



# **Bradford Metropolitan College**

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

June 2012

## Key findings about Bradford Metropolitan College

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in June 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 Edexcel and the Chartered Management Institute.

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 and organisation.

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

### Good practice

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

- the regular review of a comprehensive range of policies and procedures (paragraph 1.3)
- the fully embedded tutorial approach (paragraph 2.10).

### 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:

- ensure that minutes of meetings are more detailed and that progress on actions is tracked effectively (paragraph 1.2)
- implement a system to evaluate student achievement data to enhance academic standards and learning opportunities (paragraph 1.4)
- ensure continued development of the virtual learning environment to support learning and teaching (paragraph 3.6).

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

- review the internal verification policy to ensure consistency with the awarding body and organisation's requirements (paragraph 1.7)
- extend the induction checklist to include further activities (paragraph 2.9)
- maintain detailed records of research, scholarly activity and continuous professional development of staff and monitor the impact these have on the curriculum (paragraph 2.13).

## About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)<sup>1</sup> (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Bradford Metropolitan College (the provider; the College). 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 Chartered Management Institute and Edexcel. The review was carried out by W R Paul Monroe and Ruth Stoker (reviewers), and Suzanne Richardson (coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#).<sup>2</sup> Evidence in support of the review included the awarding body and organisation's agreements, quality assurance documents, policies, handbooks and minutes of meetings supplied by the provider and the awarding partners, and meetings with staff and students.

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

- the British Accreditation Council
- the Qualifications and Credit Framework
- the Academic Infrastructure
- the regulations of its awarding body and organisation.

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

Bradford Metropolitan College (the College) was founded in 2009. At that time, it delivered a wide range of qualifications from a variety of awarding organisations. After reviewing the student target market in 2010-11, the College decided to withdraw from all awarding partners except Edexcel and the Chartered Management Institute. The College had originally planned for further cohort starts in February 2012, but was unable to do so. They now plan to begin further recruitment and enrolment in either July or September 2012 for the Diploma in Management and Leadership, levels 5 and 7, and Higher National Certificate, level 4.

The College operates from one campus in Bradford, which has three lecture rooms, a computer laboratory with 20 networked computers, a library, student common room and an administration office. There are three full-time and four part-time members of teaching staff. This gives the College the capacity to provide education to 95 students at any one time. Up to April 2012, the College had enrolled 295 full-time students, with a continuing focus on small class sizes, delivering higher education in a professional environment for international students. There are presently 13 students registered on the two awards.

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

### **Chartered Management Institute**

- Diploma in Management and Leadership

### **Edexcel**

- Higher National Certificate in Business

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<sup>1</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/tier-4).

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

## **The provider's stated responsibilities**

The College shares responsibility with its awarding partners for the setting of assignments, moderation and second marking of student work, but it has overall responsibility for planning, delivery and assessment of the awards in line with the awarding body and organisation's guidelines and module assessment criteria with reference to the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF). It also has responsibility for providing teaching and learning opportunities to the learners in order to enable them to meet the required standards of the qualifications, with the Chartered Management Institute providing the learning materials for their awards.

The College is responsible for the marketing and recruitment of students for the approved qualifications and also for monitoring student retention and providing feedback to the learners in line with the awarding body and organisation's guidelines. The College also provides student support, staff development and the public information for all awards.

The College has no responsibility for the provision of programme specifications or the intended learning outcomes, as these are provided by the awarding body and organisation.

## **Recent developments**

The College appointed a new Academic Director in November 2011, who has worked with colleagues to revise academic governance procedures to provide enhanced learning opportunities and assure academic quality. Discussions have started with higher education institutions to advance formal progression opportunities.

## **Students' contribution to the review**

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. Two student representatives prepared the submission, using information gathered from their respective cohorts, firstly through a detailed questionnaire and secondly via a meeting/focus group. One student was from the Diploma in Management and Leadership and another from the Higher National Certificate in Business. These students attended a meeting with the College Welfare Officer, who provided guidance and assistance to the student representatives. The submission addressed all the significant aspects of the students' experience and helped the reviewers to develop their agendas for the visit. The review team also held valuable meetings with students at the preparatory meeting and during the visit.

## Detailed findings about Bradford Metropolitan College

### 1 Academic standards

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

1.1 There is a clear and effective structure for the governance of the College, which supports the agreements held with the awarding partners. The membership and terms of reference for each committee and individual roles are well defined in the College's Organisational Constitution. The Executive Board has oversight of all College activity with the Principal as Chair and the Academic Director as one of the two other members. This Board meets twice per year and has responsibility for College strategy, finance, public information and oversight of accreditation reports and annual reviews. The Management Committee meets four times a year and reports to the Executive Board with responsibility for the review of all aspects of teaching and learning and academic standards, including staff recruitment and development. The Operations Committee meets once a month with the Academic Director as Chair and has responsibility for reviewing resources and monitoring assessment and teaching. This Committee reports to the Management Committee. Staff clearly understand the remit of each committee and believe that their contribution to College management via the Operations Committee is valued. They welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the management of academic standards.

1.2 Meetings are briefly minuted with action points for committee members noted. The minutes lack detail and do not systemically capture the discussions or actions to close the quality loop. Improving the quality of the minutes of the meetings would demonstrate explicitly the central role of these committees in the maintenance of academic standards. There was evidence from staff that they were aware of the issues under discussion. However, the Academic Director is developing a tracking system where action points are detailed and signed off as they are taken through to completion. When live, this will enhance the College's management of academic standards. It is advisable for the College to ensure that minutes of meetings are more detailed and that progress on actions is tracked effectively.

1.3 The College has a mission statement, objectives and comprehensive policies and procedures. A Strategic Plan was implemented in 2009 to direct the activities of the College. Progress is followed through an action plan. There is a policies and procedure review process which tracks the formal review of all policies and any changes are well documented. Both staff and students confirm their involvement in the development and monitoring of these through the Operations Committee (see also paragraph 2.3). Students were complimentary of the involvement of the student voice and welcomed the opportunity to make staff aware of their concerns and to have involvement in the management of standards. The regular review of a comprehensive range of policies and procedures which enhance the student experience is good practice.

1.4 The Academic Director undertakes the role of quality manager with oversight of academic standards for the programmes and reports directly to the College Principal. This ensures effective control through the quality review cycle. The quality of academic standards is assured through the annual programme review process with the Academic Director in consultation with staff writing the annual programme reviews. Each review incorporates key points from staff, student surveys, external verifiers' reports and the College's response to these. The reviews are reported to the Operations Committee for discussion. Achievement and limited non-completion data is included in individual annual programme reviews. Evidence of student achievement and progression data was made

available to the team. However, it lacks clear evaluation, with no system in place to use the data to enhance standards, quality or to monitor course provision effectively. It is advisable that the College implements a system which refines the evaluation of data to enhance academic standards and learning opportunities.

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

1.5 The College is largely dependent on the awarding partners for ensuring that the Diploma in Leadership and Management and the Higher National Certificate in Business awards meet the requirements of external reference points, such as *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* and the Academic Infrastructure. The College makes effective use of the documentation provided by its awarding partners as a basis for the management of academic standards. Staff develop schemes of work and lesson plans with the level of study clearly indicated with appropriate activities shown to support learning. Opportunities to share good practice across the teaching team are identified with sessions organised by the Academic Director for the teaching teams to meet and share information gained on a frequent basis (see also paragraph 2.4).

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

1.6 The College effectively engages with external verifiers. The awarding body and organisation appoint external verifiers who make regular visits to the College. The College complies with all requirements of the awarding partners' quality monitoring processes. External verifiers' reports are positive about the management of programmes, the quality assurance procedures and feedback provided to students. Students said that they were given formative feedback on an ongoing basis and benefitted from written feedback on drafts of their work. Summative feedback is both in-text and summarised on a front sheet with appropriate internal verifiers' comments. The review team examined work drawn from the courses validated by the awarding body and organisation with which the College currently has an agreement. The College delivers appropriate assessment to the specified levels and feedback given is supportive and appropriate.

1.7 While some assessments are set by the awarding body and organisation, others can be contextualised and, where this is the case, the assignments have to be approved by the awarding partners before being issued to students. This is detailed in the College internal verification process. The assignment briefs are subject to external verification by the relevant awarding partners. The Edexcel policy is that assignment briefs are internally verified prior to issue. A suitable form is provided by Edexcel for this purpose. A copy of this document was found in the internal verification file, but there was no evidence of the use of this document to internally verify the quality of the assignments used for Edexcel module. It is desirable that the College reviews the internal verification policy to ensure consistency with awarding body and organisation's requirements.

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 and organisation.

## 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 key responsibilities for the quality of learning outcomes are detailed in the approval documents and centre guides provided by the two awarding partners. The awarding partners provide the programme specifications. The Chartered Management Institute provides summative assignments to be used by students, but allows the College to contextualise the assignments and provide scenarios to support the assignments. Edexcel provides example assignments, but requires the College to devise their own summative assignments. These are checked for compliance with Edexcel protocols during annual visits by the external examiner.

2.2 Both awarding partners require the College to be responsible for recruitment and selection, monitoring admissions, induction arrangements, monitoring retention and completion through to claiming certificates from the awarding body and organisation. They also have responsibility for programme annual monitoring and quality reviews, development and implementation of teaching and learning strategies, and gathering and acting on student opinion, while providing staff development and the management and allocation of learning resources.

2.3 Coherent and consistent mechanisms are used to manage the higher education provision and enhance the quality of learning opportunities (see also paragraph 1.4). Students confirm that the provision on offer is appropriate for their needs. Recruitment of students has been an issue during the current academic year due to the College not meeting its recruitment target. The provision has been restructured to address the financial consequences of the reduced student numbers with the UK Border Agency A rating being reinstated in April 2012. There are effective policies and procedures dealing with all other mechanisms for ensuring the quality of learning opportunities and these are reviewed annually, following feedback from students and other stakeholders to ensure any necessary changes are actioned appropriately.

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

2.4 The external reference points used include the Academic Infrastructure, programme specifications and guidance provided by the awarding partners and documentation from the British Accreditation Council and the QCF. These help the College to assure the provision on offer equals that offered in similar institutions. The level of engagement with external reference points is appropriate (see also paragraph 1.5).

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

2.5 The academic staff are well qualified in relevant disciplines with suitable experience to deliver the courses of study. Most of them hold professional memberships and have master's degrees. They all either have or are in the process of attaining a teaching qualification. Where training and development is needed to supplement existing qualifications and maintain academic currency, it is available. Staff are initially approved by both the Chartered Management Institute and Edexcel prior to delivering on any of the awards. Learning opportunities are supported by a wide range of regularly updated internal policies and procedures that, taken together, form a strong and coherent mechanism for ensuring that teaching and learning is effective.

2.6 An effective peer observation scheme is used to evaluate teaching and learning. This is supported by a transparent and successful peer observation checklist. The Peer Observation Policy and the procedures are comprehensively documented and link effectively with the Staff Appraisal Policy and Procedure and the Staff Development Policy. Formal verbal feedback is provided as soon as possible after the observation of teaching and an action plan agreed, where support and training or development is deemed necessary. Inadequate performance leads to a reobservation and, where no improvement is apparent, to capability proceedings.

2.7 Representatives of the Chartered Management Institute visit the College annually to observe the quality of teaching and learning. The reports of these visits express satisfaction with the quality of learning opportunities. A significant proportion of students do progress to higher levels of study at other higher education institutions. Returning students told the team that they felt well prepared for progression and that they valued the expertise of the teaching team at the College. The College uses the awarding body and organisation's reports and student feedback to supplement the feedback, appraisal, training and development mechanisms outlined above.

2.8 In their meeting with the team, students confirmed that the programmes are relevant to their academic goals. They are happy with the teaching and learning strategies used and are confident that they will achieve their qualifications. The student voice is collected in several ways, including end-of-semester surveys, student tutorials and student representation on the Operations Committee. Students are satisfied with pre-admission information, marketing materials and the induction process. In their submission to the review and meeting with the team, students were able to cite examples of where their comments had been acted upon, including the need for new computers and support for students with weaknesses in study skills and English.

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

2.9 The College has comprehensive policies and procedures relating to admissions, accreditation of prior learning, equal opportunities, induction and health and safety. Online video interviews are used to interview students and pre-arrival packs are sent to successful applicants. An informative and effective induction process is provided, with students completing an induction checklist to confirm that they understand the information provided. The induction includes the issue of student handbooks, course handbooks, an explanation of College policies and procedures, a code of conduct, and further necessary information essential to international students, for example on obtaining accommodation, registering with a doctor and opening a bank account; yet not all of this important information is included in the checklist. It is desirable that the induction checklist is extended to include all relevant activities.

2.10 There is an effective tutorial system which enhances the quality of learning opportunities. Initial skills audits are used to generate developmental targets, which lead to individual learning plans for every student. There are formally timetabled tutorial slots using a clear and comprehensive personal development plan to record the outcomes, where constructive formative and summative feedback is provided by staff on student assignment work. An exit tutorial records student reflection on the outcomes and the intended destination of the students. The College also allocates additional time for students who need help with their coursework, literacy, numeracy and research skills, supplemented by drop-in subject tutor support. Students confirm that this additional support is useful. The team considers that the coherent system of student support, which includes tutorials, skills audits, personal development plans and the provision of additional study skills support, underpins teaching and assessment and is an example of good practice.



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

2.11 The College makes appropriate arrangements for staff development, as set out in the Staff Development Policy. Staff development needs are identified through annual appraisal and the operation of a teaching observation process. A dedicated staff training and development budget is agreed annually by the Executive Board. New teaching staff attend a formal induction session focusing on College policies and systems, which is conducted by the Principal or the Academic Director, to ensure that they become familiar with College practice. There is an effective mentoring scheme to assist staff in their professional development, with the College encouraging staff to gain membership of relevant professional bodies. A personal development plan is used to record and monitor this process.

2.12 An annual College staff development plan is created, based upon targets arising out of the appraisal process, the peer observation scheme and other departmental issues. Training and development sessions on differentiation, initial assessment tools, assessment feedback and moderation have been attended by all staff. Opportunities for sharing good practice arising out of training and development are arranged when necessary and staff confirm that these sessions are beneficial.

2.13 The College does not systematically record individual scholarly activity and professional development, and has no mechanisms to monitor the impact of this activity on teaching and learning. However, individual members of staff are undertaking postgraduate qualifications, and they use this experience to inform their teaching and enhance the quality of learning opportunities. It is desirable that the College maintains detailed records of research, scholarly activity and continuous professional development, and monitors the impact of these on the curriculum.

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

2.14 There is a dedicated computer room and all computers are networked to provide internet access and a printing and scanning facility. Free wireless internet access is provided for students using their own laptops, tablets and mobile phones. As a result of student comments, the College has recently upgraded and refurbished the computer infrastructure to provide better information technology support and services to its students.

2.15 There is a small library with books, journals, magazines and prospectuses from universities. The College advises students at induction to register with Bradford Central Library for a wider range of resources and online access. The Hub facility, which offers access to learning materials, including textbooks and journals, is available from the Chartered Management Institute to all students registered on programmes offered by this awarding organisation. Students on the Diploma in Leadership and Management make good use of this facility, especially during periods of assessment, and the College and students consider it to be very useful.

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 College effectively communicates a range of public information to potential students, current students and staff. It is responsible for publishing promotional and marketing material, such as leaflets and prospectuses, and all other programme-related documents, such as student handbooks, course handbooks and unit/module handbooks. These are available in hard copy, to download from the College website and on the virtual learning environment.

3.2 The awarding partners are responsible for publishing information relating to the structure and content of the programmes on offer, but this information is available in both hard copy and electronically through the College. The College prospectus contains key information about the College and the courses available. The website is accessible and easy to navigate and the information provided is accurate. Students confirm that the information available on the website before and during application was helpful and reflected their experience of the College.

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

3.3 The College has standard templates for assessment briefs, programme handbooks and programme specifications. Programme and unit handbooks are produced by the programme chairs together with the Academic Director, using the College's own templates and guidance from the awarding body and organisation.

3.5 There is a public information policy which sets out a comprehensive list of information in the public domain and those with responsibility for it at operational level. The Executive Board is responsible for checking the accuracy and completeness of public information. All documents, policies and procedures go through appropriate checks by the Executive Board before being published as hard copies, on the website and the virtual learning environment.

3.6 The virtual learning environment is in the early stages of development, but does contain links to College policies and the online application process. Module information currently includes assignment briefs, but there is scope for further development to include module handbooks, lecture notes and materials to support learning. It is desirable that the College continues to develop the virtual learning environment in order to support learning and teaching.

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 plan<sup>3</sup>

Bradford Metropolitan College action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight June 2012						
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation
The review team 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>the regular review of a comprehensive range of policies and procedures (paragraph 1.3)</li> </ul>	Review all College policies and procedures to ensure the accuracy, completeness and consistency with relevant awarding and other regulatory bodies requirements	March 2013	Academic/ Admin Director	Accurate and up-to-date document history tables and version control  Readily availability of information to staff and students	Principal	Compliance checks with awarding and regulatory bodies requirements with their respective quality managers and UK Border Agency guidance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the fully embedded tutorial approach (paragraph 2.10).</li> </ul>	Provide three one-to-one tutorial supports in each semester to students	Entry tutorial at fourth week, first review tutorial at eighth week and second review tutorial at	Programme Chair/ Course Tutor	Fewer late submissions, breach of academic integrity and withdrawals  Successful achievement of	Academic Director	Student progression and feedback data analysis and hence annual programme review

<sup>3</sup> 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 and organisation.

<b>Advisable</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 team considers that it is <b>advisable</b> for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure that minutes of meetings are more detailed and that progress on actions is tracked effectively (paragraph 1.2)</li> </ul>	<p>Adapt and standardise the minutes of meeting format</p> <p>Provide more in-depth detail of discussion points, with for and against arguments and how the agreement was reached</p> <p>Clearly label actions for staff with completion dates</p> <p>Development, piloting and implementation of action tracking system to monitor the progress of action completion</p>	<p>Start September 2012</p> <p>Monthly for operations committee, quarterly for management committee and biannually for the Executive Board</p>	<p>Minutes Recorder</p>	<p>Clear appreciation of role of minutes and action agenda</p> <p>Effective and efficient actions with completions within deadline</p>	<p>Committee chairs</p>	<p>Action completion track record</p> <p>Sign-off by committee chairs for consistency, accuracy and adequacy</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>implement a system to evaluate student</li> </ul>	<p>Use achievement data within annual</p>	<p>August 2013 Annually</p>	<p>Programme chairs</p>	<p>Improved student achievements</p>	<p>Principal/Academic</p>	<p>Comparison of progression</p>

achievement data to enhance academic standards and learning opportunities (paragraph 1.4)	programme review to critically evaluate the impact on academic standards and learning opportunities  The process must highlight strengths and development areas with subsequent remedial actions			statistics Reflection on students results with full appreciation of programme success  Follow-up of subsequent actions for future sessions	Director	across programmes and units  Annual programme review report  Action completion track record
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ensure continued development of the virtual learning environment to support learning and teaching (paragraph 3.6).</li> </ul>	Gradually develop the virtual learning environment to include lecture notes for all units and other learning resources  Availability of college policies and procedures and forms	Start September 2012	Admin Director/ course tutors	Improved learning opportunities and higher student satisfaction  Information point easily accessible for students hence increased student achievement	Principal/ Academic Director	Student feedback and comments  Student achievement data
<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 team considers that it is <b>desirable</b> for the provider to:						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>review the internal verification policy to ensure consistency with the awarding body and</li> </ul>	Maintain record of all assignment briefs validation forms provided by the awarding bodies to	September 2012	Programme chairs/course tutors	Completed internal verification assignment brief forms for all units	Academic Director	Compliance check with awarding body and organisation's

organisation's requirements (paragraph 1.7)	ensure consistency with internal verification policy			and programmes, signed off by quality managers of the awarding body and organisation		regulations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>extend the induction checklist to include further activities (paragraph 2.9)</li> </ul>	Induction checklist to include information on student welfare and support facilities with particular attention to international needs	August 2012	Admin Director/ Student Welfare Officer	Improved student support and welfare	Principal	Student feedback and comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>maintain detailed records of research, scholarly activity and continuous professional development of staff and monitor the impact these have on the curriculum (paragraph 2.13).</li> </ul>	<p>Introduce research and scholarly activity records to monitor its impact on teaching and learning</p> <p>Encourage staff to review continuous professional development</p>	Start October 2012	Academic Director	Research and scholarly activity record	Principal	<p>Staff appraisal, continuous professional development and staff development plans</p> <p>Student feedback and comments</p>

## About QAA

QAA is the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education. QAA's mission is to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education.

QAA's aims are to:

- meet students' needs and be valued by them
- safeguard standards in an increasingly diverse UK and international context
- drive improvements in UK higher education
- improve public understanding of higher education standards and quality.

QAA conducts reviews of higher education institutions and publishes reports on the findings. QAA also publishes a range of guidance documents to help safeguard standards and improve quality.

More information about the work of QAA is available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk](http://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](http://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](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary). Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#)<sup>4</sup>

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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<sup>4</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/reo-handbook.aspx](http://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.

**RG 1021 09/12**

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