



# **American Institute for Foreign Study**

## **Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight**

**Review by the Quality Assurance Agency  
for Higher Education**

**March 2012**

## About this report

This is a report of a review under the Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight conducted by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) at the American Institute for Foreign Study, London. The review took place on 7 March 2012 and was conducted by a panel, as follows:

- Professor Peter Bush
- Mr Alan Hunt
- Mrs Bop Dhillon.

The main purpose of the review was to:

- make judgements about the provider's delegated responsibilities for the management of academic standards and the quality and enhancement of learning opportunities
- draw a conclusion about whether the provider's public information is reliable
- report on any features of good practice
- make recommendations for action.

A summary of the [key findings](#) can be found in the section starting on page 3. The [context](#) in which these findings should be interpreted is explained on page 5. [Explanations](#) of the findings are given in numbered paragraphs in the section starting on page 6.

The QAA website gives more information [about QAA](#) and its mission.<sup>1</sup> More information about this review method can be found in the [published handbook](#).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/pages/default.aspx)

<sup>2</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/eo-recognition-scheme.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/eo-recognition-scheme.aspx)

## Key findings

The QAA panel considered evidence relating to the educational provision at the American Institute for Foreign Study, London (AIFS London), both information supplied in advance and evidence gathered during the visits of the review itself. The review has resulted in the key findings stated in this section.

## Judgements

The QAA panel formed the following judgements about the American Institute for Foreign Study, London:

- **confidence** that AIFS London effectively discharges its responsibilities related to the management of academic standards in the context of its agreements with partner institutions
- **confidence** that AIFS London effectively discharges its responsibilities for the management of the quality of the learning opportunities which it makes available to students.

## Conclusion about public information

The QAA panel concluded that:

- **reliance can** be placed on the public information that AIFS London supplies about itself.

## Good practice

The QAA panel identified the following **features of good practice** at the American Institute for Foreign Study, London:

- pre-departure briefings are given by AIFS London staff for students, parents and local academic staff at partner institutions in the USA (paragraph 2.2)
- interns are given a comprehensive and student-focused Internship Handbook (paragraph 2.4)
- AIFS London provides regular academic staff meetings to share good practice and discuss scholarly and pedagogical matters (paragraph 2.16).

## Recommendations

The QAA panel makes the following recommendations to the American Institute for Foreign Study, London.

It is **advisable** for AIFS London to:

- implement the formal practice of recording the business of management meetings (paragraph 1.3)
- maintain an up-to-date record of the accreditation status of USA partner institutions (paragraph 1.5)
- formalise and consistently apply arrangements for observation of teaching given by adjunct staff (paragraph 2.10)
- ensure that the relationship between AIFS London and Richmond, the American International University in London, is accurately and clearly presented in all AIFS

London public information (paragraph 3.2).

It is **desirable** for AIFS London to:

- further develop the provision of IT facilities for students and visiting academic staff in line with technological advances (paragraph 2.18)
- reconsider the provision of academic library access in London (paragraph 2.19).

## Context

The American Institute for Foreign Study (AIFS) is a for-profit American company, based in Stamford, Connecticut, USA, which provides a range of educational and cultural exchange programmes. Through its Partnership Division, based in London, it offers study abroad programmes in many countries, including the UK. These study abroad programmes contribute credit to the awards of USA universities and colleges. This report addresses the AIFS study abroad provision in London, which is referred to throughout as AIFS London.

AIFS London organises courses of study for students from about 40 USA universities and colleges, usually for a single semester. About 700 students come to AIFS London on this basis each year.

AIFS London's partner institutions are accredited in the USA. They are responsible for the academic standards of provision at AIFS London: they provide or approve courses, assess the students and award credit through their normal procedures. AIFS London is responsible for student support before and during the students' visit to London, and for the provision of an appropriate learning environment and experience. Responsibilities are defined in formal written agreements.

Awards of accredited USA institutions are recognised by the National Recognition Information Centre for the United Kingdom (UK NARIC) as valid with a recognised level of equivalence with UK awards.

The reference points used in the setting of academic standards are those of the USA accrediting bodies which accredit AIFS London's partner universities and colleges.

AIFS London is inspected from time to time by its USA partner institutions. It is also accredited by the British Accreditation Council (BAC), which issued its most recent accreditation report in February 2010. This report made no recommendations and confirmed that AIFS London had responded positively to recommendations made in the previous BAC accreditation report dated November 2008.

In addition to its own study abroad provision, the AIFS Partnership Division in London supports the annual Summer School of Richmond, the American International University in London (RAIUL). RAIUL is an independent not-for-profit institution accredited in the USA and based in London. AIFS in the USA recruits students for RAIUL's Summer School, and AIFS London provides orientation, a cultural events programme, and pastoral support services for students enrolled on it. All academic planning, selection of staff, writing and delivery of courses and awarding of credit for this Summer School are the responsibilities of RAIUL, which is the school of record.

Similar services were provided until recently for the University of London's Institute of Education, but this provision has now been discontinued.

## Detailed findings

### 1 Academic standards

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

1.1 AIFS London's USA partner institutions are responsible for the academic standards of courses offered in London, and in particular for the design of courses, student assessment, and the award of credit. The USA partners' staff travel with students and undertake most of the teaching on the programmes, with support from a small number of UK-based adjunct teaching staff appointed by AIFS London. All courses, teaching and assessment are governed by the academic policies and procedures of the USA partner institutions, as applied on their own USA campuses.

1.2 The senior management team of AIFS London is led by the Senior Vice-President and includes two Programme Directors and a Deputy Programme Director. This team operates with significant delegated authority from its parent organisation. The Senior Vice-President is directly responsible to the Chairman of AIFS, to whom she provides frequent oral reports; she also participates in board-level meetings with AIFS's academic advisers in the USA.

1.3 The senior management team meets regularly and operates an open-door, informal approach to staff, who confirmed and welcomed the access they had to senior staff. Senior management meetings were traditionally informal, but the team had recently decided to introduce the taking of minutes. The panel considered that this decision was wise in view of the accumulated knowledge and experience of the senior group, the relatively high turnover of more junior staff, and the increasing challenges presented by educational provision of this kind. It advises AIFS London to implement without delay the formal practice of recording the business of management meetings.

1.4 Relationships between AIFS London and its USA partner institutions are governed by formal Partnership Programme Agreements. These agreements clearly define the financial, academic, support, and administrative obligations and responsibilities of AIFS London and the USA partners, usually in a standard template form. A supporting checklist summarises the respective responsibilities of AIFS London and its partners, noting areas of dual responsibility (typically in the areas of guidance and support, acting on student feedback, and the provision of accurate public information).

1.5 AIFS London assures itself that its partner universities and colleges are accredited in the USA, using online databases, networks and informal contacts for this purpose. However, it does not hold formal records of accreditation checks. Given the importance of accreditation for the assurance of standards and public confidence, the panel advises AIFS London to formalise its checking process and to maintain an up-to-date record of the accreditation status of USA partner institutions.

1.6 AIFS London has detailed discussions with its USA partners on the courses to be offered during the students' visit to London. In some cases it provides courses to supplement the USA institutions' programmes. Example of locally provided courses, all of which were approved, assessed and accredited by the USA institutions, included British Life and Culture, Art History and Theatre, and the History of Science. These courses were taught by UK adjunct staff, some of whom had worked at AIFS London for several years. Recently appointed adjunct staff were recruited by AIFS London following formal advertisements, interviews and references, and their appointments were formally endorsed by the USA partners.

1.7 Some programmes include unpaid work placements, or internships, which are arranged by AIFS London but graded and accredited by the USA partners. Students are assigned a supervisor/mentor at the workplace and a faculty supervisor, either one of the visiting USA staff or a USA-based academic, who monitors the placement remotely. The mentor, the USA staff member and the student complete evaluations at the end of the placement period. These evaluations were found to be comprehensive and reflective; they are reviewed by AIFS London senior staff for enhancement purposes.

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

1.8 AIFS London's USA partner institutions are responsible for the management of academic standards, in which they make use of the requirements of their accreditation bodies.

### **How effectively does the provider use external scrutiny of assessment processes to assure academic standards (where applicable)?**

1.9 Assessment processes are the responsibility of AIFS London's USA partner institutions.

The panel has **confidence** that the American Institute for Foreign Study, London in the provider's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the awards to be conferred by its awarding organisations.

## **2 Quality of learning opportunities**

### **How effectively does the provider fulfil its responsibilities for managing the quality of learning opportunities?**

2.1 AIFS London is responsible for the quality of visiting students' learning opportunities by providing appropriate facilities for the delivery of all courses on the programmes from the perspectives of both students and academic staff, ensuring the continuing quality of the teaching of adjunct staff, ensuring the provision of appropriate academic, administrative, and personal support to the students, and by taking seriously the observations from students and staff.

2.2 The panel learned of the continuous communications between AIFS London and its partner institutions in setting up study programmes, so that London staff were fully aware of the requirements of partners. AIFS London staff sent recruitment presentations to assist USA universities in briefing their students. They also give pre-departure briefings for students, parents and local academic staff at partner institutions in the USA. These pre-departure briefings facilitate a common understanding among all interested parties of the nature of the London programme, and help students to develop realistic expectations of the experience. They were appreciated by students, and were noted by the panel as a feature of good practice.

2.3 AIFS London takes particular care to ensure the quality of its internship programme (see paragraph 1.7). Before departure, students are carefully briefed about the procedures for visas, their responsibilities on placement, and placement monitoring arrangements. On arrival in London, an internship orientation programme helps students to determine their internship objectives. Where possible, AIFS London arranges pre-departure interviews, directly or by telephone, to assist students in deciding what type of placement is best suited

to them; however, none of the placement students whom the panel met had experienced this.

2.4 Students expressed their appreciation of the comprehensive and student-focused Internship Handbook, which, in the panel's view, was a feature of good practice. This Handbook provides a step-by-step guide to placements and includes detailed information and advice on placement selection and application (including model letters), the responsibilities of all parties to the placement, visa arrangements, placement monitoring, and student expectations. AIFS London had acted promptly to switch the small number of placements that had proved unsuccessful.

2.5 AIFS London pays particular attention to student feedback and evaluation. There are separate student evaluations of the placement, 'early bird' evaluations of homestay accommodation (which allow issues to be resolved early or changes to be arranged), and a comprehensive post-programme evaluation on housing, courses, cultural events, and student support, together with an invitation to the respondent to suggest areas for improvement. AIFS London also receives outcomes of post-visit evaluations carried out by the USA partners. Meetings with student representatives have been established recently, and both AIFS London staff and students reported that these were positive and helpful.

2.6 Senior staff of USA partner institutions visit AIFS London to evaluate the programme and provide written reports. These visits typically last two days and involve meetings with students and senior AIFS London staff, and evaluation of teaching facilities, domestic accommodation, and the cultural resources of London. Examples of inspection visit reports showed that USA partners were satisfied with AIFS London's provision.

2.7 The panel concluded that AIFS London had established effective arrangements to monitor the quality of learning opportunities, that staff took seriously the comments received through a variety of evaluations as providing suggestions for enhancement, and that students were informed about responses to their evaluations.

### **How effectively are external reference points used in monitoring and evaluation processes?**

2.8 AIFS London staff indicated that they develop and maintain the level of the services they provide to students through networking across the AIFS divisions, and through membership of professional associations such as the Forum on Education Abroad, the Association of International Educators (NAFSA), and the Association of American Study Abroad Programmes/United Kingdom (AASAP/UK). These bodies promote and advocate international education, establish principles and good practice, and provide training and professional development opportunities. Senior staff of AIFS London welcomed the suggestion that they might wish to review their arrangements against relevant parts of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, especially in connection with placements.

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

2.9 The quality of the direct learning and teaching on programmes delivered through AIFS London is the responsibility of the USA partners. AIFS London is responsible, along with visiting USA staff, for ensuring the quality of the learning and teaching in courses which it provides, and in placements. AIFS London invests considerable effort in administering feedback questionnaires and responding to the matters raised (see paragraph 2.4).

2.10 Adjunct staff are supported by AIFS London senior staff and by visiting USA staff, with whom they meet regularly. The panel was told that USA staff observe the teaching of



adjunct staff, in order to ensure that standards set by the USA partners are being met and to offer developmental comment. However, as the adjunct staff met by the panel had not been observed by USA colleagues during the current semester, AIFS London is advised to formalise and consistently apply arrangements for observation of teaching given by adjunct staff.

2.11 Students complete evaluation forms on teaching by adjunct staff at the end of the programme; these are analysed by AIFS London managers, who discuss the outcomes with the adjunct staff, and are also sent to the USA partners. Student complaints or appeals are formally considered by USA partner institutions, but AIFS London's Student Services staff help to facilitate communication between the parties concerned and seek to resolve issues informally.

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

2.12 AIFS London provides a full range of student support. Staff are available in the Study Centre every day during the working week, some staff are resident in student apartments, and a 24-hour helpline is available. Responding to student feedback, AIFS London has enhanced the emergency helpline service to provide a quicker and more effective response. Students usually discuss academic matters relating directly to each course with the teacher concerned, but AIFS London staff are available to discuss matters more generally and sometimes raise specific academic concerns on behalf of their students. Visiting USA staff confirmed that the Head of Academic Services and the Head of Student Services alerted them to any particular student issues during weekly staff meetings.

2.13 AIFS London staff provide guidance at an early stage on culture shock, British culture, London life, homesickness, safety, security, travel, and medical problems. Such matters are covered in a comprehensive London Student Handbook, which the students found invaluable. An orientation workshop helps students to develop culture awareness and sensitivity. AIFS London also arranges a number of cultural events, including visits to Canterbury, Oxford and Stonehenge, and to theatres and cinemas. Students appreciated all such activities, and reported that staff responded to their suggestions for enhancing these.

2.14 It is the responsibility of AIFS London to provide London accommodation for the students either in residences or as homestay arrangements with families. The students expressed their satisfaction at the arrangements for providing accommodation and on the overall quality of what was provided. The panel learned of the 'early bird' feedback for homestay students if there were problems. Students reported that AIFS London staff dealt with any concerns quickly and effectively.

2.15 The panel noted the AIFS London team's highly committed and professional approach to the support of students, and found that this was much appreciated by them.

### **How effective are the provider's arrangements for staff development in relation to maintaining and/or enhancing the quality of learning opportunities?**

2.16 AIFS London does not have direct responsibility for the development of USA visiting staff or adjunct staff. It provides visiting USA staff with a comprehensive Faculty Handbook, which summarises the programme, provides details of the roles of AIFS London staff, and offers a guide to the UK and London in particular. AIFS London also provides assistance in finding accommodation for visiting staff. In addition to teaching and learning resources (see paragraph 2.17), AIFS London provides office space, computers, photocopiers, and scanners for USA staff. It seeks to build an academic community of visiting USA staff and

UK-based adjunct tutors for the duration of the programme. The panel noted as a feature of good practice the regular meetings which enable all academic staff to share good practice and discuss scholarly and pedagogical matters (see also paragraph 2.4).

2.17 AIFS London has developed a structured approach to the development of its own staff. Two days each year are dedicated to mandatory staff training based on staff needs and requests. Staff confirmed that development and training needs were discussed at appraisals with line managers. Staff development provision also includes funding for higher degrees, training in counselling, cultural awareness and mental health, secondment to other AIFS centres overseas, language learning, and first aid training. Staff whom the panel met confirmed the range of opportunities available and indicated their satisfaction with the staff development they had undertaken.

**How effectively does the provider ensure that students have access to learning resources that are sufficient to enable them to achieve the intended learning outcomes of their programmes?**

2.18 AIFS London is responsible for the provision of learning resources, including teaching accommodation and computing facilities, and access to library facilities. Students and USA visiting staff found that teaching rooms were appropriate, and commented favourably on the accessibility and quality of the computing facilities. IT facilities in the study centre provide internet access, technical support and free printing facilities, which are much appreciated by students and staff. Free internet is also available in self-catering apartments for visiting staff, and pre-loaded USB sticks are provided for students who live in homestay accommodation without free internet access. The panel noted that there had been significant investment in IT facilities over the last year, particularly in the student residences where connectivity problems had been rectified and 24-hour support made available in response to student feedback. There were apparently no significant resource constraints in providing appropriate IT facilities, but AIFS London had no specific plans for IT enhancement in the Study Centre. While the panel noted generally high levels of satisfaction with IT provision, AIFS London is encouraged to further develop these facilities for students and visiting academic staff, to keep pace with continuing technological advances.

2.19 AIFS London arranges library facilities for students in discussion with its USA partners. A variety of arrangements are in place. In a few courses, free access to academic libraries in London is arranged. Access to nearby university libraries is available; students have to pay for this, but few do so. AIFS London advises students to join local public libraries at no cost and provides appropriate administrative support and advice in this regard. In some cases students are expected to buy the books necessary for their courses, and many have access to online library resources at their USA institutions. Students indicated mixed levels of satisfaction with these arrangements. Some visiting staff were disappointed at the lack of automatic access to high quality academic library resources, which would greatly enrich the students' learning experience. The panel encourages AIFS London, in discussion with its USA partners, to reconsider the provision of academic library access in London.

The panel has **confidence** that the American Institute for Foreign Study, London is fulfilling its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of the learning opportunities it provides for students.

### 3 Public information

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

3.1 AIFS London and its USA partners have dual responsibility for the publication of information to students and other stakeholders, and AIFS London staff were clear about their responsibilities in this regard.

3.2 The AIFS website provides a range of information about all AIFS services and activities worldwide, not only its partnership programmes. At this 'global' level the published information is of a general nature and includes contact details for each AIFS office around the world. The panel noted that information presented about AIFS London did not make clear the nature of its relationship with Richmond, the American International University in London (RAIUL). In particular, it was not clear that AIFS London's link with RAIUL does not affect the study abroad programmes and facilities which it offers to its USA partner institutions and their visiting students. Statements on one AIFS website might be taken to imply that RAIUL is the 'school of record' for all AIFS London programmes, though this is the case only for the RAIUL Summer School supported by AIFS London (see page 5). AIFS London is advised to ensure that its relationship with RAIUL is accurately and clearly presented in all its public information.

3.3 The panel noted that AIFS London information is frequently displayed on the websites of USA partners. All London-based information is checked by the Deputy Programme Manager before a USA partner uploads it to its website. Academic content is now agreed between AIFS London and a partner institution through a signed proposal form ahead of publication. AIFS London was confident about the accuracy with which it is represented on partners' websites, and confirmed that it checked these at the start of the student recruitment process to ensure their accuracy.

3.4 The panel viewed a range of well produced and accessible web and paper-based information about the programmes, application processes, support provided at AIFS London, and pre-departure information on topics such as flights, UK travel, money, housing, safety and security, and living in London. Students and visiting staff confirmed that this information was accurate, helpful and complete. The Student Portal, due for upgrading in 2012, was used largely for administrative matters, such as updating personal information, travel arrangements, and accessing the AIFS London Student Handbook. Visiting staff and students used the USA partners' portals for online discussions of academic matters, and UK adjunct staff usually communicated with students through a dedicated email system.

The panel 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 which it delivers.

## 4 Action plan

American Institute for Foreign Study action plan relating to the Recognition Scheme for Educational Oversight March 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The panel identified the following areas of <b>good practice</b> that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pre-departure briefings are given by AIFS London staff for students, parents and local academic staff at partner institutions in the USA (paragraph 2.2)</li> </ul>	Continue to plan pre-departure meetings for all semester programmes	Immediate	Senior Vice-President	Students feel well prepared  Manage student expectations	Senior Vice-President	Positive feedback on early bird evaluations  Review in focus groups
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>interns are given a comprehensive and student-focused Internship Handbook (paragraph 2.4)</li> </ul>	Review and update Internship Handbook twice yearly	June and December each year	Head of Academic Services	Information accurate  Positive feedback from students	Deputy Programme Director	Review responses at internship feedback sessions and on internship evaluations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>AIFS London provides regular academic staff meetings to share good practice and discuss scholarly and pedagogical matters (paragraph 2.16).</li> </ul>	Maintain frequency of meetings	Immediate	Head of Academic Services	Positive feedback from faculty  Faculty/student issues resolved in timely manner as a result of frequent communication	Deputy Programme Director	Positive feedback on faculty evaluations  Positive feedback on faculty and student evaluations

Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The panel considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>implement the formal practice of recording the business of management meetings (paragraph 1.3)</li> </ul>	<p>Minutes taken at staff meetings, management meetings and focus groups</p> <p>Action already taken and will continue</p>	March 2012	Senior Vice-President, programme directors, Deputy Programme Director	Action items followed up and reported back on	Senior Vice-President	Minutes reviewed by Senior Vice-President to ensure action items completed, reported back on
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>maintain an up-to-date record of the accreditation status of USA partner institutions (paragraph 1.5)</li> </ul>	<p>When proposal is sent to a partner institution, accreditation status is checked on the US Department of Education accreditation database</p> <p>Screenshot saved in accreditation file on shared drive and hard copy kept in Senior Vice-President office</p> <p>Action already taken and will continue</p>	March 2012	Office Assistant	Accreditation for all partner schools on file and readily available	Senior Vice-President	Senior Vice-President to monitor file quarterly to ensure it is up to date
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>formalise and consistently apply arrangements for observation of</li> </ul>	Write formal policy on observation of adjuncts and ensure implementation	April 2012	Head of Academic Services	Positive feedback on adjunct courses from students and	Deputy Programme Director	Head of Academic Services and Deputy Programme

teaching given by adjunct staff (paragraph 2.10)	Action already taken and will be implemented and monitored			visiting US faculty		Director to review reports from US faculty and AIFS staff observers to ensure satisfaction
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that the relationship between AIFS London and Richmond, the American International University in London, is accurately and clearly presented in all AIFS London public information (paragraph 3.2).</li> </ul>	<p>Review AIFS website and add statement to further clarify relationship</p> <p>Action already taken</p>	April 2012	Senior Vice-President US Marketing Director	<p>Students have realistic expectations</p> <p>Please note we have never had a student who has expressed confusion about this</p>	Senior Vice-President	Positive feedback re expectations at focus groups and on evaluations
<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Action to be taken</b>	<b>Target date</b>	<b>Action by</b>	<b>Success indicators</b>	<b>Reported to</b>	<b>Evaluation</b>
The panel considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>further develop the provision of IT facilities for students and visiting academic staff in line with technological advances (paragraph 2.18)</li> </ul>	IT review	September 2012 and quarterly	Senior Vice-President and IT Manager	IT provision meets student academic needs	Senior Vice-President	Feedback in focus groups, faculty and student evaluations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reconsider the provision of academic library access in London</li> </ul>	Review of library access and communication of options to partner	June 2012	Head of Academic Services, Deputy Programme	Students able to effectively conduct research and complete	Deputy Programme Director	Feedback from faculty in weekly meetings

(paragraph 2.19).	institutions  Review of information provided to students on availability of library access		Director  Head of Student Services and Deputy Programme Director	academic work		Feedback from students in focus groups and on evaluations
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## Glossary

This glossary is a quick-reference guide to key terms in this report that may be unfamiliar to some readers. For more details see the [handbook](#)<sup>3</sup> for this review method.

If you require formal definitions of other terms please refer to the section on assuring standards and quality:

[www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/pages/default.aspx).

User-friendly explanations of a wide range of terms can be found in the longer **Glossary** on the QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary/pages/default.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary/pages/default.aspx).

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

**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.

**credit(s)** A means of quantifying and recognising learning, used by most institutions that provide higher education programmes of study, expressed as 'numbers of credits' at a specific level.

**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.

**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.

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

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

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

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<sup>3</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/eo-recognition-scheme.aspx](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/eo-recognition-scheme.aspx)



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