and feedback. Where possible, first and second markers assess students' work

anonymously. Each assessment sheet relates the assessment criteria to the percentage marks but not to the intended learning outcomes. The final mark the student receives, however, does not show the marks awarded for each criterion. It is **advisable** that the RAD revise assessment briefs and feedback sheets to more clearly map learning outcomes and awarded marks against assessment criteria.

1.8 Students on the Master of Teaching (Dance) programme are able to conduct practical assessments such as teaching practice in languages other than English. Students occasionally translate their own work and a member of the RAD staff checks the accuracy of the translation. There is no formal process in place to ensure that the translation is accurate on the video recording. It is not clear how these translations are externally examined. It is therefore **advisable** that the RAD develops a process to confirm the accuracy of assessment translations for distance-learning students.

1.9 The RAD is found to be largely effective in managing its responsibilities for delivering academic standards. There are coherent line management structures in place, although emerging committees do not yet have clear channels of responsibilities and communication. The mechanisms for the management of its higher education programmes are sound at programme level but the assessment sheets received by the students need more detail. The assessment procedures are fair and effective except for practical teaching assessments which are sometimes conducted in languages other than English and translated, which require a mechanism to confirm accuracy of these assessment translations.

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

## 2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 The procedures for the management of academic standards described in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.3 also apply to the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities. Programme teams effectively monitor the quality of learning opportunities using data from the annual programme reviews, including external examiners' reports and student feedback.

2.2 Students have a variety of formal and informal opportunities to comment on their learning opportunities. There are module and programme evaluation surveys, regular informal meetings with the Director of Education and students report good access to tutors with regular tutorials. Students have representation on the current RAD committees but often find it difficult to attend or submit papers because of their other commitments. It would be **desirable** for RAD to schedule meetings when students are able to attend.

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

2.3 Paragraph 1.4 identifies how the RAD effectively engages with the Quality Code and the awarding body. This also applies to the management and enhancement of learning opportunities. Staff engage with other external reference points through familiarity with the requirements of the awarding body and their extensive membership of the dance sector professional bodies and committees.

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

2.4 The RAD assures itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced through various methods. These include external examiners' reports, the annual programme reviews, peer observation and student feedback. This is supported by the Learning and Teaching Strategy and a recently appointed Head of Learning and Teaching. Staff identify and disseminate good practice in teaching and learning by team teaching, staff training days, lunchtime gatherings, external examining and external review activities. Students report that they are very satisfied with the quality and variety of teaching.

2.5 Students on the BA (Hons) Ballet Education programme undertake a supervised professional placement of practical teaching. The Placement Officer manages these professional placements and the RAD contracts placement providers to appoint mentors to support each student on their placement. The RAD invites placement providers to a support day at the beginning of each academic year and provides them with a Placement Handbook. The mentors have regular documented meetings with RAD tutors. The support given by the RAD to professional placement mentors is **good practice**.

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

2.6 The RAD assures itself that students are supported effectively by regularly reviewing its policies and procedures governing support and guidance. The Student Support and Guidance Policy describes precepts and procedures. The Student Support Officer submits a report to programme meetings on the progression of students requiring support. Students are introduced to the availability of support at induction. Student support services and advice on additional learning are fully detailed on the website.

2.7 The RAD has well-established and effective systems to support students. Formal and informal support is provided by the Student Support Officer, programme managers, level coordinators and module tutors. The RAD allocates a regular core study day for students undertaking supervised professional placements. A Study Skills Officer supports the development of academic skills. All teaching material is available electronically for distance-learning students. Tutors conduct tutorials by email and by voice over internet protocol (VoIP) with students studying off-site. The Institutional Review by the University of Surrey commended the RAD on the provision of a supportive learning environment for students. Student surveys give high satisfaction scores for student support and the students confirm this in person.

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

2.8 The RAD has a comprehensive staff development policy which maintains and enhances the quality of learning opportunities. This policy describes clear roles and responsibilities for staff development. RAD has a staff development budget specifically for the higher education provision. New staff attend a comprehensive induction to ensure the RAD systems and processes are understood and put into operation. There are annual appraisals for staff and an active peer teaching review system, both of which help to identify development needs. Each academic staff member on a permanent contract has time allocated for staff development and research.

2.9 The Faculty of Education at the RAD has a developing but active research culture which enhances the students' learning opportunities. Academic staff are encouraged to enhance the level of their academic qualifications and to engage in research and scholarly activity by regular reviews. The results of research and scholarly activity are disseminated to

staff through regular meetings and by an online publically available publication. The 2014 Institutional Review Report by the University of Surrey commends the RAD on the development and support for research activity. Staff at the RAD serve as external examiners, external review panel members and belong to sector leading committees. The research activity together with extensive links with the dance industry, which are reflected in the programmes, is **good practice**.

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

2.10 The RAD has a range of facilities, including a library, information technology suites, studios and performance space. The RAD has a dedicated budget for the acquisition of new learning and teaching resources. Programmes and the library have devolved budgets. All staff are well qualified and experienced in dance education. They all have, or are completing, a higher degree.

2.11 The main learning resource for students studying distance-learning programmes are the online facilities but it is not an interactive virtual learning environment. The RAD recognises the need for the development of information technology through its new Technology Enhanced Learning Strategy. The RAD plans to appoint an E-Learning Development Manager to develop further the existing online and distance-learning provision. A virtual learning environment is being piloted with two modules. The students say they are satisfied with the learning resources.

2.12 The RAD is managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities effectively. There are various methods to assure the quality of teaching and learning. Support given to professional placement mentors is **good practice**. Students are supported effectively. There is a comprehensive staff development policy and developing research activity. This, together with extensive links with the dance industry, is **good practice**. Students say that learning resources are accessible and sufficient to enable them to achieve their learning outcomes.

The review team has **confidence** that the provider is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of the intended learning opportunities it provides for students.

## **3 Information about learning opportunities**

### **How effectively does the RAD communicate information about learning opportunities to students and other stakeholders?**

3.1 The RAD effectively communicates information about higher education learning opportunities to students and other stakeholders through a range of methods. These include an accurate and well-designed website containing the prospectus, programme specifications in comprehensive handbooks and an easy to navigate online resource. Some students regularly interact with fellow students and staff through the RAD online forum. Other students prefer to communicate through personal social media platforms. They say communication is more accessible through applications on their mobile phones and tablet devices. Students report that they are very satisfied with the information they receive.

3.2 All students, including those on distance-learning programmes attend an induction period. The students say the induction is intense and very helpful as it informs them about



learning opportunities. These sessions contain a variety of activities such as classes and external visits. Students complete a questionnaire to enable the RAD to improve the induction process, for example, the induction period for Master of Teaching (Dance) students has recently been extended at their request.

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

3.3 The RAD has effective arrangements for assuring that marketing, publicity and promotional material is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy. It is responsible for these arrangements and provides final copy to the University of Surrey of any publication containing details of programmes leading to the University awards. All changes relating to information about learning opportunities on the website or in the prospectus are approved by the RAD Faculty of Education's marketing manager who informs the University.

3.4 The RAD arrangements for assuring that information in programme handbooks is fit for purpose and accurate are informal. Although students indicate that they are satisfied with the detail and usefulness of the information there is variation in terminology and the information is not consistent across programmes. For example there is different information regarding extenuating circumstances for assessment. There is no formal editorial procedure to track amendments or any version control system to manage documents consistently. It would be **desirable** for the RAD to formalise the procedure to deliver consistency in programme handbooks and aid the management of information about learning opportunities.

3.5 The RAD effectively communicates information about higher education learning opportunities to students and other stakeholders through a range of methods, although the students do not use the student forum consistently. Arrangements to assure that marketing, publicity and promotional material is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy are effective. The RAD's arrangements for assuring that information in programme handbooks is fit for purpose and accurate are informal with variation in terminology, although students indicate that they are satisfied with the detail.

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

## Action plan<sup>3</sup>

Royal Academy of Dance action plan relating to the Review of Specific Course Designation May 2014						
Good practice	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The review team identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the RAD:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the support for placement mentors (paragraph 2.5)</li> </ul>	<p>To maintain and develop current practices to ensure that teaching placement mentors have knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities</p> <p>These practices are monitored annually to ensure that the needs of all stakeholders are met</p>	<p>Continue to collate mentor feedback, and review such feedback at appropriate committee meetings and Annual Programme reviews</p> <p>Annual review of teaching placement mentor training days so that issues identified by the Faculty of Education or mentors are discussed and where appropriate incorporated into training days</p>	<p>July 2014</p> <p>July 2014 for implementation academic year 2014-15</p>	<p>Programme managers</p> <p>Programme managers and/or placement officers</p>	<p>Under-graduate and Postgraduate Board of Studies</p> <p>Under-graduate and Postgraduate Board of Studies</p>	<p>Annual Programme Review meetings, reports and the Annual Review Report to University of Surrey</p> <p>Annual Programme Review meetings and the Annual Review Report to University of Surrey</p>

<sup>3</sup> The RAD 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 RAD's awarding body.

		To investigate the potential for inclusion of more interactive resources to support mentors in their roles	December 2014	Head of Learning and Teaching	Undergraduate and Postgraduate Board of Studies	Annual Programme Review meetings and the Annual Review Report to University of Surrey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>research activity and extensive links with the dance industry, which are reflected in the programmes (paragraph 2.9).</li> </ul>	Content and delivery of content across programmes reflect current ideas in dance and education	Setting of research targets for individual tutors to indicate how research will inform own practice as well as delivery of programmes of study and programme development	September 2014	Dean/Head of Research	Director of Education	Annual appraisals
<b>Advisable</b>	<b>Intended outcomes</b>	<b>Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes</b>	<b>Target date(s)</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation (process or evidence)</b>
The team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the RAD to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>map learning outcomes to marking criteria on assessment briefs (paragraph 1.7)</li> </ul>	Greater clarity for students in how learning outcomes are assessed summatively	Further information to be added to the assessment criteria information in assessment and examination booklets for each assessment to indicate where learning outcomes will be assessed	September 2014	Head of Learning and Teaching	Learning and Teaching Committee	Revision to assessment criteria as provided in assessment and examination booklets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop a process to</li> </ul>	Assurance that translations are accurate	Devise policy and procedures for verifying	October 2014	Head of Quality	Policy and Strategy	Policy and procedures

	confirm the accuracy of assessment translations for distance-learning students (paragraph 1.8).	and that students are clear on the requirements of translating all verbal communication in assessed teaching episodes where the language of delivery is not English	the accuracy of translated transcripts for assessed teaching episodes which are not delivered in English		Assurance	Committee	pertaining to translation of assessed teaching episodes delivered in languages other than English  Process to be reviewed at Master of Teaching (Dance) Annual Programme Review
	<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Intended outcomes</b>	<b>Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes</b>	<b>Target date/s</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation (process or evidence)</b>
	The team considers that it would be <b>desirable</b> for the RAD to:						
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>clarify the committee structure (paragraph 1.3)</li> </ul>	Clear and transparent terms of reference and standing orders that indicate lines of reporting and responsibilities	<p>Review and where appropriate revise current terms of reference and standing orders for each Faculty of Education committee</p> <p>Revise the current organogram to clarify the flow of information and areas of responsibility</p>	September 2014	Head of Quality Assurance	<p>Policy and Strategy Committee</p> <p>Education Sub-Committee</p>	<p>Revision where appropriate of terms of reference and standing orders</p> <p>A chart clearly showing lines of reporting</p>

		Show clear channels of responsibilities and communication for the committees to allow for sharing of best practice across programmes and discussion of cross-programme issues				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• schedule meetings when students are able to attend (paragraph 2.2)</li> </ul>	Increased attendance by student representatives at programme and committee meetings so that student views can be presented by student representatives in person	Survey student representatives requesting their views on when programme/committee meetings might be scheduled to increase attendance	September 2014	Head of Learning and Teaching	<p>Programme meetings</p> <p>Policy and Strategy Committee</p> <p>Education Sub-Committee</p>	<p>Audit trail of student consultation</p> <p>Guidelines and procedures for student representation</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• formalise the procedure to ensure consistency of programme handbooks (paragraph 3.4).</li> </ul>	Programme handbooks which adhere to the University of Surrey's template with clear and consistent information across all programmes of study	<p>Review current format and make revisions as appropriate</p> <p>Devise a style guide for staff to follow</p> <p>To put in place a signing off pro forma for the annual update of programme handbooks which indicates where updates/additions have been made</p>	From August 2014, with annual review every subsequent August	Dean/Quality Assurance Manager	Learning and Teaching Committee	<p>Style guide</p> <p>Signing off sheets</p>

## About QAA

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

QAA's aims are to:

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

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

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

More detail about Review of Specific Course Designation can be found at: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/RSCD.aspx>.

## Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary>. Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the *Review for Specific Course Designation: Handbook, May 2014*.<sup>4</sup>

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

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

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

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

**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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<sup>4</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2707](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2707)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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