Adapted Review for Specific Course Designation by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

Nexus Institute of Creative Arts

January 2014

Contents

Key findings about Nexus Institute of Creative Arts

As a result of its adapted Review for Specific Course Designation carried out in January 2014 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 programme it offers on behalf of the University of West London.

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 information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Good practice

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

- the involvement of teaching and support staff in developing teaching approaches (paragraph 2.2).
- the innovative use of electronic tablets as part of a learning and teaching strategy (paragraph 2.4).

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:

- further develop and implement its quality assurance policies, clarify responsibilities, and identify clear reporting lines and actions (paragraph 1.1)
- work closely with its awarding body to ensure that delegated responsibilities are fully understood and implemented (paragraph 1.2)
- ensure that its policy on external examining is in line with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, *Chapter B7: External examining*, and that its implementation is timely (paragraph 1.6)
- formalise and implement a comprehensive assessment policy (paragraph 1.7).

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

- review and comprehensively map its policies and procedures against the Quality Code (paragraph 1.4)
- establish a formal process for student engagement and representation (paragraph 2.7)
- further develop its staff development policy and encourage staff to undertake teaching qualifications (paragraph 2.9)
- establish a policy with clearly articulated responsibilities for assuring that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy (paragraph 3.2)
- publish the new website at the earliest opportunity, incorporating full information on the programme offered (paragraph 3.4).

About this report

This report presents the findings of the adapted [Review for Specific Course Designation](#)[1] conducted by [QAA](#) at Nexus Institute of Creative Arts (the College), which is a privately funded provider of higher education. 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 programme of study that the provider delivers on behalf of the University of West London. The review was carried out by Mrs Catherine Symonds and Professor Tom Thomas (reviewers) and Mr Simon Ives (Coordinator).

The review team conducted the review in agreement with the provider and in accordance with the [*Review for Educational Oversight (and for specific course designation): Handbook, April 2013*](#)[2] Evidence in support of the review included documentation supplied by the College and its awarding body, meetings with staff and students, and reports of reviews by the Bridge Schools Inspectorate and the British Accreditation Council.

QAA carries out an adapted review for providers who are also reviewed by another approved body. The *Review for Educational Oversight (and for specific course designation): Handbook, April 2013* provides further details.

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

- *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ)
- the requirements of the awarding body
- the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code).

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

The College is a registered charity founded in 1998 to provide educational programmes in music and biblical studies. The College has a strong Christian ethos which informs all aspects of its operational and educational approach. Students come from a wide range of Christian denominations and have historically been able to study for up to three years on internally validated programmes. A wide range of instrumental and vocal musicianship is taught, along with biblical studies. Students undertake concerts and recording, festivals and mission work. The College works closely with a wide range of churches within the traditional, evangelical and charismatic sector.

The College has traditionally recruited students from around the world as well as the UK and Europe and holds a Tier 4 Licence from the Home Office to recruit international students. There are a total of 79 students studying at the College although only 21 of these are enrolled on the first year of the validated programme.

At the time of the review, the provider offered the following higher education programme, listed beneath its awarding body:

University of West London

- Certificate of Higher Education in Popular Music and Worship

---

[1] www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx

[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

The provider's stated responsibilities

The College takes extensive account of the external reference points provided by the University, and of the Quality Code. The College is responsible for the recruitment and admission of students, programme delivery, elements of assessment and internal verification, the quality of teaching and learning, the provision of appropriate staffing and physical resources, application of the University's standards, regular internal monitoring of quality, and compliance with the University's requirements for annual monitoring and review.

The College's responsibilities are clearly outlined in the institutional agreement signed between the College and the University, and in the procedures set out in the University Quality Handbook.

Recent developments

The College has recently entered into a partnership with the University of West London to validate the Certificate of Higher Education programme. The College's strategic intention is to work with the University in 2014 to validate a Diploma of Higher Education, and in 2014-15 to work towards providing an honours level award.

Students' contribution to the review

Students studying at the College were invited to present a submission to the review team. With assistance from the College, students produced a written submission which provided a useful perspective on the student experience, and a helpful starting point for the team. Students met reviewers at the preparatory meeting and during the review visit. The team found their views helpful in informing discussions and in gaining a clear understanding of the student learning experience.

Detailed findings about Nexus trust

1   Academic standards

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

1.1   The College is developing systems and procedures to deliver and manage the programme currently offered. The College's Quality Manual provides information about policies and procedures for the management of academic standards. However, these are continuing to be developed and lack relevant detail. The College is currently considering options for the structures appropriate for managing academic standards. Management meetings are currently held fortnightly and address operational matters. A recently introduced Academic Committee has been established to provide more formal oversight and review of the provision. However, terms of reference and responsibilities are still being formulated. College policies and procedures are not clearly defined, or yet aligned to the requirements of the University. It is **advisable** for the College to further develop and implement its quality assurance policies, clarify responsibilities, and identify clear reporting lines and actions.

1.2   The College's validation partnership with the University was confirmed in July 2013 and the current programme has been running for one semester. It is therefore too early to confirm that all systems are fully operational and effective. Valuable engagement has taken place between the College and the link tutor designated by the University, although the appointee has recently changed. However, College staff are uncertain of their specific responsibilities for programme management, monitoring and review. Greater understanding is also required of the procedures for assessment, programme management, external examining and annual monitoring. Further development needs to take place to ensure that the College is fully aware of its responsibilities, and understands the policies and procedures required by the University. These requirements are yet to be fully incorporated into the College's Quality Manual, or embedded in practice. It is **advisable** for the College to work closely with the University to ensure that delegated responsibilities are fully understood and implemented.

How effectively does the College make use of external reference points to manage academic standards?

1.3   The College has used a range of external reference points in the development of its programme and in developing its approaches to the maintenance of academic standards. These are generally well understood and inform College procedures. The programme specification shows engagement with the relevant subject benchmark statements for music, and theology and religious studies. Staff are aware of the level expectations of *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and the broad requirements of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code). Some engagement with these reference points is identified in the Quality Manual, although the College aims to further embed these in its quality assurance policies and procedures.

1.4   The external reference points used in the management of academic standards are largely derived through engagement with the quality procedures required by the University. Staff are able to articulate key elements of the Quality Code, although staff are aware that these have not been explicitly addressed or embedded within the College's quality assurance policies and procedures. It would be **desirable** for the College to review and comprehensively map its policies and procedures against the Quality Code.

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

1.5   The College has a developing understanding of its responsibilities for setting and assessing assignments. There is a significant reliance on the procedures required by the University for managing assessment, verification, and examining although the College has not been through a complete assessment cycle. The College has recently produced a draft assessment policy, although further work is taking place to ensure that it is in line with the requirements of the University.

1.6   Two subject-based external examiners, nominated by the College, have been formally appointed by the University. The College has recently developed a policy on external examining. It confirms that this policy is developmental and requires further clarification about examiners' induction at the College, how reports will be addressed and responded to by the College, and how they will be shared with students. It is **advisable** for the College to ensure that its policy on external examining is in line with the Quality Code *Chapter B7: External examining*, and that its implementation is timely.

1.7   The College is in the process of reviewing its Assessment Policy to ensure that full information is provided to students, and to clarify the marking process. There is currently no consistent process for the development of assignment specifications, for internal verification, or to confirm that these are consistent and of an appropriate standard. Assignment briefs vary in their clarity and in the information provided on the learning outcomes to be addressed. Some assignment briefs do not provide assessment criteria, assessment tasks are not fully specified, and insufficient guidance is given to students. Assignment briefs demonstrate little requirement for students to undertake supplementary reading. Students confirm that they do not consider that additional reading is a requirement for assessment for either music or biblical studies. Further guidance and reading lists should be provided to students to widen their research base and allow them to develop higher-level skills. Samples of students' work show that feedback on assessments is appropriate and at times detailed and developmental. However, the approach to second marking and moderation is inconsistent, although this is being developed. It is **advisable** for the College to formalise and implement a comprehensive assessment policy.

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

2   Quality of learning opportunities

How effectively does the College fulfil its responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities?

2.1   The College's responsibilities for managing and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities reflect those in paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2. The management structure is generally effective in ensuring that appropriate learning opportunities are in place. Staff have a developing understanding of their responsibilities with regard to the University for the management of learning opportunities. There is a range of policies and procedures in place to support oversight of learning opportunities, including current guidance documents, for example, the staff development policy and the lesson observation procedures. The Quality Manual provides core information on how the College manages its responsibilities, and this is supported by a Teaching and Learning Policy. This policy is aimed at students and identifies the College's core principles, small group teaching strategies, creativity, and the use of technologies to support learning. Module tutors are responsible for managing the

quality of learning opportunities at unit level, reporting to the Head of Musical and Academic Studies, who has overall responsibility for managing the programme.

2.2   Students benefit from staff who have a wide range of relevant experience and who provide excellent support and guidance, both within and outside timetabled activities. This culture of support is embedded throughout the College. Feedback from students indicates a high level of satisfaction with the pastoral and academic support provided. Fortnightly staff meetings dedicated to discussing different approaches to learning and teaching, and sharing good practice, have had a significant impact. The involvement of both teaching and support staff in developing teaching approaches has resulted in learning becoming much more student centred, and is **good practice**.

2.3   A wide range of learning opportunities is provided. This is demonstrated in the various approaches to teaching and assessment in the music and biblical studies modules. However, while students have not yet completed the first semester of the programme, the assessed work indicates that there is insufficient engagement in the necessary academic underpinning required at this level of study.

2.4   A recent significant development in learning and teaching has been the issuing of an electronic tablet to each first-year student. This allows students access to programme materials, including schemes of work, timetables and assessment information. The tablet also provides digital books, a note-taking facility, creative media software for music modules, and other interactive technologies. This initiative has been well received by students, who confirm that the electronic tablets have become a vital part of their learning experience. Students are well briefed on the use of the technology and there are plans to develop this resource further. Feedback from students on the use of tablets has been addressed following a focus group discussion. The innovative use of electronic tablets as part of a learning and teaching strategy is **good practice**.

2.5   The College provides a well resourced environment that is equipped with music-specific resources, and an appropriate environment for delivery of the programme. There is a spacious main hall with a fully equipped stage, lighting rig and sound desk for lectures and performance-related activities. Five classrooms and two practice rooms are all well equipped for multipurpose use and are sufficient in size for the current numbers. The recent Bridges Schools Inspection report confirms that the physical resources available are sufficient for the current student numbers. Students' concerns about pressure on instrumental practice space is being managed by use of appropriate resource timetabling.

How effectively does the College make use of external reference points to manage and enhance learning opportunities?

2.6   The College's engagement with external reference points for the management and enhancement of learning opportunities reflect those identified in paragraphs 1.3 and 1.4. There has been recent progress in developing its learning and teaching policies and processes against the relevant chapters of the Quality Code, for example *Chapter B3: Learning and teaching*, and *Chapter B5: Student engagement*. However, many of the College policies and procedures have yet to be tested and reviewed, and are not yet fully embedded in practice. There is evidence that staff use and understand the FHEQ and the relevant subject benchmark statements, and these are incorporated in the programme documentation. The College is undertaking an exercise mapping the Quality Code with a focus on reviewing its systems for managing learning opportunities.

How does the College engage students in its quality assurance processes?

2.7   There are appropriate mechanisms for students to provide feedback. However, there is no process for engaging students formally in the College's quality assurance processes. Students commented positively on the opportunities for regular informal feedback to staff at all levels, and state that concerns are considered and responded to by the College. The Programme Committee required by the University has not yet met, but will require student attendance, and there are plans to develop a system for course representation. A process of regular module feedback is in place through the use of questionnaires at the end of each year. However, there is no evidence of how feedback from students is formally considered and addressed. It would be **desirable** for the College to establish a formal process for student engagement and representation.

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

2.8   The College is committed to staff development and has a policy in place. This provides information about the scope of staff development activities. The policy encourages individual members of staff to be actively engaged with identification of their own professional development. Personal development priorities are also identified during annual staff appraisal. A number of staff are undertaking higher degrees. These activities are supported by the College through the allocation of time and contribution to fees. Staff training days are organised two or three times each year and staff are encouraged to engage in activities outside the College to ensure their knowledge and experience is current. Several staff have attended development events organised through the University. Regular staff meetings provide useful opportunities for dissemination of information and sharing good practice, such as the development of approaches to second marking and assessment.

2.9   There is an appropriate annual appraisal scheme in place for both teaching and support staff. A system of formal and informal teaching observations, which informs the quality improvement cycle, has also been introduced. These activities provide suitable opportunities for staff reflection and development of future practice. Many staff are qualified to degree level in either music or biblical studies. The University requires that teaching staff have a qualification higher than the level at which they are teaching. The University's strategic aim is for all staff to become Fellows of the Higher Education Academy. However, staff CVs indicate that few staff have formal teaching qualifications and there is little evidence of engagement with developments in higher education learning and teaching. It would be **desirable** for the College to further develop its staff development policy and encourage staff to undertake teaching qualifications.

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   Information about learning opportunities

How effective are the College's arrangements for assuring that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy?

3.1   Students are provided with appropriate information before joining the College and during their induction. Once enrolled, the electronic tablet provided is used as the vehicle for dissemination of programme and other information. This material includes the Student Handbook Course Specification, module handbooks and other policies and procedures,

including information on student support, codes of behaviour, attendance policy, academic offences and complaints policy and procedures. Students are required to accept formally the terms and conditions contained in the handbook. The programme is delivered within a Christian context and it is important that this is communicated clearly to students prior to enrolment. Students confirmed that the quantity and quality of information provided is appropriate and helpful.

3.2   The arrangements for the development, production and management of information involve staff with the appropriate expertise. Input from students is obtained where this is appropriate. While the arrangements are currently effective, in practice there is no policy that clearly articulates different management responsibilities for signing off information for publication. It would be **desirable** for the College to establish a policy with clearly articulated responsibilities for assuring that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

3.3   The College has produced a range of brochures covering key aspects of the programme. These brochures are accessible, and provide clear guidance for prospective students. Further material has been produced that provides additional comprehensive details in relation to the course content.

3.4   The College is working towards updating its website and currently no information is available online. An earlier version of the website published prior to the review incorporated an interesting design and layout, although additional basic information was needed to ensure that prospective students were fully aware of the contents of the programme being offered. However, the College acknowledges the need to enhance the information available to prospective students and other stakeholders by developing additional promotional material available through the website. Current students have been assisting the redesign of the website, and further work is in progress to rectify previous omissions. The College's stated intention is to publish the new website in January 2014. It would be **desirable** for the College to launch the new website at the earliest opportunity, incorporating full information on the programme offered.

The team concludes that reliance **can** be placed on the information that the provider produces for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers.

Action plan[3]

Nexus Institute of Creative Arts action plan relating to the Review of Specific Course Designation, January 2014						
Good practice	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The review team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the College:						
• the involvement of teaching and support staff in developing teaching approaches (paragraph 2.2)	Ongoing development of student learning experience	Fortnightly meetings with teaching and support staff that are minuted and disseminated within the College and externally, via the Collaborative Link Tutor (CLT)	Currently in place	Course Leader and Team/CLT	Minutes to teaching and support staff as well as Management Team	Teaching and support staff meeting minutes
• the innovative use of electronic tablets as part of a learning and teaching strategy (paragraph 2.4)	Development of student electronic resource as a learning tool through the continued implementation and embedding into the learning and teaching delivery process	Fortnightly teaching staff meetings which are minuted and disseminated within the College and externally, via the CLT	Currently in place	Course Leader and Team/CLT	Minutes to teaching staff and Management Team	Teaching staff meeting minutes

---

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

Advisable	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date(s)	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The team considers that it is **advisable** for the College to:						
• further develop and implement its quality assurance policies, clarify responsibilities, and identify clear reporting lines and actions (paragraph 1.1)	Nexus Quality Handbook that aligns with University quality assurance policies, systems and regulatory procedures Responsibilities flow chart that identifies clear reporting lines and actions	Closely revise Nexus Quality Handbook	May 2014	Course Leader (Nexus) Collaborative Link Tutor (University) Deputy Head of Quality Assurance (University)	Management Team (Nexus) Head of Quality Assurance (University)	Nexus Quality Handbook including flow chart
• work closely with its awarding body to ensure that delegated responsibilities are fully understood and implemented (paragraph 1.2)	Shared and implemented full understanding of the delegated responsibilities in relation to the Cert HE Popular Music and Worship programme and any future developments	Schedule of joint meetings to address the nature of roles and responsibilities related to all aspects of programme management, external examiners and annual monitoring	March 2014	Collaborative Link Tutor (University) Course Team (Nexus) Management Team (Nexus)	Management Team School Academic Quality and Standards Committee (SASQC - LCM)	Schedule and outcome actions
• ensure that its policy on external examining is in	Nexus Quality Handbook: section on external examiners is aligned with the	Review of Nexus Quality Handbook	May 2014	Course Leader (Nexus)	Management Team (Nexus)	Nexus Quality Handbook

					Collaborative Link Tutor (University) Deputy Head of Quality Assurance (University)	Head of Quality Assurance (University)	
line with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, *Chapter B7: External examining*, and that its implementation is timely (paragraph 1.6)	respective chapter in the University quality handbook and chapter B7 of the Quality Code						
• formalise and implement a comprehensive assessment policy (paragraph 1.7).	Revised Nexus assessment policy to align with Chapter B6 of the Quality Code, to include the marking process, in accordance with University procedures and taking into account sector best practice and innovation in assessment	Production of module assignment specifications including schedule for all modules regarding submission, approval by University, external examiners and publication to students Provision of additional module reading Strengthen teaching and learning approach to ensure learning experience supports students to read more widely	March 2014	Module leaders Module leaders Course Team meetings	Course Leader (Nexus)/ Collaborative Link Tutor (University)	Module study guides Assignment briefs Course Team meeting minutes	

Desirable	Intended outcomes	Actions to be taken to achieve intended outcomes	Target date/s	Action by	Reported to	Evaluation (process or evidence)
The team considers that it would be **desirable** for the College to:						
• review and comprehensively map its policies and procedures against the Quality Code (paragraph 1.4)	Mapping current policies to the Quality Code	Production of mapping of Nexus quality processes and procedures against the Quality Code	July 2014	Course Leader/Co-director (Nexus) Collaborative Link Tutor (University)	Management Team (Nexus)/ SASQC - LCM)	Mapping of policies to quality code
• establish a formal process for student engagement and representation (paragraph 2.7)	Develop cyclical Nexus process for receiving and responding to student feedback	Election of students to act as representatives for course team meetings and student experience meetings	March 2014	Student liaison administrator/ course team	Management Team	Minutes of student meetings Minutes of management Team meetings
• further develop its staff development policy and encourage staff to undertake teaching qualifications (paragraph 2.9)	Update staff development policy, taking into account awarding body staff development opportunities and sector best practice	Update staff development policy Nexus making available 'introduction to teaching in higher education' course to all teaching staff for Cert HE modules	February 2014 September 2014	Course Leader Management Team (organisation of)	Management Team	Updated policy document Individual staff award transcript from Coventry University/Higher Education Academy
• establish a policy with clearly articulated responsibilities	Nexus quality handbook public information section and develop a clear public information	Review Nexus Quality Handbook	May 2014	Course Leader (Nexus)	Management Team (Nexus)	Nexus Quality Handbook (Contract - joint

for assuring that information about learning opportunities is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy (paragraph 3.2)	policy			Collaborative Link Tutor (University) Academic Registry - Quality (University)	Head of Quality Assurance (University)	agreement of public information)
• publish the new website at the earliest opportunity, incorporating full information on the programme offered (paragraph 3.4).	Publication of new website including full information regarding CertHE Popular Music and Worship course	Development of 'live' new website	March 2014	Website Manager	Management Team/ Collaborative Link Tutor	Live Nexus website

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 of Courses Specifically Designated can be found at: www.qaa.ac.uk/InstitutionReports/types-of-review/designated-providers/Pages/default.aspx.

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 (and for specific course designation): Handbook, April 2013*.[4]

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

academic standards The standards set and maintained by degree-awarding bodies for their courses (programmes and modules) and expected for their awards. See also **threshold academic standards**.

awarding body A UK higher education provider (typically a university) with the power to award degrees, conferred by Royal Charter, or under Section 76 of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, or under Section 48 of the Further and Higher Education (Scotland) Act 1992, or by Papal Bull, or, since 1999, granted by the Privy Council on advice from QAA (in response to applications for taught degree-awarding powers, research degree-awarding powers or university title).

awarding organisation An organisation authorised to award a particular qualification; an organisation recognised by Ofqual to award Ofqual-regulated qualifications.

differentiated judgements In a Review for Specific Courses Designation, separate judgements respectively for the provision validated by separate awarding bodies.

enhancement The process by which higher education providers systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported. It is used as a technical term in QAA's review processes.

external examiner An independent expert appointed by an institution to comment on student achievement in relation to established academic standards and to look at approaches to assessment.

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: *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland*.

good practice A process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to a higher education provider's management of academic standards and the quality of its educational provision. It is used as a technical term in QAA's review processes.

learning opportunities The provision made for students' learning, including planned study, teaching, assessment, academic and personal support, and resources (such as libraries and information systems, laboratories or studios).

learning outcomes What a learner is expected to know, understand and/or be able to demonstrate after completing a process of learning.

---

[4] www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Pages/REO-designated-providers-handbook-13.aspx

operational definition A formal definition of a term, which establishes exactly what QAA means when using it in reviews and reports.

programme (of study) An approved course of study that 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(s) (of higher education) Organisations that deliver higher education. In the UK they may be a degree-awarding body or another organisation that offers programmes of higher education on behalf of degree-**awarding bodies** or **awarding organisations**. In the context of Review for Specific Course Designation 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').

quality See **academic quality**.

Quality Code Short term for the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, which is the UK-wide set of reference points for higher education providers (agreed through consultation with the higher education community, and published by QAA), which states the Expectations that all providers are required to meet.

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.

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 standards The minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award. Threshold academic standards are set out in the national **frameworks for higher education qualifications** and **subject benchmark statements**. See also **academic standards**.

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