



Central Film School London

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

December 2012

Key findings about Central Film School London

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in December 2012, 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 awards it offers.

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.

The team considers that **reliance can be placed** on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the provider is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Good practice

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

- the design and delivery of the highly specialised curriculum that prepares students effectively for employment (paragraphs 1.5 and 2.9)
- the range of mechanisms used to collect and respond to student feedback (paragraph 2.8).

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:

- conduct a further review of programme specifications that takes full account of all relevant external reference points (paragraph 1.7)
- establish clear and transparent marking schemes that are linked to assessment criteria and learning outcomes (paragraph 2.2).

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

- continue with the development of a formal system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning (paragraph 2.6)
- continue with the implementation of tutor development to enhance teaching, learning and assessment practice (paragraph 2.12).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by QAA at Central Film School London (the provider; the School). 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 was carried out by Dr Julie Andreshak-Behrman, Mr Millard Parkinson (reviewers) and Mrs Freda Richardson (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 the School's mission statement, strategic plan and teaching and learning strategy 2010-15; meetings with staff and students; the recent City and Guilds audit visit report (8 November 2012); draft and approved programme specifications; and staff, tutor and course handbooks.

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

- Creative Skillset's National Occupational Standards
- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)
- the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*)
- National Qualifications Framework guidance on levels and their equivalents
- *Master's degree characteristics*, March 2010
- subject benchmark statements
- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (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](#).

Central Film School London is an independent private provider of higher education based on long-established film industry practices of master-apprentice style training. Industry professionals founded the School in order to provide high-level vocational training to students with the genuine potential to work and succeed in the film industry.

The first full-time courses were launched in September 2009. These comprise three diploma courses that were developed in line with similar programmes offered at other international film schools. For these diplomas, the School acts as its own awarding body and has recently been accredited by City and Guilds (see section on Recent Developments on page 3). The diplomas have been set at level 7 through a process of internal discussion, external consultation, and reviewing external reference points. In particular, Creative Skillset's National Occupational Standards, the professional practice master's descriptors in Appendix 1 of *Master's degree characteristics*, and the FHEQ level descriptors were consulted. Through this process, the School management team agreed unanimously that to achieve the standards required by employers, the diploma courses had to be set at level 5 of the National Qualifications Framework, which is equivalent to the Qualifications and Credit Framework level 7. The courses are designed, delivered and assessed on that basis.

The School has premier status with the Accreditation Service for International Colleges. There are currently 32 full-time students enrolled on two diploma programmes.

¹ www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/tier-4

² www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx

Curriculum management, delivery and assessment is supported by a broad range of permanent and freelance tutors (over 80 in total), who bring extensive industry experience and expertise. The curriculum is highly specialised and vocational.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes (the number of full-time students currently enrolled is shown in brackets):

- Professional Screen Directing Diploma (0)
- Industry Filmmaking Diploma (22)
- Applied Screenwriting Diploma (10).

The provider's stated responsibilities

As the School acts as the awarding body, it has sole and entire responsibility for all aspects of its higher education provision; City and Guilds has recently accredited the School and the postgraduate diplomas it awards (see below for further details).

Recent developments

A recent relationship with City and Guilds has been established whereby this awarding organisation accredits the School and the three level 7 diplomas. The City and Guilds logo will appear on the certificates issued by the School, but City and Guilds will not take on the role of awarding organisation for these courses. The School also has plans to develop its curriculum to offer honours and master's-level programmes in partnership with a university.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. A student written submission was provided with the self-evaluation. It was prepared by student representatives, who were supported by two members of staff. Students were briefed about the process and attended a QAA conference in preparation for their submission. The representatives then sent out a student survey and students' comments were summarised in the submission. The review coordinator met a representative group of students at the preparatory meeting. On discussion, it was explained that only two diploma courses were running at the time when the submission was produced, and that it was written primarily from the perspective of students on the Applied Screenwriting Diploma. The submission was nonetheless helpful in confirming views of students and supporting evidence from other sources. The review team met a representative group of students in a confidential meeting during the visit.

Detailed findings about Central Film School London

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The School has a clear and effective structure for developing, managing and monitoring academic standards. There is a very clear rationale, based on the 'specialist conservatoire' model, for the curriculum offered that comprises a niche range of subjects and levels. The School has a tight and integrated management structure. There are six shareholders, three of whom form the Board of Directors. The Board has responsibility for the delegation of management of standards and quality assurance, and for the financial well-being of the School. The School Director sits on the Board of Directors and, with another Board director, is also a member of the Senior Management Team, which has oversight of the provision. The small academic and administrative team ensures that senior managers are aware of issues, are involved in discussion and can respond quickly.

1.2 In 2011, the School appointed a Head of Curriculum, who is a member of the Senior Management Team. This role has responsibility for overseeing all aspects of the curriculum and the introduction of an increasingly rigorous academic management system. Three members of the Senior Management Team, including the School Director and Head of Curriculum, form part of the Academic Board, which also includes course leaders and other academic and administrative staff. The Academic Board acts as the Exam Board and is attended, where appropriate, by the external examiner. An external Quality Assurance Consultant provides advice and guidance on compliance with external reference points and other quality assurance matters. The close liaison between boards and committees, and the overlap of membership, enables effective communications and management oversight.

1.3 There is a comprehensive system of meetings at all levels that allows for regular and effective examination and discussion of issues around resources and performance. Weekly curriculum meetings comprise course staff, student representatives and appropriate members of the Academic Board. Weekly staff meetings cover operational issues. Matters from both these meetings are either referred to the Senior Management Team or resolved locally. Student representatives meet every two weeks. Student meetings are chaired by the Curriculum Coordinator and issues are referred to curriculum meetings and - through the Head of Curriculum - to the Senior Management Team, as required. A Programme Development Board has recently been established, comprising the Heads of Curriculum and Administration, and course leaders. It considers curriculum content, performance, assessment and academic standards, and reports to the Academic Board.

1.4 The School undertook an annual review in November 2012, which examined all aspects of curriculum, assessment, resources and academic standards. The review considered all aspects of the School's provision, including quality assurance procedures, assessment, teaching and learning, premises and facilities, and the student voice. An action plan was produced from the review, with actions to be completed in December 2012. Action plans are also produced from the Academic Board and Programme Development Board, and from external examiner reports. The School intends to combine all action plans into one overall action plan, progress against which will be monitored by the Senior Management Team.

1.5 The curriculum has been developed and designed with clear reference to the needs of employers and the industry. The diplomas are set at FHEQ level 7, based on internal and external consultation and a review of relevant external reference points. In particular, a panel

of consultants took account of Creative Skillset standards (which express clearly what is required of professionals in the industry) and of the master's professional practice characteristics in agreeing the level of the awards. The very vocational and practical nature of the curriculum, and the master-apprentice training style adopted throughout, is highly effective in preparing students for a variety of roles within this sector (see also paragraph 2.9). The team considers that the design and delivery of the highly specialised curriculum that prepares students effectively for employment is **good practice**.

How effectively are external reference points used in the management of academic standards?

1.6 External reference points - including the FHEQ level descriptors, subject benchmark statements, *Master's degree characteristics*, Creative Skillset's National Occupational Standards, National Qualifications Framework guidance on levels and equivalents, and the British Film Institute strategic plan - were considered in the planning of each course. The Quality Assurance Consultant has considerable experience of quality assurance monitoring processes, external reference points and academic standards at this level. Staff confirmed that the Consultant's expertise and advice was helpful in developing their understanding of the external reference points, and that these had been used to inform curriculum development.

1.7 A programme specification has been produced for the Professional Screen Directing Diploma course and approved by the Academic Board. Refined and expanded specifications for other programmes have been produced and are awaiting approval. These are produced to a standard format, are informed by a range of external reference points, and clearly indicate the aims, learning outcomes and assessment methods. While these will be useful for students, they need to be further developed to ensure they are more closely aligned to the level 7 programme learning outcomes and level descriptors. This has been identified in the gap analysis on use of external reference points undertaken by the School in December 2102. The team considers **advisable** that the School conduct a further review of programme specifications that takes full account of all relevant external reference points.

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

1.8 All student work is assessed by the tutors against current professional standards and industry practice. The School has appointed an external examiner to examine all summative assessment according to principles in the School's policy and procedures for external examiners. Assessment criteria for each course have been devised and approved at the Academic Board. Assignment briefs are approved by the Academic Board and the external examiner prior to being issued to students. Students' graduation work is presented to staff, students and external practitioners. Student work is double marked. Although there is no specific policy on internal verification, the Head of Curriculum acts as internal verifier to monitor marking of student work and feedback, prior to submission to the external examiner. The Academic Board monitors all summative assessment and refers results to the Senior Management Team. The external examiner's report is considered by the Academic Board and an action plan is produced and monitored by the Senior Management Team. The external examiner report confirms that moderation and marking of assessments are satisfactory, and that the standards of the awards are appropriate for a qualification in this subject area and address relevant subject benchmark statements.

The review team has confidence in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers.

2 Quality of learning opportunities

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

2.1 The structures and processes for managing academic standards outlined in paragraphs 1.1-1.5 also apply to the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities.

2.2 The School has recently created a Programme Development Board to ensure clarity and transparency for tutors and students with respect to marking, assessment and learning outcomes. Assessment criteria are used to separate elements of the final summative assessment task and, while the final grade awarded to students is a pass/fail, marking against the assessment criteria is in percentages. To pass the course, students must achieve an average of 50 per cent across all assessment criteria. There is, however, no clear rationale regarding the percentage grades awarded. The School's draft gap analysis identified the need to elaborate on grading criteria, and the Programme Development Board is reviewing the assessment criteria and the link with learning outcomes. In addition, the City and Guilds audit visit report recommended further clarity on the use of assessment criteria and, in particular, more transparency on percentage grades awarded. The team considers it **advisable** that the School establish clear and transparent marking schemes that are linked to assessment criteria and learning outcomes.

How effectively are external reference points used in the management and enhancement of learning opportunities?

2.3 The use of external reference points explained in paragraphs 1.6 and 1.7 is also applicable to the management and enhancement of learning opportunities.

2.4 The School has recently conducted a gap analysis between School practice and external reference points, and in particular the Quality Code. The gap analysis prompted the development of a policy on students with disabilities. The School is aware that if the diversity and size of the student body increases, there will be a need for further development of policies and practice informed by external reference points.

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

2.5 The School's Academic Board, Programme Development Board, Senior Management Team and curriculum teams are separately and jointly responsible for monitoring and maintaining the quality of teaching and learning. There is a clear hierarchy between these bodies, and procedures and processes are in place to ensure communication and follow-up. A teaching and learning strategy was developed in 2011, which articulates the School's strategic aims, guiding principles and performance measures - such as student, tutor and external feedback.

2.6 The quality of teaching and learning is monitored through student and tutor feedback, student success and graduate destination information. There is no formal lesson observation system, although there has been a pilot observation of a summative feedback session. Teaching observations are intended to become regular components of the induction process and continuing staff development. The School is examining different models to support tutor development and teaching skills. The team considers it **desirable** that the School continue with the development of a formal system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning.

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

2.7 Student support is managed effectively through a range of mainly informal processes. The Student Administrator/Receptionist and the Curriculum Coordinator have student welfare roles embedded in their job descriptions. Students reported easy access to staff that enables them to ask for and receive personalised support in academic and pastoral matters quickly and effectively. Student tutorial sessions are another means by which students can access individual support. The School's ability to communicate directly with students and student representatives is possible with the small cohorts currently enrolled.

2.8 The means of collecting, collating and disseminating student feedback are well defined and play a crucial role in providing the student voice. The master-apprentice, student-focused and individualised approach to teaching and learning and student support enable student issues to be flagged up and concerns dealt with in a variety of ways, including through induction, modular and end-of-course feedback forms. The Head of Administration is responsible for collating feedback from these forms and disseminating it to the appropriate committee. Students are represented on the Academic Board and at curriculum meetings, and are aware of discussions and actions taken as a result. Informal feedback takes place at course level and with the Head of Curriculum and the Curriculum Coordinator. Students confirmed that matters which they raise are dealt with effectively and in a timely manner. The student representative system further enhances access to staff, with student representative meetings taking place fortnightly. The team considers the range of mechanisms used to collect and respond to student feedback to be **good practice**.

2.9 The design and delivery of the highly specialised curriculum is effective in preparing students for relevant employment. The School puts craft and employability at the forefront of what it does, and career development is central to this. Teaching staff are all current or recent industry practitioners and use their professional experience to inform teaching. This is particularly relevant given the curriculum model based on the master-apprentice system of intensive practical learning by creative involvement in production work, which has been the long-established system within the film industry. Students stated that the network opportunities afforded by being taught by industry practitioners is key to their career development. The favourable tutor-student ratio facilitates good interaction between student and tutor in this regard. Career advice and information sessions are also organised throughout the course. The School holds a high-profile awards ceremony at the end of each academic year, which provides a useful publicity opportunity for graduates and the institution. Destination data confirms that students are successful in securing relevant employment on completion of their studies.

2.10 Formative assessment is used effectively to develop students' knowledge, understanding and vocational practice. On all courses, summative assessment is confined to a graduation portfolio produced in the final term. Students are encouraged to take risks and to be imaginative in their early production work, as it is formatively assessed and does not contribute to their graduation portfolio. Students confirmed that the verbal formative feedback they receive is helpful and aimed at getting the best out of them. They stated that they would appreciate more and, in some cases, written feedback to further develop their skills.

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

2.11 The School effectively supports and encourages staff development. There is an annual appraisal system that informs professional development. The School supports a range of training and development opportunities that arise through the appraisal process and

as needs are identified throughout the year. These opportunities have included exploration of, and training on, new film equipment, minute taking and accountancy training. The staff handbook is comprehensive.

2.12 The School maintains a large database of high-quality part-time tutors who make an exceptional contribution to student learning. As industry professionals, tutors develop their knowledge and skill through the practice of their craft and through their own continuing education. Communication with such a large number of part-time staff can be a challenge due to their multiple obligations; a tutor handbook has recently been developed to formalise policy and communicate with tutors in a more official manner. There is no formal requirement or process for teacher training, although training sessions are being planned to ensure a level of engagement with pedagogy, assessment standards, marking and learning outcomes. The team considers it **desirable** that the School continue the implementation of tutor development to enhance teaching, learning and assessment practice.

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

2.13 The School has a learning resource policy and dedicated staff who manage and assess resource needs. The Head of Curriculum is responsible for assessing academic resource needs and communicating these to the Senior Management Team level where required.

2.14 There is a clear system for checking equipment out and in and making necessary repairs and replacements. While students expressed some concerns about the availability and quality of equipment, the process for assessing needs is adequate and upgrades in equipment are regular. There is a clear process for matching equipment needs with assignment requirements. Students have access to the facilities out of standard timetabled teaching hours to work on their projects. Equipment allocated for assessment and training is fit for purpose and enables the development of relevant skills required in the industry.

2.15 Non-technical resources are located in a small library at the School, and an additional outside resource library nearby is accessible to students and has a sufficient holding to meet current curricular needs. Students are issued with a cinema pass at the start of their course that provides free access to viewings. There are three teaching rooms, an edit room with eight edit stations, a fully equipped screening theatre and a film production studio.

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 Public information

How effectively does the provider's public information communicate to students and other stakeholders about the higher education it provides?

3.1 The School has an effective system for communicating information about its provision. It produces a prospectus containing appropriate information about the School, its courses and the master-apprentice style of delivery. The prospectus is available through the School's website, which also contains written and audio-visual material about student

activities and application processes. Students indicated that they used the website to decide on applying to the School and found it to be informative and accurate.

3.2 The School produces general handbooks for students and staff, which contain comprehensive information about studying and working at the School. The Head of Curriculum works with course teams to produce handbooks for each course. There is a lack of clarity around modularisation of courses, with one handbook referring to key areas of study and another referring to modules. The School has identified this as an area for development and is considering breaking all courses down into modules of learning. Handbooks include course content, details of assessment and reading lists, but no week-by-week breakdown of teaching activities. Students indicated that they were not always clear on the overall picture of the course and upcoming course elements; staff stated that detailed timetables are provided at the start of each term, and this is confirmed in course handbooks.

3.3 School policies are produced by appropriate members of the Academic Board. They are reviewed twice yearly and approved by the Senior Management Team. The School has developed a public information policy which is informed by Part C of the Quality Code.

3.4 The School is in the process of developing a Management Information System which will incorporate a virtual learning environment for students' use. This will also be linked to the School website. The complexities of developing a system that fulfils all of these functions has led to some technical difficulties, which are being addressed as a matter of urgency, and the system should be operational early in 2013. The system aims to provide better access to a wide range of information, including learning materials for students, and should serve as an enhanced means of communicating course information. This will be especially useful if student numbers increase.

How effective are the provider's arrangements for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information it has responsibility for publishing?

3.5 The School awards its own diplomas and therefore has sole responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of public information, although City and Guilds will approve appropriate use of its logo on publicity material. Nominated members of the Academic Board are responsible for producing public information. This is then proofread by the Head of Administration before approval by the Senior Management Team. Handbooks are also approved by the Academic Board. This process is effective and, as the Academic Board and the Senior Management Team meet regularly, information can be updated in a timely manner. The School Director is responsible for all marketing material and signs off the prospectus and information on the website. The Content Manager is responsible for the development of the website and for all web content, which is checked on a regular basis for accuracy and completeness.

3.6 The School does not have a written policy on the use of social media networks, but students are made aware of acceptable standards and these are regularly monitored by the Content Manager. Students indicated that they were well informed about the School prior to application and that their experience at the School has met their expectations, based on the pre-enrolment information provided.

The team concludes that **reliance can be placed** on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the provider is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Action plan³

Central Film School London action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight December 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the design and delivery of the highly specialised curriculum that prepares students effectively for employment (paragraphs 1.5 and 2.9) 	Create internship programme in partnership with industry organisations as bridge to employment opportunities	September 2013	Head of Curriculum	Increase in student employment rates over 6, 12 and 24 months after graduation	Academic Board	Internship programme
	Create Industry Advisory Board	September 2013	School Director/Head of Curriculum			Trend analysis of student destination data
	Formalise relationship with Creative Skillset (industry trade and skills council)	September 2013	School Director/Head of Curriculum			Industry and student feedback
						Advisory board minutes

³ The provider 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.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the range of mechanisms used to collect and respond to student feedback (paragraph 2.8). 	<p>Design and implement overarching procedural document for collecting, responding to, collating and reporting student feedback to student body and relevant committees</p> <p>Establish quality assurance training for students</p>	September 2013	Head of Administration	<p>Effective and efficient action in response to student feedback within prescribed time limits</p> <p>Consistent student representation in all quality assurance committees</p> <p>Student representatives participation in quality assurance training</p>	Academic Board	<p>Constructive student feedback</p> <p>Student feedback protocol documents</p> <p>Minutes of committee meetings</p> <p>Student feedback on training</p>
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is advisable for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> conduct a further review of programme specifications that takes full account of all relevant external reference points (paragraph 1.7) 	Map comprehensive programme specifications for all postgraduate diploma courses clearly to the FHEQ level 7 qualification descriptors and Creative Skillset's National Occupational	April 2013	Head of Curriculum/ course leaders	Feedback from students; tutors; City and Guilds; professional, statutory and regulatory bodies; and external consultants on clarity, accuracy and accessibility of	Programme Development Board	<p>Programme specifications</p> <p>Feedback from students; tutors; City and Guilds; professional, statutory and regulatory bodies; and external</p>

	Standards, and then update Develop and embed modular structure for all postgraduate diploma courses tied to assessment criteria and overall intended learning outcomes as expressed in programme specifications	April 2013	Head of Curriculum/ course leaders	information Student feedback demonstrating clear understanding of intended learning outcomes and relationship to assessment criteria	Programme Development Board	consultants Quality of published information survey Student module evaluation forms External examiner reports City and Guilds feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish clear and transparent marking schemes that are linked to assessment criteria and learning outcomes (paragraph 2.2). 	Devise clear rationale for marking schemes and tie to expanded articulation of assessment criteria	April 2013	Head of Curriculum/ course leaders	Positive feedback from students; tutors; City and Guilds; professional, statutory and regulatory bodies; and external consultants on clarity, accuracy and accessibility of information	Academic Board	External examiner reports City and Guilds audit Marking scheme rationale Student results Quality of published information survey
	Expand assessment criteria definitions	April 2013	Head of Curriculum/ course leaders	Improvement in marking consistency	Academic Board	

Desirable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is desirable for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue with the development of a formal system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning (paragraph 2.6) 	Create, implement and evaluate teacher observation scheme	September 2013	Head of Curriculum/ Curriculum Coordinator	<p>Fully established and embedded teacher observation scheme</p> <p>Positive tutor feedback</p> <p>Positive student feedback</p>	Academic Board	<p>Tutor feedback</p> <p>Student feedback</p> <p>Destination data</p> <p>Student performance and achievement</p> <p>Teaching and learning strategy</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> continue with the implementation of tutor development to enhance teaching, learning and assessment practice (paragraph 2.11). 	<p>Devise and implement 'training the trainers' days</p> <p>Agree and monitor continuing professional development targets with key teaching staff</p>	<p>September 2013</p> <p>September 2013</p>	<p>Head of Curriculum/ Curriculum Coordinator</p> <p>Head of Curriculum/ Curriculum Coordinator</p>	<p>50% attendance of all teaching staff across the academic year</p> <p>Achievement of relevant and appropriate continuing professional development targets</p>	Academic Board	<p>Tutor feedback</p> <p>Teaching and learning strategy</p> <p>Tutor handbook</p> <p>Teacher observation</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.

More detail about Review for Educational Oversight can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/institutionreports/types-of-review/tier-4.

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: Handbook](#).⁶

Academic Infrastructure Guidance developed and agreed by the higher education community and published by QAA, which is used by institutions to ensure that their courses meet national expectations for academic standards and that students have access to a suitable environment for learning (academic quality). It consists of four groups of reference points: the **frameworks for higher education qualifications**, the **subject benchmark statements**, the **programme specifications** and the **Code of practice**. Work is underway (2011-12) to revise the Academic Infrastructure as the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

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

academic standards The standards set and maintained by institutions for their courses and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standard**.

awarding body A body with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the **framework for higher education qualifications**, such as diplomas or degrees.

awarding organisation An organisation with the authority to award academic qualifications located on the Qualifications and Credit Framework for England and Northern Ireland (these qualifications are at levels 1 to 8, with levels 4 and above being classed as 'higher education').

Code of practice *The Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education*, published by QAA: a set of interrelated documents giving guidance for higher education institutions.

designated body An organisation that has been formally appointed to perform a particular function.

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

enhancement Taking deliberate steps at institutional level to improve the quality of **learning opportunities**. It is used as a technical term in QAA's audit and review processes.

feature of good practice A positive aspect of the way a higher education institution manages quality and standards, which may be seen as exemplary to others.

framework A published formal structure. See also **framework for higher education qualifications**.

framework for higher education qualifications A published formal structure that identifies a hierarchy of national qualification levels and describes the general achievement expected of holders of the main qualification types at each level, thus assisting higher education providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks:

⁶ www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx

The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) and The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland.

highly trusted sponsor An education provider 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.

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

learning outcome 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 reports.

programme (of study) An approved course of study which 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 An institution that offers courses of higher education, typically on behalf of a separate **awarding body or organisation**. In the context of REO, 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').

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.

quality See **academic 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 standard The minimum standard that a student should reach in order to gain a particular qualification or award, as set out in the **subject benchmark statements** and national qualifications frameworks. Threshold standards are distinct from the standards of performance that students need to achieve in order to gain any particular class of award, for example a first-class bachelor's degree. See also **academic standard**.

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

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The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Tel 01452 557000
Fax 01452 557070
Email comms@qaa.ac.uk
Web www.qaa.ac.uk

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