



European School of Economics

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

March 2012

Key findings about European School of Economics

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in March 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 awards it offers on behalf of the University of Buckingham.

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

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**:

- weighted mid-term assessments provide opportunities for students to receive timely formative feedback while they are achieving credits towards their final grades (paragraph 2.4)
- the comprehensive internship programme enhances students' work-related learning opportunities (paragraph 2.9).

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:

- adopt a systematic approach to document version control of policies and procedures for managing academic standards and quality (paragraph 1.3)
- introduce mechanisms to record and sign off actions and issues raised at academic committee meetings (paragraph 1.4)
- review the provision and accessibility of library resources to adequately support the needs of students (paragraph 2.10)
- formalise systems for the management of its public information to maintain its accuracy and completeness (paragraph 3.3).

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

- review the range and consistency of information given to students through programme handbooks (paragraph 3.2)
- extend access to its portal to London-based students and staff (paragraph 3.4).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at the European School of Economics (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 applies to programmes of study that the provider delivers on behalf of the University of Buckingham. The review was carried out by Mr Peter Hymans, Miss Hamim Azam, Dr Steve Hill (reviewers), and Mr Christopher Mabika (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:

- policy documents
- documented procedures
- minutes of meetings
- completed forms
- meetings with staff, students and a representative from the awarding body.

The review team also considered the School's use of the Academic Infrastructure.

The European School of Economics (the School) is a private college founded in 1995 in Italy. It comprises six campuses offering undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications to European and overseas students. Teaching and assessments are synchronised across all six campuses. The London campus was formed in 1999. It is situated in the Knightsbridge area facing Buckingham Palace gardens. It is the largest in terms of student intake, with approximately 214 full-time higher education students registered on its courses annually. The other five campuses are in New York, Madrid, Milan, Rome and Florence. Students are allowed to attend at any campus of their choice.

A Managing Director assumes overall responsibility for the School, based at its head office in Florence, Italy. Each of the campuses is managed by a Campus Director who is also Academic Director in London.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programmes, listed beneath their awarding body (with current student full-time numbers):

University of Buckingham

- BBA (Hons) degree with specialisation in Finance, in Marketing, and in Management (26)
- BA (Hons) degree in Organisational Communication with Media Management (12)
- BSc (Hons) degree in Global Business, in Entrepreneurship and in Leadership (77)
- Undergraduate degree level short courses in Music Industry Management, Sport Management, Hospitality and Tourism Management (not validated) (11)
- Postgraduate Certificate courses in Fashion Management and Sustainable Events Management (14)
- MSc degrees in Finance, Management and Marketing (51)
- MBA degree with specialisation in Marketing, International Finance, International Business and Entrepreneurship (15)

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

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

- Postgraduate Certificates in Finance, Management and Marketing (under validation) (9)
- Postgraduate Degree level Short Courses in Marketing, Management, Finance, HR and Entrepreneurship (not validated) (37)

The provider's stated responsibilities

The School's stated responsibilities include programme development, specifications and teaching. Following validation, a programme review team meets every four years to ensure that programmes offered by the School appropriately reflect the requirements of professional and academic standards against benchmarks. The School develops its own assessments, which undergo internal quality checks through the Quality Assurance Department. The Quality Assurance Department coordinates academic quality control internally. All assessments are also moderated and approved by external examiners appointed by the School and approved by the University. Student and staff recruitment is carried out by the School.

Recent developments

The School has not carried out any meaningful strategic planning in the past, relying on the small size of its management team to maintain planning through frequent informal interactions and quarterly one-day management meetings. However, in response to Review for Educational Oversight, and other external demands, the School recently carried out an extensive self-evaluation exercise resulting in the development of a formal strategic plan and a range of action plans across all its departments and around its academic quality control. A new Quality Assurance Coordinator was appointed to head the Quality Assurance Department in 2011. Since 2008, a number of changes have taken place relating to its programmes:

- some four-year undergraduate degrees were shortened to three years
- academic titles of some undergraduate degrees were changed from BA to BSc and BBA
- a new contract was signed with the University, resulting in the introduction of master's degrees in the validation agreement
- a number of new undergraduate and postgraduate degrees and postgraduate certificate courses were introduced.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the School were invited to present a submission to the review team. However, there was no formal student submission, but testimonials written by selected students were available. The team also heard views of students through an informal meeting convened with representatives from a cross-section of the programmes during the review. The students actively participated in the meeting and their views of the students proved useful to this review. Two of them had also attended the preparatory meeting.

Detailed findings about the European School of Economics

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The School has put in place several mechanisms for the management of academic standards to ensure that it effectively discharges its duties. It places responsibility for these roles at the appropriate management levels. The Campus Director oversees the management of academic standards with the support of the Quality Assurance Department and the Coordinator from the awarding body. A Quality Assurance Coordinator, heading the Quality Assurance Department and reporting directly to the Managing Director, coordinates academic quality across the six campuses. The Dean of Postgraduate Programmes together with the Dean of Undergraduate Programmes develops policies and procedures. Various committees, including the Programme Review Team, Programme Committee, Teaching and Learning Committee, Internal Quality Control Panel, Board of Examiners and the Joint Board, also oversee the School's academic activities with a clear hierarchy and reporting lines.

1.2 The School fulfils its responsibilities for the management of academic standards. The University of Buckingham (the University) stated in its annual reports and audit documents that it was satisfied that the School is delivering its programmes in accordance with its requirements. Under the terms of the agreement, the School designs and delivers programmes and assesses students. The University validates the programmes, oversees their assessment, and awards the qualifications. The University also approves and maintains oversight of the School's policies and procedures through regular audits, annual reviews and participation at some of the School's quality assurance meetings.

1.3 The team has some concerns with how the School manages its policies, which may in future put at risk its ability to effectively manage academic standards. Several policies are in place, such as Academic Misconduct Regulations. Most of these policies, including the Staff Development Policy discussed further in paragraph 2.8, were being updated at the time of the review. Members of staff were unsure which policies and procedures to use, as current documents are not clearly identifiable. Different versions of documents were used as a result. It is advisable for the School to adopt a systematic approach to document version control of policies and procedures for managing academic standards and quality.

1.4 Reliance on informal interactions among its members, which the School believes is a major advantage of its size, may in future compromise its ability to effectively manage academic standards. Informal interactions clearly speed up and simplify decision-making processes. However, policies and procedures are not consistently followed and important decisions are often not documented as a result. The School's various committees meet regularly, often informally, but their discussions are not always recorded. For example, the Alleged Misconduct Committee convened to discuss allegations of plagiarism when they were initially raised. This meeting was recorded but there is no documented evidence of further formal meetings showing that these allegations were investigated or that the cases were closed. A follow-up meeting showed that these cases had in fact been investigated further and conclusions reached. The team therefore recommends that it is advisable for the School to introduce mechanisms to record and sign off actions and issues raised at academic committee meetings.

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

1.5 The School effectively uses external reference points in its management of academic standards. Its programme specifications reference the Academic Infrastructure and subject benchmark statements. It develops learning outcomes and assessment criteria alongside the Academic Infrastructure and *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and in terms of the University's regulations.

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

1.6 The School has an effective policy and procedures for internal verification and external moderation. Assessments are marked and second marked internally. They are scrutinised by the external examiners before final approval. To maintain the standards of this process, external examiners are selected on the basis of their experience through recommendations and approval of the University. Undergraduate students sit a mid-term examination which is weighted and contributes to the final score (also discussed in paragraph 2.4). This is also meant to provide the students with extensive and timely formative feedback to allow them to improve their learning before the final assessments.

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

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 School effectively fulfils its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities. Under the terms of its agreement with the awarding body, the School is responsible for such matters as admissions and induction, counselling and support, initial appeals, discipline and complaints procedures, course development and delivery, assessments and annual programme monitoring. The University reviews admissions policies as part of its annual monitoring system. It also conducts four-yearly audits on the management of the quality of teaching and learning opportunities. As part of its annual reviews, the University randomly checked 130 student files in 2010. Reports from its reviews show that the University is satisfied that the School effectively carries out its responsibilities for the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities. The School's responsiveness to issues raised during the reviews fulfils the terms of the collaborative agreement. A senior member of staff from the University oversees the collaborative agreement, as mentioned in paragraph 1.1.

2.2 The School has put mechanisms in place to ensure that it effectively manages and enhances the quality of learning opportunities available to its students. The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Handbook outlines a simple structure of responsibility. Each programme specification details procedures to be followed. The deans of undergraduate and postgraduate programmes assume day-to-day responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement. The Academic Director has oversight of the process. A Programme Review Team undertakes an annual review and enhancement audit coordinated by the Academic Director. At the end of each term, teaching staff complete module evaluation forms reflecting on the learning opportunities provided and possible

enhancements achieved. Students have continuous access to course documents through the School's website and the Emerald e-library, as well as at induction. A comprehensive portal is expected to be accessible to teachers and students by autumn 2012.

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

2.3 The School makes effective use of external reference points in its management and enhancement of learning opportunities. It references the Academic Infrastructure, providing details and information to new staff as part of their induction. Programme specifications reference the Academic Infrastructure, and subject benchmark statements and the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education* (the *Code of practice*), *Section 6: Assessment of students* and *Section 7: Programme design, approval, monitoring and review* are clearly applied.

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

2.4 The School has particularly effective systems to assure itself that it is maintaining and enhancing the quality of teaching and learning, to which it responds and takes decisive action. It conducts external surveys, one of which considered a sample of current UK universities' module assessment practices. As a result of this survey, it adopted a new standardised assessment system for level 7 of 15 credit modules, of a mid-term 2,000 word assignment and a final 3,000 word assignment or three-hour written exam. The School also introduced weighted mid-term assessments for undergraduate students, which have received the support of the students. Weighted mid-term assessments provide opportunities for students to receive timely formative feedback while they are achieving credits towards their final grades. The team considers this to be good practice.

2.5 The School has developed mechanisms to measure the effectiveness of its teaching and learning strategy and to test staff knowledge of it. The University monitors it through external examiners' reports and includes it in its feedback to the School. The School monitors teaching against learning outcomes through regular peer reviews and observations. Student concerns may trigger observations from the Academic Director and the deans outside their normal routine. Each programme specification contains a specific teaching and learning strategy which is referenced during these reviews. Students are satisfied with teaching and learning methods applied by the School.

2.6 The School recruits highly qualified and experienced lecturers to ensure that it maintains and enhances the quality of teaching and learning. It submits curriculum vitae for academic staff to the University at the beginning of each academic year for their records. It also uses student feedback to assess the efficiency and suitability of lecturers to teach their allocated modules.

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

2.7 The School has instituted procedures to ensure that students are supported effectively. The student induction programme informs the students of the wide range of support available, including policies and regulations, student representatives and feedback surveys, the School portal, e-library facilities, and guidance on study skills. Learning skills, information technology support, careers advice, personal tutors and access to pathway and programme directors are listed in programme specifications. Through the School's open-door policy, students raise issues and concerns with their learning and the support they receive. The Student Support Services department provides pastoral support, advice

and information. Students spoke highly of the support they get from this department. The School carries out regular student surveys to evaluate the effectiveness of the delivery of programmes. Senior management staff review feedback from these surveys and inform students on actions taken through regular meetings with student representatives. In the awarding body's annual survey, in which students rated various services the School provided, accessibility of staff and career prospects scored highest compared to other services, such as library services which scored the least.

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

2.8 The School's staff development systems and formal methods for disseminating good practice are yet to be utilised. A new Staff Development Policy has been drafted but it still has to be implemented. It incorporates documented staff appraisals. In the new procedures, teaching staff should periodically complete a development record and development plan. Individual staff development report documents evaluate the School's and individual's staff development needs. Existing staff development opportunities that can be considered to address the needs identified include workshops and seminars on teaching, learning and quality assurance. Teachers are offered financial assistance to cover fees for external courses, such as the Postgraduate Certificate for Higher Education and membership of the Higher Education Academy. The School uses a standard presentation for the induction of new staff and issues a Lecturers' Handbook. Senior members of staff mentor new staff. The School plans to improve procedures for dissemination of good practice when the student portal is available in autumn 2012.

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

2.9 The School has a comprehensive internship programme through which it has established effective links with a large database of UK-based companies that have agreed to offer work-related learning opportunities to its students. The compulsory internship is incorporated into the design of the School's programmes. It sets out clear policies, procedures, responsibilities and agreements between the School, students and companies providing the placement. It is drafted according to the precepts of the *Code of practice, Section 9: Work-based and placement learning*. Internship reports showed evidence of reflection and application of relevant academic concepts and theories, such as change management and strategy formulation. The comprehensive internship programme enhances students' work-related learning opportunities. The team considers this to be good practice.

2.10 The School has no policy or budget for resourcing to meet the needs of students. It responds to student feedback to establish what resources are required. As a result, availability and accessibility of library resources to students is becoming a cause for concern. Although students are given information on and access to available library resources, including public libraries, they feel that the School has insufficient books in its library and access for private study is often difficult. They also consider the Emerald First online e-library, to which they have unlimited access, as not meeting their needs. The team recommends that it is advisable for the School to review the provision and accessibility of library resources to adequately support the needs of students.

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 communicates effectively with students and other stakeholders about the higher education it provides. Under the terms of the agreement with the University, the School is responsible for issuing student handbooks, assessment regulations, and School policies and regulations as approved by the University in writing. Although not referred to in the agreement, the School is responsible for the production of all marketing material and the development of the School website. Documents such as handbooks, policies and procedures are produced as required by senior staff. As the documents apply across the international centres, drafts are circulated by email and the final documents written and accepted. The School has produced a range of attractive brochures containing clear and well presented information.

3.2 Some students do not agree that they receive adequate information they require to undertake their studies, although the School clearly produces a range of information to meet their needs. As part of their induction, students are given the Student Guidebook, which contains detailed information about studying at the School and living in London. They found this guidebook to be a valuable resource to support their studies. Undergraduate and postgraduate generic handbooks containing information on assessment regulations, misconduct, special circumstances, appeals and complaints procedures, as well as associated forms, are issued. Students also receive the appropriate programme handbook, which contains information relating to the assessment regulations and academic misconduct. At the start of each year, students are given a document derived from the programme specification containing the module specifications. However, some students are unsure which information they should receive and believe they have not received all the information they need. The team considers it desirable for the School to review the range and consistency of information given to students through programme handbooks.

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

3.3 The School's reliance on informal consultations due to its size may in future curtail its ability to maintain the accuracy and completeness of published information. The School has a document entitled ESE Publishing Policy and Procedure for both electronic and paper-based information. However, the document is very brief and only contains basic information in relation to posting new pages on the website. It has no details on who is responsible for the accuracy and consistency of the information. Although some marketing documents are considered at Board level, the website is effectively under the control of a single person, a developer based at another campus in Italy who manages the content and accuracy of the information. Students are able to comment on published information through the student feedback mechanisms, but there is no evidence that this has happened. The School has recognised that some of the documents contained errors and has undertaken a process of proofreading all documents to remove them. However, there are no formal systems and controls to maintain the accuracy and completeness of published information. The team considers that it is advisable for the School to formalise systems for the management of its public information to maintain its accuracy and completeness.

3.4 The web-based portal that the School has developed is an effective means of providing information to both students and staff. However, at the time of the review this had only been implemented at the other campuses of the School. The team considers the portal

to be a welcome development and that it is desirable for the School to extend access to its portal to London-based students and staff.

3.5 Although there is no specific requirement in the validation agreement, the University and the School ensure that copies of all marketing materials, handbooks and policies are received and held by the University in accordance with the precepts of the *Code of practice Section 2: Collaborative provision and flexible and distributed learning (including e-learning)*. Most materials were approved at the time of validation. Updated handbooks and new documents are sent to the University on an annual basis.

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

European School of Economics action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight March 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"> weighted mid-term assessments provide opportunities for students to receive timely formative feedback while they are achieving credits towards their final grades (paragraph 2.4) 	Disseminate the practice to all other six campuses so that this can be applied in each campus systematically	30 May 2012	Dean of Undergraduate Programmes	The weighted mid-term assessments will be integrated into syllabi to ensure that all campuses include them in their assessment requirements	Quality Assurance Department	Monitoring through internal examination and Joint Board to ensure that these have been implemented
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the comprehensive internship programme enhances students' work-related learning opportunities (paragraph 2.9). 	The current policies and practice is to be disseminated to all other campuses	30 June 2012	Head of Internship	All campuses have adopted the policies and procedures and students taking up internships will be placed into appropriate organisations and will have a more developmental	Campus Director London	Providing annual reports by each campus with student and employer evaluations of their experiences for feedback to aid further development of practices

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, in conjunction with the provider's awarding body.

				work and learning experience		Student internship portfolios will also be monitored to ensure that appropriate policies are effective and the current successes are maintained
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"> adopt a systematic approach to document version control of policies and procedures for managing academic standards and quality (paragraph 1.3) 	<p>Compile a comprehensive set of academic policies and procedures, including revision of current policies and procedures, and a system to ensure that these are reviewed annually and updates are clearly documented to reduce potential confusion over which versions apply</p> <p>These documents are essential as they will inform the Quality Assurance Department Manual</p>	10 September 2012	Academic Director, Quality Assurance Department and Dean of Undergraduate Programmes	<p>The policies and procedures for managing academic standards is systematically disseminated to all relevant staff with formal response to confirm receipt of the documents and all faculty and academic coordinators are informed</p> <p>Additionally, such policies will be available in a designated place</p>	Academic directors and Quality Assurance Department	<p>Demonstration of reliance on the guidelines at Examination Boards through consultation</p> <p>Documentation to be filed for consultation of the policies and procedures at each domain</p> <p>When following procedure, minutes (where appropriate) will confirm that the guidelines have been relied upon</p>

				within academic offices		in the decision-making process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> introduce mechanisms to record and sign off actions and issues raised at academic committee meetings (paragraph 1.4) 	<p>Introduce and document systematic and regular formal meetings rather than informal decision-making</p> <p>A system needs to be introduced to monitor action points decided at the meetings</p> <p>The relevant documentation will be logged for future reference and available from academic offices</p>	10 September 2012	Student Services Academic Director, deans and Quality Assurance Department	<p>A schedule of formal meetings, which are minuted and logged and referred to at subsequent meetings</p> <p>Action points will have been followed up and documented and signed off by the responsible member of staff or faculty</p> <p>A dedicated member of staff will be appointed to ensure that each meeting is minuted and actions identified are followed up</p> <p>A process of traceability will be in place for monitoring decision-making</p>	Academic Director at each campus	<p>Schedule of meetings set at the beginning of each academic year per term</p> <p>Reports monitored to ensure that each action had been signed off by appropriate person and reviewed by academic directors</p> <p>Decision-making will be more transparent and traceable</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> review the provision and accessibility of library resources to adequately support the needs of students (paragraph 2.10) 	<p>A policy for and a budget needs to be introduced to upgrade the current provision in the library to ensure that copies of required textbooks are available to students</p> <p>A continuous plan of improvement needs to be implemented with a regular annual dedicated budget of approximately £3.5K for this purpose</p> <p>The Emerald online library will continue to be provided as it is a very useful source of academic literature as reference for students</p>	8 October 2012	Student Services and deans	Student satisfaction with library services, increased uses of library and Emerald online services	Student Services	Student surveys reporting higher level of satisfaction with library resources. Increased use of Library for research
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> formalise systems for the management of its public information to maintain its accuracy and completeness (paragraph 3.3). 	<p>Complete structural changes to student portal</p> <p>Upload all relevant policies, procedures, handbooks and course programmes</p> <p>Introduce student portal to all new and</p>	30 August 2012	Online Content Manager	<p>Increase usability of the platform for students and staff</p> <p>Increased access to important and relevant information about the School's global environment,</p>	Managing Director	<p>Six-monthly review between portal coordinators across campuses to discuss possible ways for improvement and usability</p> <p>User feedback</p>

	<p>returning students and staff</p> <p>Appoint Content Coordinator for all campuses</p> <p>Implement feedback questionnaire</p>			courses and activities		<p>and increased student knowledge of policies and procedures concerning themselves and their studies</p> <p>Monthly review of all information to ensure it is always up to date and correct</p>
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"> review the range and consistency of information given to students through programme handbooks (paragraph 3.2) 	<p>Ensure that students are provided with relevant student handbooks at induction and ensure that they confirm receipt</p> <p>The relevant information will be clearly indicated in the handbooks to encourage students to read it</p>	10 September 2012	Academic coordinators	Students will be aware of the required information	Academic directors	<p>Students will be surveyed following distribution of student handbooks to determine if they have read the information they require</p> <p>Students will be surveyed also to determine if they need any other information not</p>

						already available
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> extend access to its portal to London-based students and staff (paragraph 3.4). 	<p>A schedule for implementation needs to be established for extending the portal to London campus</p> <p>A person for managing the process will be assigned to implement the portal and train students and staff</p>	30 October 2012	To be appointed	<p>Students and staff will communicate through the portal and utilise it for dissemination of information, course materials</p> <p>Although portal already available, a training programme will be implemented to ensure that both students and staff actively participate in communication through the portal</p>	Academic directors	The usage of the portal will be monitored and evaluated each term and a survey conducted among students and staff to evaluate the performance of the portal

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 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 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 Providers in maintaining academic standards. QAA publishes the following frameworks:

⁴ 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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