



Manchester College of Higher Education and Media Technology

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

February 2012

Key findings about Manchester College of Higher Education and Media Technology

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight, carried out in February 2012, the QAA review team (the team) considers that there can be **confidence** in how the provider manages its stated responsibilities for the standards of the award it offers on behalf of the Association of Business Executives, and **no confidence** for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of Education for Business Managers and Administrators.

The team also considers that there can be **confidence** in how the College manages its stated responsibilities for the quality and enhancement of the learning opportunities it offers.

The team considers that **reliance cannot** be placed on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Good practice

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

- the teaching observation scheme is consistent and informative in enhancing learning and teaching (paragraph 2.4)
- the designation of a weekly 'guidance and assessment day' (paragraph 2.7).

Recommendations

The team has also identified a number of **recommendations** for the enhancement of the higher education provision.

The team considers that it is **essential** for the College to:

- immediately review customised programmes to ensure that they are located at the right level which lead to recognised awards and include credit values (paragraph 1.13)
- develop and embed a robust, appropriate and secure system for programme approval, design and validation (paragraph 1.9)
- ensure that the information it publishes on its websites, and in specific student materials, is accurate and complete (paragraph 3.7).

The team considers that it is **advisable** for the College to:

- ensure that minutes of relevant meetings are sufficiently detailed to explain how key decisions associated with programme development and approval are reached and recorded (paragraph 1.3)
- ensure all programmes have student programme handbooks and these incorporate relevant and accurate programme-specific information (paragraph 3.5).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Manchester College of Higher Education and Media Technology (the College). 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, the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities available to students, and the reliance that can be placed in the information the College publishes. The review applies to programmes of study that the College delivers on behalf of Education for Business Managers and Administrators, and Association of Business Executives. The review was carried out by Mr T Cantwell, Dr S Hill, Ms R Stoker and Dr M Mabey (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the College and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).² Evidence in support of the review included documentation supplied by the College, and meetings with staff and students.

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

- Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF)

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

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

Association of Business Executives

- Post Graduate Diploma in Business Management (Level 7)

Education for Business Managers and Administrators

- Postgraduate Diploma in Management with Education and Training (Level 7)
- Graduate Diploma in Business Management (Level 6)
- Graduate Diploma in Interactive Media and Technology (Level 6)
- Graduate Diploma in IT and Computer Science (Level 6)
- Graduate Diploma in Health and Social Care Management (Level 6)
- Graduate Diploma in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and Training (Level 6)
- Graduate Diploma in Law and Integrated with Masters Diploma in Legal Practice (Levels 6 and 7)
- Graduate Diploma in Fashion and Management (Level 6)
- Graduate Diploma in Accountancy and Finance (Level 6)

The College's stated responsibilities

The College stated that it has high quality learning and teaching facilities specialising in media technology and that it provides higher education programmes in accordance with awarding organisation centre agreements and guidance.

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

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

The customised programmes offered on behalf of Education for Business Managers and Administrators are devised by the College. For these programmes, the College stated that its responsibilities include setting assessments, first marking and giving feedback to students on their assignments, guidance for progression, and quality review of higher education provision. The College stated at the review visit that it was their sole responsibility to check the accuracy and completeness of information that it has responsibility for publishing. The College stated that responsibilities are shared with the awarding organisation regarding curriculum development, programme specifications and intended learning outcomes, moderation or second marking of assignments, and programme and module information available to students.

For Association of Business Executives programmes, the College stated that its principal responsibilities for these programmes are the quality of teaching, learning and student support. The College stated that responsibilities are shared with the awarding organisation regarding setting assessments, moderation or second marking of assignments, quality review of higher education provision, monitoring the quality of higher education teaching and learning and programme and module information available to students.

Recent developments

The College was established and registered as a limited company in 2009. Subsequently, the College gained accreditation from Accreditation Service for International Colleges (ASIC) and a number of awarding organisations. The College began student recruitment in November 2009 and its first academic session started in January 2010. Since opening its doors, its student intake has grown to over 1,000 students. The College has three campuses in and around the centre of Manchester, namely Cheetham Hill Campus, Lords Street Campus and Turner Street campus.

The College has recently opened an Innovation Technology Centre in Manchester city centre which offers students access to improved resourcing and technology. The development of a comprehensive virtual learning environment is now contributing to the learning experience of students.

Students' contribution to the review

A student representative body was given the opportunity to present a submission for the review process. A draft copy was circulated to groups of students across programme areas for comment and the final submission represented these views. The review team are very grateful for the student submission. The team also met a representative sample of students during the review visit. Again, the review team was very grateful for the students' contributions.

Detailed findings about Manchester College of Higher Education and Media Technology

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The Chief Executive Officer of the College is also its chairman. The College Principal answers directly to the Chief Executive Officer. There are programme leaders for each individual programme. Programme leaders report to an Academic Coordinator who, in turn, reports directly to the College Principal. There is also a Quality Assurance Manager. There are 10 members of teaching staff, four of whom are full-time, who work across the three campuses.

1.2 The College has an appropriate committee structure in place. The Quality Assurance Committee reports to the Management Executive Committee, and comprises the Principal, Vice Principal, and Quality Assurance Manager. There are clear terms of reference for the Quality Assurance Committee, though not for the Management Executive Committee and the Academic Board. All teaching staff and managers are able to attend Academic Board meetings. The Board reports to the Quality Assurance Committee. Staff felt that their contributions to Academic Board meetings were encouraged and valued. However, while the committee structure is appropriate, the naming of relevant committees is inconsistent across key documents, with the term Academic Board being interchangeable with staff meetings. The consistent use of committee terminology would assist the College in having a more effective quality management system.

1.3 All meetings have minutes, although details of discussions are brief. The Quality Manual states that all programme reviews should be documented in the form of minutes of meetings which clearly identify actions to be taken, personnel responsible and completion dates for actions. However, the team found that when important issues were discussed, such as the development and approval of new programmes and student results, key decisions were not recorded. The team consider it advisable for the College to ensure that minutes of relevant meetings are sufficiently detailed to explain how decisions associated with programme development and approval are reached and recorded.

1.4 The College has a written quality management system which sets out its expectations of staff. The system includes the Quality Manual, a Quality Procedures Manual, and policies, regulations and operational guidelines. Information given to the team during the visit outlined a number of procedures, the majority of which are still to be formulated and implemented by the College. The College provided documentary evidence outlining when its manuals would be reviewed, and when its policies and procedures would be prepared. However, the College did not state when these would be rolled out to staff. In addition, the quality manuals, policies, regulations and guidelines concentrate on broad statements about how the College approaches its quality management system from a business perspective. For example, the procedure outlined in the Quality Manual lacks detail of how customised programmes offered by the College are designed and approved.

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

1.5 The College delivers an off-the-shelf programme that is both developed and approved by the Association of Business Executives. The College provided evidence that

this programme is approved. The Association of Business Executives is regulated by Ofqual. The process for the design of customised programmes begins with the Chief Executive, Principal and Vice Principal discussing the potential need for a particular programme. They then produce a programme draft which is considered by the staff team before being finalised and sent to the awarding organisation for approval. Two of the customised programmes offered by the College (the Postgraduate Diploma in Management with Education and Training, and the Graduate Diploma in ESOL and Training) include off-the-shelf units from an Ofqual recognised awarding organisation as well as non-accredited units devised by the College.

1.6 The College is an approved centre of Education for Business Managers and Administrators. The customised programmes devised by the College are delivered under the cover of this centre approval. Neither the awarding organisation nor the customised programmes under review are regulated by Ofqual. The centre approval document provided by the College to the team was neither signed nor dated. The document lacked detail regarding the programme approval process.

1.7 For customised programmes awarded by Education for Business Managers and Administrators, staff draw on their own experience and models of programmes validated by other organisations. The Quality Manual makes no reference to the use of relevant external reference points in the design of customised programmes. No evidence was offered by the College of compliance with Ofqual guidance on the design of qualifications relating to either the QCF or the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). For example, the Graduate Diploma in Fashion and Management programme specification states that it is level 6 on the QCF. However, no evidence was offered that the level descriptors for any of the Graduate Diplomas had been mapped against the QCF.

1.8 The Quality Manual states that industry inputs are an important feature of the design process for customised programmes, and that verification in design and development of programmes may include having the programme, or portions of it, reviewed by industry experts. However, the College provided no evidence of any formal involvement of external industry or subject specialists in the design and development of its customised programmes. For example, discussions with staff provided no evidence of external examining as set out in the QCF. In addition, the College stated that the customised programmes were originally approved by an Ofqual-regulated awarding organisation but it was not able to provide any evidence to support this claim nor any evidence to confirm that the programme content had been mapped against any approval requirements of Education for Business Managers and Administrators in line with the requirements set out in the QCF.

1.9 Based on the findings set out in paragraphs 1.5 to 1.9, the team found a lack of rigour in the design and approval of customised programmes. Therefore, the team considers it essential that the College develop and embed a robust, appropriate and secure system for programme design and approval.

1.10 The team saw evidence that the College's annual monitoring process is fit for purpose and has worked effectively for programmes delivered on behalf of the Association of Business Executives and other awarding organisations. The Education for Business Managers and Administrators customised programmes did not begin until September 2011 and therefore have yet to be subject to this process. The team was not provided with any evidence that the College had a periodic review process in place.

1.11 The learning outcomes for customised programmes consist of a list of unit learning outcomes, the majority of which are based on knowledge and understanding rather than higher level abilities. Learning outcomes included terms such as 'be able to recognise top designers', while assessment criteria include the ability to 'identify scissors, tape measures,

pins and to be able to identify the use of coloured pencils, marker pens or ink, watercolour and wax solvent crayons'. The College offered no evidence of mapping the learning outcomes at the relevant level of the QCF. The team concluded that learning outcomes did not reflect the level descriptors for courses delivered at levels 6 and 7 on the QCF.

1.12 The use of assessment criteria across customised programmes is inconsistent and there is no indication what a student must do to pass unit assessments. There is inconsistency in unit weightings, and no indication as to how a final mark is arrived at or how to achieve a 'good' grade, and information for customised programmes that is given to students lacks key aspects. The College was unable to offer a satisfactory explanation as to how modules would be marked and verified in terms of credit value. The team concluded that there existed no way of adding up the credits attained by a student on any of the customised programmes.

1.13 Based on the findings set out in paragraphs 1.12 to 1.13, the team considers it essential that the College immediately review customised programmes to ensure that they are located at the right level which lead to recognised awards and include credit values.

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

1.14 The College has been offering higher education programmes since June 2010 and has received six external verifier reports, one from the Association of Business Practitioners, and five from another awarding organisation regulated by Ofqual. The reports were satisfactory and included points of development regarding organisation of assessment to be reviewed at future visits. The customised programmes have been running since September 2011, but Education for Business Managers and Administrators have yet to make any external verifier visits to consider these programmes. The College has recently implemented a system for tracking external reports which identifies action points, but, at the time of the review, it was too early to evaluate its effectiveness.

1.15 Clear procedures and expectations for both staff and students are set out in the Staff Handbook on Assessment and the Student Handbook on Assessment. The Staff Handbook clearly sets out the processes involved in the assessment and internal verification of student work. The majority of staff have completed recognised training in assessment, and the system whereby the Quality Manager acts as internal verifier is widely regarded by staff as being an effective one.

The review team has **confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the award it offers on behalf of Association of Business Executives, and **no confidence** in the College's management of its responsibilities for the standards of the awards it offers on behalf of Education for Business Managers and Administrators.

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 terms of reference for the Academic Board include responsibility for academic standards, teaching and learning, curriculum, programme review and monitoring. Quality assurance objectives are reviewed annually by the Management Executive Committee which meets on a weekly basis, with current quality objectives listed in the Quality Manual.

2.2 The College stated that its quality management system is concerned with 'the design and delivery of education and training to students including support services', with effectiveness monitored through internal auditing, feedback and management review which alert the quality coordinator to any issues. There is an effective process for managing the quality of learning opportunities.

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

2.3 The issues concerning the effective use of external references are covered in paragraphs 1.5 to 1.14.

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

2.4 There are effective procedures in place to assure the quality of teaching and learning. New staff undertake an induction programme and there is a system of annual appraisal to identify individual training and development needs. All staff undertake assessor training. There is a structured observation process which takes place annually using standard pro forma with feedback to staff. A process of support and reobservation for those staff who do not reach the required standard is in place and the team considered the teaching observation scheme to be consistent and informative in enhancing learning and teaching, and thus a feature of good practice.

2.5 Appropriate arrangements are in place to gather student feedback on the quality of teaching and learning through questionnaires and through elected student representatives. As part of the assessment board process, the Quality Assurance Manager and Academic Coordinator meet when necessary with students to review their progress. Students expressed satisfaction with the availability and support from teaching staff at the College. The College provided evidence of responses to student feedback questionnaires.

2.6 Students were both complimentary and enthusiastic about the quality of teaching. There is diversity in delivery with staff regarded as being approachable and knowledgeable. Many classes are highly participative and require active involvement from the students which they found stimulating and enjoyable. Students are regularly consulted on the College's programmes via a student meeting and through questionnaires. Students told the team that they felt their views were valued and taken seriously.

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

2.7 Student induction and support facilities are well summarised in the Student Handbook and supported by further information available at the College. Use is made of online induction materials and students were satisfied with the support services provided, which includes skills training, personal development portfolios and an effective tutorial system. Students felt well supported both academically and pastorally on all modes of study. There is an online induction programme for late starters and diagnostic assessment material is available on the virtual learning environment which leads to identification of appropriate support for students. The designation of a weekly 'guidance and assessment day' was recognised by the team as good practice.

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

2.8 There are effective procedures to identify staff development needs and to meet those needs through appropriate induction and continuing professional development programmes. The Quality Manual lists policies concerned with staff induction, appraisal, staffing needs and staff development. The Staff Handbook is given to new members of staff as part of their induction programme. There is evidence of skills audits and a system of annual appraisal to identify the need for continuing professional development and a resulting plan to implement these actions. The College has involved awarding organisations to deliver training in-house and has also sent staff on specific external programmes.

2.9 The Quality Committee oversees and reviews the planning of staff development. There are opportunities for accredited teaching programmes in-house and the provision of teaching and assessor qualifications for teaching staff and all full-time staff have undertaken formal assessor qualifications and successfully completed these. Although staff are well-briefed, many staff are employed on a part-time basis and work at the College on a range of days so the sharing of good practice is difficult and limited.

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

2.10 The College has a wide range of facilities with a number of computer suites and specialist facilities, especially in the area of media technology which includes a television studio and editing suite. Additional resources, when identified, are discussed between the senior management team and implemented to meet both programme and student needs.

2.11 There are effective procedures in place to gather student feedback on resource provision from surveys and student representatives and to review current resource provision. Students expressed satisfaction with the availability of teaching and guidance materials through the virtual learning environment and with library and information technology facilities, but would like access to an e-library. A number of students have to travel a long distance to the College in order to access learning resources on days when they are not required to attend for formal classes. E-library facilities are under consideration by the College.

2.12 Students have the opportunity to feed back at the end of each module and at the end of each year. A student forum which meets each term, allows for discussion and feedback from the College management team regarding actions taken to points raised across all programmes. Students were complimentary of the way in which the College responded to requests and felt that they were listened to. As well as the formal mechanisms, an open door policy meant that students could get regular meetings with staff to discuss issues both academic and pastoral.

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

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 College stated that it has sole responsibility for the accuracy and completeness of the entirety of its public information. This includes electronic and hard copy materials, some of which are produced in both formats. These materials include all of the information that is published on the College website, the Higher Education Prospectus, the College's virtual learning environment and the Student Handbook. The College has plans to produce an interactive guide to higher education and a guide to assessment.

3.2 The team accessed two versions of the College prospectus online. One dated 2011-12, while the other was undated. Both contained numerous inaccuracies and contradictions. In addition to programmes advertised in the prospectuses, the College also advertises other programmes on its website. Each programme is presented in the form of a factsheet with some also having downloadable PDF versions. The team found that these factsheets also contained many inaccuracies or were incomplete with serious omissions of information, such as the name of the awarding organisation or entry requirements. In some cases, the PDF version differed in key information from the factsheet. Inaccuracies of award level were found to be commonplace with, for example, HNC and HND used interchangeably and wrongly aligned with the level of the award. Some programmes were listed with different titles on the same page. One factsheet indicated erroneously that the credits would lead to a Foundation Degree.

3.3 There were substantial discrepancies in the information about the College's higher education offer. The programmes listed in the self-evaluation, those on the website, those available in downloadable PDF format and a new list provided during the visit contained different information. The College was unable to confirm to the team which programmes were running, which ones had been running but had closed, which ones were on offer but had not recruited, and new programmes that were advertised but due to begin after the review visit. During the review, the College responded to inconsistencies in the location of lists for higher education programmes by making amendments to the factsheets of the 10 programmes being reviewed. Amendments were not made to the other 28 advertised programmes. After the amendments were made, the team found that numerous and serious errors were still present. This led the team to conclude that the College does not have an effective process for signing off public information.

3.4 Despite the lack of any reference to external standards or benchmarks used in the design of the programme, the College claimed that it is 'recognised by many professional organisations and employers, graduates can establish successful careers as company secretaries, accountants, marketing managers, candidates that successfully complete will progress into University certificate stage in Master degree'. Students informed the team that they were led to believe that the customised awards would lead to progression opportunities with universities. The College's public information, including website factsheets, prospectus, videos hosted on third party social media sites and public signage all included reference to affiliations with universities. The College provided no evidence of direct affiliations with universities, or that its customised programmes give accurate information to students regarding potential progression opportunities onto university courses.

3.5 There are no specific programme handbooks. The Student Handbook does not contain specific details relating to the actual programme of study. Information for customised programmes that is given to students lacks key aspects, such as module credit values.

The team considers it advisable that all programmes have student programme handbooks and these handbooks incorporate relevant and accurate programme-specific information.

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

3.6 The College's website is created by the College and maintained by a college-employed website administrator. The College has recently appointed an e-learning coordinator and has formulated an e-learning development plan. The Public Information Policy' is the College's overarching policy for the control of information. The College informed the team that this was used to regulate document control and ensure that information is current and accurate. The College's Quality Manual outlines organisational control of documents, describing in detail the College's responsibilities and practices, including the withdrawal and destruction of obsolete materials. In practice, and as noted in paragraph 3.3, the team found that The Public Information Policy was not effective for assuring the accuracy and completeness of information that the College has responsibility for publishing.

3.7 Based on the findings set out in paragraphs 3.1 to 3.6, the team considers it essential that the College ensures that the information it publishes on its websites, and in specified student materials, is accurate and complete.

The team concludes that **reliance cannot be placed** on the accuracy and completeness of the information that the College is responsible for publishing about itself and the programmes it delivers.

Action plan³

Manchester College of Higher Education and Media Technology action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight: February 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 College:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the teaching observation scheme is consistent and informative in enhancing learning and teaching (paragraph 2.4) 	The scheme to be continued with addition of peer observation to promote sharing of best practices	30 June 2012	Quality Coordinator	Increased sharing of best practices among faculty Further enhancement of teaching and learning	Principal	Annual Program Review; feedback from staff; staff performance review
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the designation of a weekly 'guidance and assessment day' (paragraph 2.7). 	The scheme to continue The guidance and assessment sessions to be integrated with virtual learning environment system	30 September 2012	Quality Coordinator	Increased student participation and improved results	Principal	Annual Program Review; feedback from students; feedback from staff

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

Essential	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is essential for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> immediately review customised programmes to ensure that they are located at the right level which lead to recognised awards and include credit values (paragraph 1.13) 	<p>All customised programs, previously integrated with HNDs and other courses, are now fully replaced with Edexcel BTEC HND and other awarding body qualifications at QCF Level 5 and 6 to simplify the qualifications portfolio</p> <p>All Education for Business Managers and administrators and other customised awards/programmes are discontinued and replaced as above</p>	<p>1 April 2012</p> <p>Note: already implemented</p>	Principal/Quality Coordinator	Portfolio of awarding body qualifications with more clarity as to progression routes and credit transfers etc	Board of Management	Annual Programme Review; feedback from staff; feedback from the students; minutes of meetings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop and embed a robust, appropriate and secure system for programme approval, design and validation (paragraph 1.9) 	<p>The draft policy and procedure for programme approval and validation to be finalised</p> <p>All future programmes offered to be from</p>	<p>1 April 2012</p> <p>Note: already implemented</p>	Quality Coordinator	An effective and robust programme approval and validation system	Board of Management	Annual Programme Review; feedback from staff; minutes of meetings

	Ofqual approved bodies under QCF (Off the Shelf)					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that the information it publishes on its websites, and in specific student material, is accurate and complete (paragraph 3.7). 	<p>Complete review of all public information on website and student material to ensure accuracy and reliability of information</p> <p>Monthly meeting of Publication Committee to be held and detailed minutes kept to ensure accuracy and reliability of information</p>	<p>30 June 2012</p> <p>Note: A complete review has already been undertaken and necessary changes made</p>	Chief Executive	<p>The public information on website and all other material is accurate and reliable</p> <p>Regular meetings are held to discuss and identify, in detail, the improvement areas</p>	Board of Management	Minutes of meetings; feedback from staff;
Advisable	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The team considers that it is advisable for the College to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure that minutes of relevant meetings are sufficiently detailed to explain how key decisions associated with programme development and 	Standard meeting minutes template to be amended to incorporate more details about the matters discussed and actions taken	30 May 2012	Quality Coordinator	Standard template for minutes used for all meetings which contains more detail about matters discussed and actions taken	Principal	Minutes of meetings; feedback from staff

approval are reached and recorded (paragraph 1.3)						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ensure all programmes have student programme handbooks and that these incorporate relevant and accurate programme specific information paragraph 3.5). 	Separate programme handbooks for each program to be prepared	30 June 2012	Principal	<p>Each programme has separate handbook</p> <p>The handbook incorporates specific details about each programme</p>	Board of Management	Minutes of meetings; feedback from staff; feedback from the students

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: Handbook⁴](#)

Academic Infrastructure Guidance developed and agreed by the higher education community and published by QAA, which is used by institutions to ensure that their programmes 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 programmes 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 one to eight, with levels four 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 Colleges in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks:

⁴www.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 College 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 Colleges 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.

College An institution that offers programmes 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 Colleges 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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