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

West London Vocational Training College Ltd

November 2013

Contents

Key findings about West London Vocational Training College Ltd

As a result of its adapted Review for Specific Course Designation carried out in November 2013, the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (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 Association of Accounting Technicians, ATHE (The Management Awarding Organisation) and Pearson.

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 organisations.

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 effective internal verification procedures for the Association of Accounting Technicians programmes, and the additional personalised feedback provided to students (paragraph 1.9)
- the comprehensive tailoring of the Learning Plans to reflect individual student needs (paragraph 2.4)
- the range of methods used for encouraging student feedback and the effective action taken in response to this feedback (paragraph 2.12).

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:

- introduce formal structures for meetings by implementing specific committees with clear responsibilities, membership and agendas to occur at regular intervals (paragraphs 1.2 and 2.2)
- ensure that verification processes and learning opportunities, including access to online resources, are the same for students on Pearson programmes as on other programmes (paragraphs 1.10 and 2.7)
- rewrite appraisal documentation to include staff developmental needs linked to lesson observations, and rewrite lesson observation documentation to include greater focus on the enhancement of student learning and achievement (paragraphs 2.15 and 2.16).

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

- align College policies and procedures and published information with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education to enhance academic standards and student learning opportunities (paragraphs 1.8 and 2.11)
- improve the consistency of written formative feedback to students (paragraph 2.6)
- review the accuracy of published information, including website content, to better reflect current Pearson programme delivery (paragraph 3.2).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the adapted [Review for Specific Course Designation](#)[1] conducted by [QAA](#) at West London Vocational Training College Ltd (the College) which is a privately funded provider of higher education. The purpose of the review is to provide public information about how the College 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 the Association of Accounting Technicians, ATHE (The Management Awarding Organisation) and Pearson. The review was carried out by Ms Colette Coleman and Mr Mike Coulson (reviewers) and Ms Jacqueline Young (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](#)*.[2] Evidence in support of the review included: documentation supplied by the provider, meetings with staff and students, and an Independent Schools Inspectorate 2013 report.

QAA carries out an adapted review for providers who are also reviewed by another approved body. The *[Review for Educational Oversight (and for specific course designation): Handbook, April 2013](#)* provides further details.

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

- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- the Qualifications and Credit Framework
- standards and programme guidance from the Association of Accounting Technicians, ATHE (The Management Awarding Organisation) and Pearson.

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

West London Vocational Training College Ltd was established in 2006. Its main teaching rooms and facilities are located in a modern building in west London but it also has a study centre in Bow, east London, which opened in March 2013. The College aims to provide high quality teaching and learning to enable its students to find suitable employment and meet their personal job goals. The programmes it offers include certificated programmes in accounting, management, information technology and business administration. It also provides apprenticeship and workplace learning programmes, which are delivered for a publicly funded further education college and a private institution, as a subcontractor. The College provides employment support to its students, including information, advice and guidance, curriculum vitae development, development of job search skills and preparation for interviews.

The College is a private limited company which is owned by the Principal and Centre Coordinator. A total of 122 students were enrolled at the time of the review. However, the scope of this review focused on the 19 students enrolled on the Association of Accounting Technicians and Pearson level 4 programmes. The ATHE (The Management Awarding Organisation) programmes had not recruited at the time of the review and the other programmes at levels 2 and 3 were outside of the review's scope. The age range of students

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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](#)

is between 18 and 50. Students are mainly of UK and European nationality and there are similar numbers of male and female students.

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

Association of Accounting Technicians
- Advanced Diploma in Accounting (level 4)

Pearson
- Higher National Certificate (HNC) (level 4) and Higher National Diploma (HND) (level 5) in Business

ATHE (The Management Awarding Organisation)
- ATHE Management Diploma (level 4)
- ATHE Extended Diploma in Management (level 5)
- ATHE Diploma in Strategic Management (level 7)

The College's stated responsibilities

The College is responsible for: student recruitment and selection; monitoring of admission, retention and completion; developing staff teaching and assessment skills, staff subject updating and scholarship; student admission, guidance and induction; review monitoring and academic guidance; library and learning resources; liaison and involvement of employers; programme and module information to students.

For Pearson and ATHE (The Management Awarding Organisation) the provider is also responsible for setting assessments, first marking and providing feedback to students.

Recent developments

The College's new centre in Bow is open three days a week and is used for study and sitting examinations. In 2013 the College had a successful Independent Schools Inspectorate report and gained Pearson accreditation. The College was accepted by Ofsted as a subcontractor for apprenticeships in May 2013 and had a satisfactory report from the external verifier for the Association of Accounting Technicians in July 2013.

The College recently began a new subcontracting relationship with a social enterprise company, alongside its existing one with Epping Forest College, as a prime provider for Student 24+ funding. It is hoping to regain its Tier 4 status with the UK Border Agency in January 2014. It is also exploring university accreditation for its programmes and is in discussion with several universities.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team but did not do so. However, students from each of the programmes met the coordinator at the preparatory meeting and the review team during the review visit and provided very useful input.

Detailed findings about West London Vocational Training College Ltd

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The College's arrangements for the management of academic standards are sound. There are appropriate structures for the management and administration of academic programmes. The Principal has overall management responsibility for the College, including development, quality, relations with awarding organisations, budgets, estates and marketing. The Strategic Planning Committee is responsible for the College's strategic direction and reviews and updates the Strategic Plan. It meets once a year and is chaired by the Principal. Membership includes an external representative and also the Vice-Principal, who provides a clear link with the Academic and Quality Assurance Committee.

1.2 The College ensures oversight and maintenance of academic standards and learning opportunities through the Academic and Quality Assurance Committee which is chaired by the Vice-Principal. Membership comprises all tutors with the Principal also in attendance for important curriculum changes. It is responsible for all aspects of academic standards and oversees learning opportunities, including the development of new programmes. The Quality Assurance Manual refers to the Academic and Quality Assurance Committee terms of reference. However, committee minutes are informal and do not differentiate between this Committee's meetings and staff meetings. It is **advisable** for the College to formalise and clarify the meeting structures to ensure separate oversight of academic standards and learning opportunities in line with the Quality Assurance Manual (see paragraph 2.2).

1.3 College staff work together effectively to manage academic standards. Programmes are overseen by the Vice-Principal who has responsibility for academic staff and manages operational delivery, including responsibilities for teaching, assessment and quality assurance. She is supported by an Apprenticeship Advisor, Administration/Student Support Officer and an Accounts and Finance Officer who are also part of the management team and are responsible for processing student admissions and student records. Each programme is led by an appropriately qualified and experienced academic tutor.

1.4 The Academic and Quality Assurance Committee is underpinned by monthly staff meetings. These ensure that tutors are effectively informed about programme changes and provide an opportunity to share good practice. Student representatives attend periodically, ensuring an appropriate response to student issues.

1.5 The College has good links with its awarding organisations and programmes are subject to annual approval visits. Reports received from the Association of Accounting Technicians confirm that the provision is well run with the small, experienced team maintaining good standards and effective feedback and internal verification processes. Actions arising from the reports are taken seriously and appropriately responded to. The College ensures that staff are fully aware of awarding organisation requirements through its meeting structures and tutors have access to the Association of Accounting Technicians' virtual learning environment.

1.6 The College has appropriate arrangements in place for annual monitoring which results in a College development plan. The College is also required to submit a detailed

annual monitoring report to the Association of Accounting Technicians along with a development plan prior to its annual visit. The Independent Schools Inspectorate report stated that the College has made good progress on effective course evaluation that takes account of learner views.

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

1.7   The College has a detailed Quality Assurance Manual and a comprehensive set of policies, including a detailed Assessment Policy, which are appropriately implemented to assure standards. Although the College claims to make active reference to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), the review team saw little evidence of this.

1.8   The College engages with the awarding organisations' guidelines for the development and review of programme specifications and assessments. All programmes delivered by the College use the Qualifications and Credit Framework. However, there is insufficient engagement with other external reference points. It would be **desirable** for the College to align policies and procedures and published information with the Quality Code to enhance academic standards.

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

1.9   The College operates an internal verification process for the Association of Accounting Technicians programmes, underpinned by a written policy and procedure. The College has two qualified verifiers to ensure that the awarding organisations' requirements are met and that feedback and internal verification is completed within awarding organisation timescales. Awarding organisation reports indicate that the internal verification process is carried out to a high standard. The effective internal verification procedures for the Association of Accounting Technicians programmes, and the additional personalised feedback provided to students, is **good practice**.

1.10   However, internal verification arrangements required for the Pearson provision are not yet fully planned. It is **advisable** that the College ensure that verification processes and learning opportunities, including access to online resources, are the same for students on Pearson programmes as on other programmes (see paragraph 2.7).

> 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 organisations.

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 management structure is robust and appropriate for a small institution. The Principal and Vice-Principal, both of whom are directors, are well qualified and have defined responsibilities for the management of learning opportunities and the quality of educational provision. Other members of the management team all have clear supporting roles and responsibilities. Academic staff are appropriately qualified and experienced.

2.2   The Quality Assurance Manual describes clear internal structures for managing the quality of learning opportunities. The Academic Quality and Assurance Committee has clear written terms of reference and composition. It meets twice a year to review and assess programme provision, although meeting minutes are titled differently. However, academic issues are also discussed at the monthly staff meeting under the remit of the Academic Quality and Assurance Committee. This leads to a lack of clarity and academic focus on the oversight and development of learning opportunities. It is **advisable** for the College to introduce more formal structures for meetings by implementing specific committees with clear responsibilities, membership and agendas to occur at regular intervals (see paragraph 1.2).

2.3   There is a defined admissions procedure and initial student assessment to determine the most suitable programme and level for each student. Students are given appropriate induction. The student's qualifications and current level of English are checked, with additional support requirements noted in the Individual Learning Plan and supplementary English language classes provided as required.

2.4   The system of student Individual Learning Plans operates across all programmes and is effective. Individual Learning Plans are initially based on areas identified during admissions and are reviewed regularly during meetings with tutors. They include details of academic progress, required English language support, skills development, learning targets and achievement of agreed objectives. The comprehensive tailoring of the Learning Plans to reflect individual student needs is **good practice**.

2.5   Lesson plans and schemes of work are approved weekly by the Vice-Principal and used consistently across all programmes. The students appreciate the range of teaching methods used, as well as relevant examples and the individual attention they are given by tutors.

2.6   Tutors are encouraged to give students homework, mock examinations and case studies. Students are provided with effective oral feedback and also receive formative written feedback on written work, although the quality and detail of this lacks consistency. It would be **desirable** for the College to improve the consistency of written formative feedback to students.

2.7   Students on the Association of Accounting Technicians programmes have access to the Association's virtual learning environment, providing them with programme specifications, assignment briefs and an extensive range of learning resources. Students on other programmes only have access to the College's virtual learning environment which contains an extremely limited range of guidance notes and no lecture materials or other resources. This leads to an inequality of learning opportunities for the Pearson provision. It is **advisable** that learning opportunities and resources be equalised for students on Pearson programmes (see paragraph 1.10).

2.8   The College has an Assessment Policy which gives guidance on academic misconduct. A guidance document on Harvard referencing is available on the College's virtual learning environment, although the relevant misconduct policies are not presented there. Students demonstrated awareness of the need to avoid plagiarism, which is covered briefly in the student handbook.

2.9   The management of student matters operates well through day-to-day interactions facilitated by the small size of the College. As a result, the support environment is strong, with good contact between tutors and students.

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

2.10   External reference points set by the awarding organisations are used to determine standards. Programmes follow awarding organisations' programme specifications. The Association of Accounting Technicians' external verification reports indicate that the College maintains good standards and addresses action points effectively. A scheduled Pearson external verification visit in May 2013 was cancelled as all students had changed to other courses. The programme is now running, and Pearson have been notified that a verification visit can be rearranged.

2.11   Although the College carefully adheres to awarding organisation guidance, little documented use has been made of the Quality Code to enhance learning, although staff indicated that this has happened informally within staff development sessions. It would be **desirable** for the College to formally review the alignment of policies, procedures and practices with the Quality Code to ensure effective learning opportunities.

How does the College engage students in its quality assurance processes?

2.12   The College makes effective use of a range of student views within the quality assurance process. Student representatives have been appointed for daytime, evening and weekend programmes. Although these arrangements are not fully formalised, students value the informal responsiveness of staff. Students complete feedback forms at the end of each module and programme as well as for the tutorial process. An online portal is used for student surveys, with helpful analysis informing potential action. A suggestions box allows anonymous feedback. The College takes appropriate action in response to student feedback. The range of methods used for encouraging student feedback, and the effective action taken in response to this feedback, is **good practice**.

2.13   There is a written complaints policy and procedure, available on the College website. Students consulted during the visit were aware of these, although there is no history of formal, written complaints.

What are the College's arrangements for staff development to maintain and/or enhance the quality of learning opportunities?

2.14   The College has recruited suitably qualified and experienced teaching staff and encourages them to develop subject knowledge and qualifications to maintain currency. One in-house staff training session on learning and teaching styles has recently taken place. Plans are being formulated for a further meeting, although there is a lack of a formal programme for continued professional development for staff.

2.15   The College operates an annual appraisal system for all staff. Staff development needs are discussed during appraisal meetings and some developmental planning may be noted. However, the appraisal documentation does not contain provision for discussing development needs identified during lesson observations. It is **advisable** for the College to rewrite appraisal documentation to include staff developmental needs linked to lesson observations.

2.16   There is a programme of regular lesson observations in which areas of good practice are identified and discussed. Following the Independent Schools Inspectorate's monitoring visit, limited attempts have been made to address the recommendation for an increased focus on student learning. This is hampered by the standardised documentation used for lesson observation, which encourages the observer to concentrate on teaching

skills and knowledge. Although it allows for discussion and reflection, there is insufficient focus on the improvement of student learning and achievement. It is **advisable** for the College to rewrite lesson observation documentation to include greater focus on the enhancement of student learning and achievement.

2.17   Although opportunities for sharing good practice are available at internal tutors' meetings, the system is not formalised. Limited use is made of these opportunities, particularly in regard to good practice observed by staff either in lesson observations or during their work at other institutions.

The review team has **confidence** the provider 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 effective are the College's arrangements for assuring that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy?

3.1   Information provided to students during induction is satisfactory. It includes a student handbook, induction pack and programme-specific information including awarding organisation information relating to their course. Student handbooks are updated annually. Students confirmed that the information they received was useful and fit for purpose. The College uses a consistent corporate style for its various publications and these contain accurate information.

3.2   The College provides basic programme information for prospective students predominantly through its website and prospectus. The website includes information on all programmes that are offered, including those which are approved but not currently delivered. There is clear information about student loans and a link to the 24+ Advanced Learning Loans information. The UK Border Agency link has been removed along with information about Tier 4 licences pending the award of a new licence. The link to the student handbook, prospectus and policy documents is rather obscure. The team found some minor inaccuracies relating to opening times published in the student handbook and in the Pearson HNC/D programme description, which cites full-time attendance and does not reflect what is currently being offered. It would be **desirable** for the College to review the accuracy of published information, including website content, to better reflect current Pearson programme delivery.

3.3   The College has a Publications Policy, which clearly states that the Principal has responsibility for the approval of published information. The Vice-Principal checks programme information and the prospectus and website are discussed at staff meetings. The College completes a website review form every two months with students and an external consultant being involved in this process. The College responds to student feedback on information and makes appropriate changes to enhance published information.

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

Action plan[3]

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West London Vocational Training College Ltd action plan relating to the Review of Specific Course Designation November 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 College:						
• the effective internal verification procedures for the Association of Accounting Technicians programmes, and the additional personalised feedback provided to students (paragraph 1.9)	Effective internal verification policy and procedure is also applied for Pearson programmes; this includes personalised feedback to students	Internal verification policy and procedures used for Association of Accounting Technicians programmes are also used for Pearson programmes	April 2014	Internal verifier	Principal	Internal verification policy and procedure including personalised feedback to learners; reviewed by Academic Committee
• the comprehensive tailoring of the Learning Plans to reflect individual	Individual Learning Plan is personalised to the student showing updates on learner progress and changes	Detail of learner's periodic review is updated on their Individual Learning Plan form	End of each unit	Tutors/admin staff	Vice-Principal	Individual learning plans reviewed at agreed target dates at

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

student needs (paragraph 2.4)	in the learning process to meet the learners' needs to achieve their goals					meetings with the tutors
• the range of methods used for encouraging student feedback and the effective action taken in response to this feedback (paragraph 2.12).	Student feedback is used effectively to improve the learning process	Student feedback analysis is done in periodic staff meetings and action is taken to improve learning systems; we will use a range of methods for all students	Every quarter	Admin staff	Vice-Principal	Feedback analysis report reviewed by Academic Committee at the end of each quarter
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:						
• introduce formal structures for meetings by designating specific committees with clear responsibilities, membership and agendas to occur at regular intervals (paragraphs 1.2 and 2.2)	Minutes of academic meetings are titled so that it distinguishes them clearly from other staff meetings; staff meeting is attended by the academic staff for improvement of learning activities	Specific staff will be trained to take minutes of the meeting in formal structure The meeting structures will be formalised and minutes recorded and identified separately for academic and other meetings	By end of June 2014	Vice-Principal	Principal	Staff meeting records and minutes

• ensure that verification processes and learning opportunities, including access to online resources, are the same for students on Pearson programmes as on other programmes (paragraphs 1.10 and 2.7)	Internal verification arrangements for Pearson programme will be fully planned in order to ensure that verification processes are the same for students on Pearson programmes as on other programmes	Standardisation activity takes place for Pearson provisions

Internal verification process for Pearson provision is conducted in the similar manner as for Association of Accounting Technicians provision | July 2014 | Internal Verifier | Vice-Principal | Internal verification reports

Record of standardisation activity |
| • rewrite appraisal documentation to include staff developmental needs linked to lesson observations, and rewrite lesson observation documentation to include greater focus on the enhancement of student learning and achievement 2.15 and 2.16). | Appraisal documentation includes staff developmental needs linked to lesson observations

Lesson observation documentation includes greater focus on the enhancement of student learning and achievement | Staff appraisal document is rewritten to include staff development needs linked to lesson observations

Lesson observation document is rewritten to include greater focus on the enhancement of student learning and achievement | April 2014 | Vice-Principal | Principal | Record of new lesson observation and staff development forms |

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 College to:						
• align College policies and procedures and published information with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education to enhance academic standards and student learning opportunities (paragraphs 1.8 and 2.11)	Include external reference points and Quality Code in college policies and procedures to enhance academic standards and student learning opportunities	Update college policies and procedures to include external reference points and Quality Code	End of June 2014	Principal	Strategic Committee	Updated policies and procedures
• improve the consistency of written formative feedback to students (paragraph 2.6)	Written formative feedback is consistent	Tutors are advised to give consistent formative feedback to students	End of June 2014	Tutors	Vice-Principal	Feedback given to learners and reviewed by the Academic Committee
• review the accuracy of published information, including website content, to better reflect current	Student handbook shows correct information relating to Pearson Higher National Certificate/Higher National Diploma	Correct the opening times published in the student handbook and in the online Pearson Higher National Certificate/Higher National Diploma programme description, so	End of Feb 2014	Vice-Principal	Principal	Updated Student handbook and website

Pearson programme delivery (paragraph 3.2).	programme to reflect what is currently being offered	that it clearly reflects what is currently being offered				

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 Courses 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).

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

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

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.