**UK Vocational Training College Ltd
t/a UK College of Arts and Technology**

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

June 2014

# Key findings about UK Vocational Training College Ltd t/a UK College of Arts and Technology

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

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

The team considers that reliance **can** 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 College's framework for academic and personal support (paragraph 2.7).

## 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:

- clarify the roles and responsibilities of all management posts (paragraph 1.1)
- refine the academic committees' processes (paragraph 1.2)
- make greater practical use of and engage staff further in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 2.3)
- include student representation on College committees (paragraph 2.6).

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

- review College policies regularly to ensure their currency (paragraph 2.2)
- identify and disseminate good practice in learning and teaching more systematically (paragraph 2.4)
- develop formal procedures for monitoring and updating the virtual learning environment and the website (paragraph 3.4).

# About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)[1] (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at UK Vocational Training College Ltd t/a UK College of Arts and Technology (the College), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the provider discharges its stated responsibilities for the management and delivery of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities available to students. The review applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of ATHE Ltd. The review was carried out by Mr David Jones, Ms Ann Kettle, Professor Donald Pennington (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: Handbook](#)*.[2] Evidence in support of the review included documentation supplied by the College and the awarding organisation, meetings with staff and students, and the report of the review by the Independent School Inspectorate.

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

- the guidelines provided by the awarding organisation
- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code).

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

The College was established in 1996 and originally provided a range of learning programmes to local residents. In 2003 it expanded to provide English and ICT programmes for international students. It currently specialises in higher education business management courses. It is located in the Levenshulme area of south Manchester. There are four managers and administrators, including the Principal, and four part-time teaching staff. There are 155 students across four programmes.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath their awarding organisation and with full-time student numbers in brackets:

**ATHE Ltd**

- Diploma in Management level 4 (10)
- Diploma in Management level 5 (62)
- Diploma in Management level 6 (60)
- Diploma in Strategic Management level 7 (23)

## The provider's stated responsibilities

The College delivers the programmes according to the programme specifications, syllabus, and assessment regulations produced by the awarding organisation. Although it makes no contribution to the curriculum design, the College is responsible for the content of units and the learning and teaching methods. The teaching staff provide formative assessment by setting, marking and giving feedback on assignments. Assignments for summative assessment are provided by ATHE Ltd, assessed by the College and moderated by ATHE Ltd.

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[1] [www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx)
[2] [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2669](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2669)

## Recent developments

The College has plans for expansion by developing programmes with UK universities.

## Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on the higher education programmes were invited to present a submission to the review team. Students on the programmes met to discuss their views and produced a video recording of the meeting. This recording was available to the reviewers. A group of students met the Coordinator at the preparatory meeting in advance of the visit. Students from programmes of different levels participated in a meeting during the review. Their contribution was constructive and helpful.

# Detailed findings about UK Vocational Training College Ltd t/a UK College of Arts and Technology

## 1        Academic standards

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

1.1        The recently revised College management structure is appropriate for the current higher education provision offered by the College. The Principal is responsible for the management of academic standards assisted by a team of four managers who meet formally and informally. Although currently effective because of the small higher education provision, the new structure is not yet embedded and does not show a clear separation of management duties. This is demonstrated by posts with inconsistent titles and a confusing organisation chart. It is **advisable** that the College clarifies the roles and responsibilities of all management posts as it continues to embed the quality framework.

1.2        The College has recently created an academic committee structure, for the oversight of academic standards and the quality of student learning experience. The Advisory Board, Academic Board, Awarding Body Standards Group and the Qualifications Assessment Group all have a planned annual meeting cycle. The Academic Board and the Qualifications Assessment Group are the only two committees to have met so far. The agendas of these committees do not reflect their key responsibilities, the minutes are brief and action plans have not been developed to monitor progress. It is **advisable** that the College refines the academic committee processes to clearly define their functions and fully record the discussions and actions. This will enable the management team to monitor academic standards more effectively.

1.3        The College is managing student achievement effectively by using data of enrolments, progression, withdrawals, referrals and achievement. A Development Plan focuses on recruitment, retention and the learning experience. Tutors use tracking sheets to monitor student progress and the Academic Manager monitors the achievement of students by tutor, programme and level. There is an annual programme review process with a report and subsequent action plan.

1.4        There is a robust enrolment process and monitoring policy. This states the criteria for acceptance by qualification level and English language ability. The College requires applicants to submit a personal statement to test their motivation. Current students confirm that they produced original documents and had a long interview either in person or by voice over internet protocol.

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

1.5        ATHE Ltd is responsible for ensuring that its processes and procedures take into account the key external reference points, including *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ). Its higher education awards align with the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). ATHE Ltd is also responsible for the implementation of sections of the Quality Code related to managing the standards of the subject and qualification, the programme approval processes and assessment of the learning outcomes. The College engages effectively and fully with the requirements of ATHE Ltd, as confirmed by the external verifier's report.

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

1.6    The College uses internal and external verification to manage and monitor student assessment. ATHE Ltd designs and produces the assignments for student assessment. These are marked internally by College staff and externally moderated by ATHE Ltd. The external verifier report recommends areas for improvement, which are entered into an action plan to monitor progress.

1.7    The College's internal verification procedure operates appropriately. The College has an annually reviewed Internal Verification Policy. The ATHE Ltd external verifier report confirms that there is good practice in internal assessment and the judgements are sound. All members of teaching staff act as internal verifiers, although they are not formally trained. Current students have not yet undertaken any final summative assessment, but report that they are very satisfied with the timeliness and quality of feedback on formative assessment. The College's previous awarding organisations report that the College has effectively used the internal verification system for the management of academic standards.

1.8    In summary the College manages its responsibilities for delivering academic standards effectively. The management and committees structures have recently been developed and academic standards are potentially at risk if the management responsibilities are not clarified Academic standards can be further secured if the College refines the academic committee processes.

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

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## 2    Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1    The College has effective systems in place to fulfill its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. The processes reflect those for managing academic standards, as described in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2.

2.2    The Quality Assurance Policy (QAP), with an associated Quality Calendar and a Curriculum Policy, contributes to the effective management of learning opportunities. The Curriculum Policy identifies the College curriculum, the initial assessment process, criteria for good teaching and learning, and the curriculum development and review cycle. These policies are effective but some of the details require updating, for example, the Learner Voice Forum in the QAP. It would be **desirable** for the College to review these policies regularly to ensure their currency.

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

2.3    The College's use of external reference points are as described in paragraph 1.5. The College has provided staff with guidance on the use of subject benchmark statements and is mapping the indicators of *Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality* of the Quality Code to the College's quality procedures. It is not yet clear how this is informing practice or informing the quality processes, particularly the Quality Assurance Policy. It is

**advisable** for the College to make greater practical use of the Quality Code in developing its quality assurance policies and further engage staff to enhance learning opportunities.

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

2.4      The College has effective and well developed procedures to assure itself that the quality of teaching and learning is being maintained and enhanced. Managers regularly audit tutor files containing schemes of work, lesson plans and individual learning plans. An external consultant carries out annual observations of teaching and learning and grades the teaching. The Academic Manager monitors an action plan linked to areas of improvement. There is also informal peer review of teaching. There are regular informal meetings of tutors to discuss different approaches to teaching. It would be **desirable** for the College to use teaching observations, staff appraisals and teaching staff meetings to disseminate good practice in learning and teaching more systematically.

2.5      Tutors collect and report student views of teaching and learning to the Academic Manager. The analysis of these views informs improvements as part of an annual review process. Posters inform the students of the management response to their feedback. The students say they are satisfied that the managers listen to them and that the College is responsive to their views.

2.6      The College is reviewing the student representative system. Students from each programme elect representatives, or 'leaders', who have meetings with each other and informally with the management team to discuss improvements. Students are not yet formally represented on College committees. It is **advisable** that the College proceed with its intention of including student representation on College management committees to formalise their participation in College quality assurance processes.

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

2.7      The College has an effective framework for the academic and personal support of its students. The Principal oversees and monitors the pastoral system and a Student Relations Manager has the operational responsibility for ensuring that student needs are being met. Each student has an individual learning plan which records their support needs after an initial assessment. They are assigned a personal tutor with whom they have four individual meetings per academic session. They are able to discuss academic progress, personal issues and review individual learning plans. The College is not equipped to meet specialised needs such as dyslexia but operates a referral system to other colleges and agencies. College staff deliver free weekly academic English support sessions and visiting speakers provide careers advice and guidance. Students say that they appreciate the support they are offered and speak highly of the accessibility of academic and management staff. The College's framework for academic and personal support is **good practice**.

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

2.8      The College provides its staff with effective continuous professional development to improve student learning opportunities and maintain the quality of teaching and learning. There is a recently produced staff development policy which defines general principles with staff entitlements and responsibilities. A staff handbook and induction session explains policies concerning teaching and learning. The staff are well qualified and an annual appraisal identifies their developmental needs. The College makes resources available to fulfil any development needs. Continuing professional development records show good staff

attendance at awarding organisation courses and in-house training sessions, for example on assessment and constructive feedback.

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

2.9     The College management keeps the provision of learning resources under continuous review. Students have access to an IT suite, a range of books and journals, and access to a commercial electronic library. In response to an external report and student feedback, the College has recently issued detailed book lists to all students, purchased limited copies of all key texts for reference in the library, improved access to the commercial e-library and assembled its own collection of e-books. The College has approached other higher education providers to explore the possibility of sharing resources and students are encouraged to join public libraries.

2.10     The College has recently developed an existing virtual learning environment (VLE) as a learning and teaching resource which includes full programme specifications, timetables, schemes of work and assessment briefs, as well as copies of lecture notes and presentations. Students say they highly appreciate the use made of the VLE by teaching staff and the ability to access the resources on it from a distance.

2.11     In summary, the College is effective in fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing quality of learning opportunities. Responsibilities and processes are appropriate. The College's framework for student support is good practice. A potential risk to the quality of learning opportunities is the lack of formal student participation in quality processes. The quality of learning opportunities could be enhanced by using teaching observations, staff appraisals and teaching staff meetings to disseminate good practice in learning and teaching.

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

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## 3     Information about learning opportunities

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

3.1     The College employs effective methods for communicating with its students and prospective applicants through a variety of media. The College has a well designed and informative website which provides users with information about the learning opportunities at the College. This includes programme outlines, details of the application process and tuition fees. The students say they found the website very useful when searching for a higher education provider. The in-depth prospective student interview by voice over internet protocol enables the College to give more detailed and meaningful initial advice and guidance at an early stage in the application procedure. The College uses social media as a publicity tool and as an effective method of facilitating informal student peer support. It distributes a small number of advertising leaflets in the local area to promote its provision.

3.2     The College gives the students a very useful Student File at an induction session. This contains the Student Handbook, detailed assessment briefs and reading lists, major policies such as academic malpractice, assessment, appeals, attendance and detailed

ATHE Ltd programme specifications. Students say they regularly consult and revise their Student Files, which they find to be easily accessible and very helpful.

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

3.3 The College's procedures for assuring that marketing information is fit for purpose are effective. The Academic Manager and the Principal discuss marketing ideas which are then implemented by the Marketing Manager and signed off by the Principal. The Marketing Manager checks the website on a daily basis together with college-specific information contained in the social media feeds.

3.4 The College assures that information on the VLE is accessible by arrangements that are currently effective but largely informal. The Academic Manager approves all the materials that are uploaded onto the VLE. He also checks the site to ensure each programme meets minimum standards of the availability of lesson plans, schemes of work, assignments and lecture notes. However, in recognition of the College's increasing use of the VLE it would be **desirable** for the College to develop formal procedures for monitoring and updating the VLE and the website.

3.5 The College has reviewed the use of agents who engage with potential international student applicants. This is to assure that information about learning opportunities is trustworthy. It has analysed in detail student retention statistics for each agent and used this information to rationalise agent activity. The College has a robust system for checking and monitoring agents who are engaged on its behalf. There are stringent guidelines on protocol and ideal student profiles to ensure that agents work effectively. Clear contractual guidelines have been established to ensure that agents only produce publicity material that is approved by the College.

3.6 In summary, the information provided to stakeholders about learning opportunities is fit for purpose and accurate. The College acknowledges ownership of the information it is responsible for publishing and uses appropriate means to ensure its accuracy. The College could enhance the arrangements if it develops more formal procedures for monitoring and updating the VLE and the website.

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

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## Action plan[3]

| UK Vocational Training College Ltd t/a UK College of Arts and Technology action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight of June 2014 | | | | | | |
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| **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 College: | | | | | | |
| • the College's framework for academic and personal support (paragraph 2.7). | The College's framework for academic support is available for wider dissemination | Complete a clear description of how the College's framework for academic support works and why it has proved effective | 27 February 2015 | Principal and staff | Academic Board | Results of student feedback continues to show effective academic and personal support |
| **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 College to: | | | | | | |
| • clarify the role and responsibilities of all | All staff, students and external bodies are clear about the roles and responsibilities of all | Revise all job descriptions and management flow charts to ensure that titles and descriptions used are | 24 October 2014 | Business Development Manager | Principal | Staff demonstrate understanding of roles and |

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[3] The College has been required to develop this action plan to follow up on good practice and address any recommendations arising from the review. QAA monitors progress against the action plan, in conjunction with the College's awarding organisation.

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| management posts (paragraph 1.1) | management staff | consistent and in line with the requirements of revised structure | | | | responsibilities of all staff<br><br>Job descriptions and management structure chart are consistent |
| | | Ensure that all information published is consistent with these revised descriptions | Ongoing | Senior Management Staff | Principal | Confirmation from feedback collected twice yearly from staff and students |
| • refine the academic committee processes (paragraph 1.2) | The academic committee process works effectively to ensure that the quality of the programmes is well managed and that communication and decision-making are clear and well informed | Clear terms of reference are drawn up for each committee | 24 October 2014 | Business Development Manager | Principal | Successful implementation of formal committees and formal meeting minutes |
| | | Accurate and consistent minutes are kept of each meeting | Ongoing | Academic Manager | Principal | All committee minutes show that all action points are reported and tracked until completed and closed |
| | | The effectiveness of the academic committee process is reviewed | 16 January 2015 | Principal | Academic Board | The review report to Academic Board |
| | | Review of the effectiveness of the | Annually | Principal | Chair of External | Review report shown in minutes |

| | | academic committee structure is included in the agenda of the annual external advisory group | | | Advisory Group | of external advisors group meeting |
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| • to make greater practical use of and engage staff further in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (paragraph 2.3) | To ensure that the standards outlined in the UK Quality Code for Higher Education are effectively embedded in all aspects of the College's work | To complete staff engagement in the mapping process of current processes against the UK Quality Code for Higher Education | 21 November 2014 | Business Development Manager and all staff | Principal | Any staff training need included in appraisal reports

Appraisal reports show staff achieve targets related to use of the Quality Code

Evidence of use of the Quality Code in Quality Improvement Cycle

The College will measure its performance and it will collect feedback twice yearly from staff and students to evaluate and develop how the College is performing against key quality factors |
| | | To identify areas where development needs to take place to ensure that all of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education are embedded in the work of the College | 12 December 2014 | Business Development Manager and all staff | Principal | |
| | | To use the UK Quality Code for Higher Education as a tool in the 2014-15 Quality Improvement Cycle | 31 July 2015 | Principal and all staff | Academic Board | |

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| • include student representation on College committees (paragraph 2.6). | To ensure that students are fully involved in College developments and that decisions are informed by student feedback | Student representation processes are completed and a student representative is included in the management committee process | 21 November 2014 | Academic Manager | Principal | Minutes and attendance list of College committees<br><br>Decisions contributed to by students are included in the Self-assessment report and published in the College |
| **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 would be **desirable** for the College to: | | | | | | |
| • review College policies regularly to ensure their currency (paragraph 2.2) | The quality manual is more focused and all documents have listed editions that are consistently updated annually | Create a separate document file to remove from the current Quality Manual documents which do not directly contribute to the purposes of the Manual | 19 December 2014 | Business Development Manager | Principal | Clear, up-to-date Quality Manual<br><br>Staff are clear about the role of the Quality Manual and document file and consistently use it in their delivery<br><br>Evidence of version control and version |
| | | To ensure that all processes and procedures in the redefined Quality Manual are version listed | 19 December 2014 | Business Development Manager | Principal | |
| | | To record centrally the dates for version review | 19 December 2014 | Business Development | Principal | |

| | | | | Manager | | numbers on all policy documents<br><br>All documents in the Quality Manual to contain version number and date |
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| • identify and disseminate good practice in learning and teaching more systematically (paragraph 2.4) | Developments in the curriculum are more clearly based on identified good practice | Regular staff team meetings identify and record areas of good practice that can inform future developments | All team meetings from 26 September 2014 | Academic Manager | Principal | Minutes of staff meetings to include good practice |
| | | Areas of good practice are fixed agenda items on all academic management meetings | All Academic management meetings from 26 September 2014 | Academic Manager | Principal | Areas of good practice are identified at all academic management meetings and action is taken to ensure that they are embedded across all areas of the curriculum |
| • develop formal procedures for monitoring and updating the virtual learning environment and the website (paragraph 3.4). | Procedures for the updating and monitoring of the virtual learning environment and website are formalised so that all staff and students are clear about their roles and responsibilities | Formal procedures are written so that the roles and responsibilities of staff in the current effective processes and procedures are clearly identified and available to staff and students | 19 December 2014 | Business Development Manager | Principal | Written formal procedures<br><br>All staff are aware of their role in the updating of the virtual learning environment and website |

| | | Monitoring and review processes are more clearly identified | 19 December 2014 | Business Development Manager | Principal | Results of the monitoring and review survey of virtual learning environment and website |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | Review processes include feedback from students on the effectiveness of the procedures | Ongoing | Academic Manager | Principal | Areas of the virtual learning environment and website that the students feel are not effective will be identified through the results of the survey |

# About QAA

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

QAA's aims are to:

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

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

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

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

# Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary. Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the
*Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook*.[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 .

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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[4] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2669

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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