



Manchester College of Accountancy and Management

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

October 2012

Key findings about Manchester College of Accountancy and Management

As a result of its Review for Educational Oversight carried out in October 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 Association of Chartered Certified Accountants and the London Centre of Marketing.

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 these awarding organisations.

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 thorough application process and admissions policy (paragraph 2.7)
- the very supportive learning environment (paragraph 2.8)
- the extensive and high-quality learning resources (paragraph 2.11)
- clear and effective lines of responsibility for the production and approval of public information (paragraph 3.4).

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 the effective implementation of its internal verification system for formative assessment (paragraph 1.7)
- monitor the quality of feedback to students on their work (paragraph 2.5)
- monitor the effectiveness of its policy on plagiarism (paragraph 2.6).

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

- map its procedures against the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 1.5)
- introduce more detailed recording of the deliberations of committees (paragraph 2.2)
- adopt more formal arrangements for the sharing of good practice (paragraph 2.10)
- develop the virtual learning environment to facilitate interactive learning (paragraph 2.12)
- produce college-specific programme handbooks (paragraph 3.5)
- make reference in the International Handbook to the College's appeals procedure and all policies included on the website (paragraph 3.6).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the [Review for Educational Oversight](#)¹ (REO) conducted by [QAA](#) at Manchester College of Accountancy and Management (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 Association of Chartered Certified Accountants and the London Centre of Marketing. The review was carried out by Michelle Callanan, Gary Hargreaves and Ranjinder Willis (reviewers), and Jeffery Butel (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 documentation supplied by the provider and awarding organisations, meetings with staff and students, and a report of inspection by the Accreditation Service for International Colleges.

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

- Association of Chartered Certified Accountants
- London Centre of Marketing
- Qualifications and Credit Framework
- the Academic Infrastructure
- Accreditation Service for International Colleges.

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

Manchester College of Accountancy and Management (the College) was established as a limited company in October 2009 under the name of MANCAM Ltd and commenced trading as the Manchester College of Accountancy and Management in June 2010. It now has one Director. It is located on two floors of a well maintained multi-storey block in Eccles, Greater Manchester. It provides 12 classrooms, two information technology suites, a library, two student common rooms and two staffrooms.

At the time of the review, there were 26 students attending the College's programmes, including 10 on an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programme. Staffing levels reflect changes in student numbers. Currently, there are five academic staff, representing approximately 4.5 full-time equivalents and 3.5 full-time equivalent management and administrative staff.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following full-time higher education programmes, listed beneath their awarding organisations, with student numbers in brackets.

Association of Chartered Certified Accountants

- Foundation level (3)

London Centre of Marketing

- Diploma in Business Management and Marketing (level 4) (10)
- Diploma in Business Management and Marketing (level 6) (1)
- Postgraduate Diploma in Business Management and Marketing (level 7) (2)

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

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

The provider's stated responsibilities

The College is responsible for administration, student recruitment, staff recruitment, the provision of learning resources and quality assurance. All examinations are set and marked externally by the awarding organisations.

Recent developments

There have been a number of recent changes. One of the directors has resigned to pursue a career elsewhere and there have been changes to the awarding organisations and programmes offered. The College no longer offers NCFE programmes and it has replaced Cambridge with Trinity as the awarding organisation for its ESOL programme. Uncertainty over the College's status in relation to the recruitment of Tier 4 students has led to a considerable decrease in student numbers.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying on higher education programmes at the provider were invited to present a submission to the review team. An initial submission was written by the Student Welfare Officer and prepared by the College in consultation with students. A second submission, written by the cross-college student representative, in consultation with students, was also submitted. The views expressed in both documents were very similar and reflected a high level of student satisfaction. Both documents were helpful to the team. Students met the coordinator at the preparatory meeting and the team during the visit.

Detailed findings about Manchester College of Accountancy and Management

1 Academic standards

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

1.1 The College has clear and effective mechanisms for identifying and delegating its responsibilities. These are evident in the leadership roles and management structures it has developed. The College has a number of agreements with the awarding organisations, although at the time of the visit not all of the accredited programmes were running. All London Centre of Marketing and Association of Chartered Certified Accountants examinations are set, assessed and moderated by the awarding organisations. The College is responsible for quality assurance. Although not currently running, NCFE programmes have been subject to external scrutiny, including biannual Quality Adviser's visits. Reports of these visits indicate a high level of satisfaction with the College's management of academic standards for these programmes.

1.2 Although the current provision is small, administration and teaching staff responsibilities are clearly delineated. The Senior Management Team comprises the Director, the Acting Principal and the Head of Administration and International Office. The Acting Principal's role includes that of Academic Coordinator and provision of academic learning support. He is responsible for liaison with the awarding organisations. The Head of Administration and International Office is responsible for day-to-day operations, maintaining the College Management System and website, recruitment and liaison with the College's agents. There is an established committee structure, although much of the day-to-day operation is conducted informally, reflecting the small number of staff and students. The Academic Committee plays a key role in informing all staff on academic matters, with the Director taking an active role in monitoring and decision-making.

1.3 The general oversight of academic standards, including the implementation and design of policies, is determined by the Academic Committee comprising the Senior Management Team, and administration and teaching staff. The College has identified a need to strengthen policies and procedures, and has appointed an external adviser. While this has resulted in a number of new policies and revisions to existing ones, it is too early to assess the effectiveness of these.

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

1.4 The College relies heavily on its awarding organisations for external reference points. It has also sought to engage with the Academic Infrastructure, although progress on this has been limited. It is important that the College engages further with the Academic Infrastructure and, as it develops, with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, to provide an overarching framework for assuring academic standards that is not dependent solely on the awarding organisations. The College's awarding organisations have provided advice and support in the development of systems and processes for the management of academic standards. The two annual NCFE Quality Advisor's visits focused on delivery, assessment, moderation and the supporting infrastructure, and identified a need for better assessment planning. The resultant reports have informed the continuing development of the committee structure and supporting administrative processes for the oversight and enhancement of academic standards.

1.5 The College has also drawn upon reports by the Accreditation Service for International Colleges. The College's actions to address these issues have been monitored by the Academic Committee. The College is aware of the need to improve its assessment practices in line with the *Code of practice for the assurance of academic quality and standards in higher education, Section 6: Assessment of students*. Some improvements have been made to assessment processes, although, as little assessed work has been undertaken since, it is not possible to judge their effectiveness. It is desirable that the College maps its procedures against the Academic Infrastructure.

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

1.6 The College's current awarding organisations do not employ external examiners and the College receives no formal feedback from the awarding organisations on its students' levels of achievement. It relies solely on students' examination results as a measure of this. The College Management System is used to map students' performance in examinations to data on entry qualifications, attendance and performance in formative assessments. This has the potential to enhance academic standards.

1.7 Although all summative assessment is undertaken by its awarding organisations, the College undertakes internal verification of the formative assessments it sets for its students. However, there are inconsistencies in internal verification practices, including identifying and penalising plagiarism. It is advisable that the College ensures the effective implementation of its internal verification system for formative assessment.

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 organisations.

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 responsibilities and arrangements for managing and reporting on the quality of learning opportunities are those described in paragraphs 1.1 to 1.3. These arrangements are effective in managing and supporting the quality of learning opportunities provided.

2.2 The College's Teaching and Learning Strategy states clearly the requirements for the delivery, assessment and management of all programmes. The Academic Committee meets at least fortnightly and is responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of the Strategy. The minutes of this and other committees are distributed electronically to all staff and the Director. However, the minutes are often cursory. More detailed minute-taking of the deliberations of committees, including allocated responsibilities and clear timelines, would facilitate action planning. It is desirable that the College introduces more detailed recording of the deliberations of committees.

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

2.3 The College follows guidance from the awarding organisations to ensure that it provides learning opportunities appropriate to the programmes offered. It also makes reference to the Common Inspection Framework, *The framework for higher education*

qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland and ISO 9001T. The College's Teaching and Learning Strategy refers to the Academic Infrastructure and recent meetings of the Academic Committee have been dedicated to engagement with it in preparation for the review.

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

2.4 The College's comprehensive Observation of Learning and Teaching Policy requires all academic staff to be subject to twice-yearly annual classroom observations. Following these, staff are provided with clear feedback and, where necessary, action plans for development. This process informs staff appraisal. NCFE reports affirm that the teaching is to a high standard and praise the experience and qualifications of staff. Students have the opportunity to comment on the quality of teaching of each tutor through the Student Feedback Form. Students value the high standard of teaching.

2.5 The College has introduced formative assessments to support student learning. NCFE identified the need for feedback on assignments to be developed further to include more detail on how students could improve their work. Progress has been made in improving the quality of feedback given to students, although some still does not indicate the standard reached or include guidance on how the student can improve. It is advisable that the College monitors the quality of feedback to students on their work.

2.6 The College policy on academic misconduct is outlined clearly in the International Student Handbook, and students confirm that they understand plagiarism. However, student work demonstrates a number of instances of plagiarism, with a lack of consistency in penalties incurred. While these cases refer to internal formative assessments only, students progressing to further study need to be better prepared to avoid plagiarism. It is advisable that the College monitors the effectiveness of its policy on plagiarism.

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

2.7 The admissions policy and application process is detailed, thorough and robust in ensuring the suitability of applicants for higher education study and identification of any special needs. As part of the application process, the College conducts online live video interviews of all students prior to acceptance on programmes. All students confirmed they had undergone an interview along with a reading and writing test. The thorough application process and admissions policy represents good practice.

2.8 The College has a clear framework for student support and guidance. It ensures that all tutors adopt a consistent approach to student induction. At induction, students are subject to a detailed assessment of their English language capability, which may prompt further individual learning support. Students also receive comprehensive and clear information on student life in Manchester. Following induction, the College elicits formal feedback from students in order to inform improvement. Students consider that the comprehensive induction process provides them with a firm basis for their studies. Students confirm that the Student Welfare Officer, tutors and administrative staff are highly supportive in addressing their academic and personal issues. The very supportive learning environment represents good practice.

2.9 The College provides numerous opportunities for students to voice their concerns and provide feedback. Formal methods include the use of feedback forms, a clear complaints procedure, student representatives for each programme and level, and one college-wide student representative. These are supplemented by opportunities to feed back informally, facilitated by the accessibility of all staff to students. Students confirm the

responsiveness of the College to their views. Overall, the College provides an open and positive environment, which students find supportive and inspiring. This is reflected in the positive attitude of students and their satisfaction with the College.

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

2.10 The College employs well qualified academic staff, all of whom have postgraduate awards, professional and teaching qualifications, and extensive teaching and academic management experience. Many academic staff are research-active. The Staff Development Committee is responsible for implementing the Staff Development Policy, which sets out the College's commitment to developing its staff. The College has recently introduced a Training Needs Analysis Form, which is informed by the staff appraisal process and classroom observations. It facilitates the clear identification of staff development needs. Although it is too early in its cycle to comment on its effectiveness, staff confirm that they are supported, a view echoed by NCFE. Informal arrangements predominate in the sharing of good practice. While this may work currently, as the College expands more formal arrangements will need to be adopted. It is desirable that more formal arrangements for the sharing of good practice are adopted.

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

2.11 The College provides an excellent learning environment for its students. Students and staff value the well stocked library, two large information technology suites with the latest hardware and software, a number of well resourced classrooms and student common rooms. Students cite the high quality of resources as a key reason for choosing the College. In its reports, NCFE rated the learning resources highly. The College has developed links with a local library, although students consider that they do not need external facilities. The extensive and high-quality learning resources represent good practice.

2.12 The College has recently developed its own in-house College Management System which incorporates an embryonic virtual learning environment. Students report that it is a very useful tool for the repository of class notes and for submitting their assessments online. As yet, the College Management System does not facilitate interactive learning. Such a development would enhance the student learning experience. It is desirable that the College develops the virtual learning environment to facilitate interactive learning.

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 has effective mechanisms to communicate its higher education provision to students and other stakeholders. The College is responsible for publishing a range of publicity and marketing information about its higher education provision. This information includes an electronic prospectus, course brochures, academic timetable

and general information for its intended stakeholders such as pre-arrival information. The electronic prospectus on the website contains individual programme information. To ensure consistency of information across programmes the College employs a template and all entries must be approved by its awarding organisations before publication.

3.2 The information on the website is constantly updated and proves particularly useful to international students both prior to and during their study. The site provides an online enrolment facility, which has been used by all students. The site also includes a 'useful links' section, which provides direct links to a number of organisations relevant to international students, such as the UK Border Agency. The website also includes policies and procedures, for both staff and students, and links to the College's awarding organisations. Students confirm that the information provided by the College on the website presents an accurate portrayal of the College, its programmes and its facilities, and meets their expectations fully.

3.3 Information on the website is supplemented with internal materials, such as student and staff handbooks, the academic timetable, an induction presentation, guides on report writing and plagiarism, and awarding organisation modules and assignments. The information contained on the College Management System is a repository for both staff and students, including teaching and learning material uploaded by lecturing staff. Students confirm that they access the system and some students indicated they had used the system to download lecturing material. The College also uses noticeboards which provide students with updates. Students consider the information provided by the College to be comprehensive and helpful.

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

3.4 The College has established clear and effective lines of responsibility for ensuring the accuracy and completeness of the information it produces. Prior to publication, material is reviewed and discussed at the Information and Publication Committee, which meets quarterly, and then with its awarding organisations to ensure it is accurate. Agreed material is then proofread by the English Department before being forwarded to the Director for approval before publication. The clear and effective lines of responsibility for the production and approval of public information represent good practice.

3.5 The College relies heavily on awarding organisation handbooks to support its students. These are generic and do not reflect the characteristics of the College learning environment. It is desirable that the College produces college-specific programme handbooks to reflect the context in which programmes are delivered and encourage a greater sense of local ownership and engagement with the programme.

3.6 The International Student Handbook contains a great deal of information for students and makes particular reference to academic protocols. There is, however, limited reference to the appeals process and other policies cited on the website. Although students have access to this information elsewhere, it is desirable that the College makes reference in the International Handbook to its appeals procedure and all policies included on the website.

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

Manchester College of Accountancy and Management action plan relating to the Review for Educational Oversight October 2012								
Good practice	Action to be taken	Target date	Action by	Success indicators	Reported to	Evaluation		
The review team identified the following areas of good practice that are worthy of wider dissemination within the provider:								
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the thorough application process and admissions policy (paragraph 2.7) 	Benchmarking College processes against the UK Quality Code (the Quality Code) to identify possible improvements	31/03/13	Head of International Department	Improvements in admission policy and procedures (if any identified)	Admission Committee Academic Committee	Analysis of student feedback collected upon enrolment		
	Collection of student feedback on the effectiveness of admission process	30/04/13 (tentative depending upon the new enrolment)					Positive feedback by students and international representatives	Analysis of biannual international representative survey
	Collection of international representative feedback on the effectiveness of	30/04/12 and then after every intake						

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 organisations.

	admission process (through online survey)					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the very supportive learning environment (paragraph 2.8) 	Collection of student feedback on their learning environment during and after completion of their studies	24-28 June 2013 and then upon the completion of their studies (end-of-course feedback)	Student Welfare Officer	Positive feedback from the students and staff	Academic Committee	Analysis of student feedback collected during and on completion of their studies Minutes of Student Welfare Officer's meetings with students and class representatives
	Collection of staff feedback on the learning environment in Academic Committee meeting	Last Friday of every month starting from 25/01/13	Administration Officer	Follow up on student and staff requests	Head of Administration	Minutes of Academic Committee Meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the extensive and high-quality learning resources (paragraph 2.11) 	Collecting student feedback on their learning environment during and after completion of their studies	24-28 June 2013 and then upon the completion of their studies (end-of-course feedback)	Student Welfare Officer	Positive feedback from the students and staff	Academic Committee	Analysis of student feedback collected during and on completion of their studies Minutes of Student Welfare Officer's meetings with students and class representatives

	Collection of staff feedback on the learning environment in Academic Committee Meeting	Last Friday of every month starting from 25/01/13	Administration Officer	Follow up on student and staff requests	Head of Administration	Minutes of Academic Committee meeting
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clear and effective lines of responsibility for the production and approval of public information (paragraph 3.4). 	Quarterly meetings of the Information and Publication Committee with formal recording of its deliberations	21/12/12, 22/03/13, 21/06/13 and 20/09/12	Head of International Department	Effective and timely communication of accurate information to relevant stakeholders	Information and Publication Committee Academic Committee	Minutes of meetings of the Information and Publication Committee Analysis of student feedback collected at the start, during and on completion of their studies
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"> ensure the effective implementation of its internal verification system for formative assessment (paragraph 1.7) 	Development and implementation of an effective internal verification system as per the College's Assessment and Achievements of Academic Standards Policy	31/01/13	Academic Coordinator	All formative assessments are assessed and internally verified according to the College's Assessment and Achievements of Academic Standards Policy	Academic Committee	Evidence of assessed and internally verified student work with a 15% sample checked by an independent, external verifier

	Training all assessors and internal verifiers on provision of feedback to students on their work	28/02/13				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> monitor the quality of feedback to students on their work (paragraph 2.5) 	<p>A member of staff to be sent on internal quality assurance training</p> <p>Appointment of an external verifier</p>	28/02/13	Senior Management Team	Assessors provide adequate and constructive feedback to students	Academic Committee	<p>Scrutiny of student marked work and feedback provided</p> <p>Analysis of student feedback collected during and on completion of their studies</p> <p>Reports from internal verifiers and external verifiers</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> monitor the effectiveness of its policy on plagiarism (paragraph 2.6). 	<p>Strict implementation and monitoring of the College's policy on plagiarism at all levels through anti-plagiarism software</p> <p>Training for staff on anti-plagiarism software</p>	<p>28/02/13</p> <p>31/03/12</p>	Academic Coordinator	<p>Students use Harvard referencing in their submissions</p> <p>All student submissions to be checked on anti-plagiarism software</p>	Academic Committee	Scrutiny of student submitted work and feedback given by assessors, internal verifiers and external verifiers
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"> map its procedures against the Academic Infrastructure (paragraph 1.5) 	<p>Training for all staff on the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code)</p> <p>Benchmarking all College policies and procedures with the Quality Code and making improvements (if required)</p>	<p>30/06/13</p> <p>30/06/13</p>	<p>Academic Coordinator</p>	<p>Trained staff members and improved versions of policies and procedures</p>	<p>Academic Committee</p>	<p>Analysis of staff post-training feedback</p> <p>Newer versions of policies and procedures with the Quality Code as a key external reference points</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> introduce more detailed recording of the deliberations of committees (paragraph 2.2) 	<p>Maintaining a record of discussions, required actions and follow up, of all committee meetings</p>	<p>21/12/12, 22/03/13, 21/06/13 and 20/09/12 for Information and Publication Committee</p> <p>Last Friday of each month for Academic Committee</p>	<p>Administrative Officer</p>	<p>Detailed recording of committee meetings</p>	<p>Head of Administration</p>	<p>Scrutiny of minutes of all committee meetings</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> adopt more formal arrangements for the sharing of good practice 	<p>Development of formal means of identifying good practice within and</p>	<p>31/03/12</p>	<p>Academic Coordinator and Head of International</p>	<p>Effective sharing of good practice internally and externally</p>	<p>Academic Committee</p>	<p>Details of topics and attendees at staff seminars</p>

(paragraph 2.10)	outside the College and facilitating staff and students to share the good practice through team teaching sessions, peer observations, inviting guest lecturers and seminars		Department			Minutes of Academic Committee Meeting Analysis of student feedback collected during and after the course Records of peer observations and team teaching
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> develop the virtual learning environment to facilitate interactive learning (paragraph 2.12) 	Develop and maintain a forum where students and teachers can interact outside the formal learning environment	30/06/13	Head of International Department	Higher levels of interaction between and within students and staff	Information and Publication Committee Academic Committee	Analysis of student feedback collected during and on completion of their studies Audit of content on the virtual learning environment Statistics of the usage of virtual learning environment by students and staff (online counter)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> produce college-specific programme handbooks (paragraph 3.5) 	Production of separate handbooks for each programme with details of the awarding body,	31/03/13	Academic Coordinator	Students obtain all necessary information about the courses, intended learning	Information and Publication Committee	Analysis of student feedback collected during and on completion of their studies

	curriculum, assessments and progression routes.			outcomes, assessments and further progression from a single source (Student Handbook)		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> make reference in the International Handbook to the College's appeals procedure and all policies included on the website (paragraph 3.6). 	Inclusion of information on appeal procedure and all College policies in the International Student Handbook	31/03/13	Head of International Department	Information on all College policies and procedures contained in the International Handbook	Information and Publication Committee	Analysis of student feedback collected upon enrolment

About QAA

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

QAA's aims are to:

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

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

More information about the work of QAA is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk.

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

Glossary

This glossary explains terms used in this report. You can find a fuller glossary at: www.qaa.ac.uk/aboutus/glossary. Formal definitions of key terms can be found in the [Review for Educational Oversight: Handbook](#)⁴

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.

RG 1080 01/13

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

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

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