

## Quality in Higher Education Group Final Terms of Reference

The purpose of the Quality in Higher Education Group is to promote a quality assurance system for higher education in England and Northern Ireland which is accountable, rigorous, transparent, flexible, responsive, enhancement-led and public facing. Such a system should balance and respond to the needs of a wide variety of stakeholders, including students, prospective students, employers, HE and FE institutions, professional bodies, funders and others. The Group will support the sponsoring bodies (UUK, GuildHE, HEFCE, DEL NI) in working with others, including the QAA and NUS, to ensure that such a system is in place.

The group will have the following remit:

1. To take a strategic overview of the quality assurance system in England and NI.
2. To bring together, inform and be informed by relevant reviews of the quality assurance system<sup>1</sup>.
3. To consider how the quality assurance system might best support the enhancement of the student learning experience.
4. To make proposals regarding the development of the quality assurance system in England and NI<sup>2</sup>.

For substantive changes, the group will recommend a course of action to the Boards of the sponsoring bodies, including any arrangements for consultation as necessary.

For minor changes<sup>3</sup>, the group will have delegated authority from the sponsoring bodies to ask the relevant organisation to take the changes forward.

5. To consider Government or other stakeholder suggestions for improvements to the quality assurance system, and make recommendations to the sponsoring bodies accordingly.

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<sup>1</sup> In the first year of operation, these will include: Review of External Examining Arrangements (led by UUK/ GuildHE), Review of Teaching Quality Information/ National Student Survey (led by the TQI/ NSS Steering Group), Evaluation of the Academic Infrastructure (led by QAA), Review of IQER (managed by the QAA on behalf of HEFCE)

<sup>2</sup> According to a protocol to be agreed by the Boards of the sponsoring bodies. This protocol will set out: the definition of a minor/ more substantive change in procedure (including the focus of audit beyond the core topics), and how these will be dealt with; kinds of changes which the QAA can make without seeking the views of the group or the sponsoring bodies; length of notice that institutions should receive for minor and substantive changes to audit or review; and any other necessary issues. It will be informed by responses to the December 2009 consultation on the future of quality assurance arrangements in England and NI, and will be guided by the principles of flexibility and responsiveness.

<sup>3</sup> "Minor changes" will not include minor changes in the operational method, which the QAA will have autonomy to make. This will be clarified further when the definition of a "minor change" is agreed in the protocol described at footnote 2

6. To provide regular updates, and recommendations or advice where appropriate (including proposals for further work, if necessary), to the Boards/Executives of the sponsoring bodies, via the secretariat.
7. To consider carefully the cost and burden implications of any proposals, including through liaison with the Higher Education Better Regulation Group to ensure that proposals meet requirements for effective regulation.
8. To join other bodies and groups in advising on, clarifying and explaining the Quality Assurance System to wider audiences, including through publicising its own work, as far as possible using sponsoring and stakeholder bodies' publication methods and those of the QAA.
9. To keep its Terms of Reference under regular review, with the first review taking place no later than one year after the first meeting.

It will be jointly secretaried and owned by the sponsoring bodies: UUK, GuildHE, HEFCE and DELNI.

### **Scope**

The Quality Assurance System is defined as:

- Institutional audits and collaborative provision audits \*
- Integrated Quality Enhancement and Review \*
- Teaching quality information (including National Student Survey)
- Institutions' own internal quality assurance processes
- Academic Infrastructure
- External Examining Arrangements
- QAA Causes for Concern procedure (England)
- HEFCE Policy on unsatisfactory quality (HEFCE 2009/31) (England)

(\* indicates processes which are England and NI only).

The Quality Assurance System is complemented by the work of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for HE and the Higher Education Academy, as well as more than 50 public, statutory and regulatory bodies. The Group will consider the synergies between the quality assurance system and the work of these other bodies, to ensure that the institutional audit method complements and avoids duplication wherever possible.

The Group will focus in particular on England and NI, but will have due regard for processes which are cross-UK. Where it wishes to make a proposal for England and NI which concerns a structure or system which is UK-wide, or where its proposal may have UK-wide ramifications, it will ensure that the proposal is fully discussed with Scottish and Welsh colleagues. Any agreement would need to involve alternative fora and could not be made unilaterally by this Group.

The Group's work will focus in particular on HEFCE and DELNI-funded taught provision (whether at UG or PG level), wherever it is delivered (including HE in FE colleges). The Group will have regard for the different purposes of the quality assurance system including: quality assurance, quality enhancement and the provision of public information.

The Group will not attempt to manage the work of the various reviews referred to at point 2 of the remit, as these already have (or will already have) their own distinct governance processes in place. Rather the Group will enable the sponsor bodies to see the reviews as part of a whole, feed into them in a more co-ordinated way and enable synergies between them.

## Initial Priorities

In the first year of operation (Jan- Dec 2010), the Group will focus on the development of the revised audit method, through:

1) Considering responses to the consultation on the future of quality arrangements in England and NI, and enable the sponsoring bodies to agree advice and proposals to their respective Boards/ Executive Committee setting out an agreed way forward. This advice will include the protocol for the powers of this Group and recommendations for the QAA in preparing the Operational Description.

2) Considering the Operational Description for the revised audit method, with the expectation that the QAA would act upon any recommendations by the group, prior to its publication for open consultation.

It will also:

3) Take a particular interest in ensuring links across the following workstreams:

- Review of External Examining Arrangements (led by UUK/ GuildHE)
- Review of Teaching Quality Information/ National Student Survey (led by the TQI/NSS Steering Group)
- Evaluation of the Academic Infrastructure (led by QAA)
- Review of Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review (managed by the QAA on behalf of HEFCE)

## Membership

Position	Name
<b>Chair</b>	Philip Jones, Vice-Chancellor, Sheffield Hallam University
<b>HEFCE nominees</b>	Janet Beer, Vice-Chancellor, Oxford Brookes University and Chair of TQI/ NSS Steering Group
	Tim Wilson, Vice-Chancellor, University of Hertfordshire and Chair of TQSE
<b>DELNI nominee</b>	Denise McAlister, PVC (Learning and Teaching), University of Ulster
<b>UUK nominees</b>	Joy Carter, VC, University of Winchester
	Saul Tendler, PVC, University of Nottingham
<b>GuildHE nominee</b>	Ruth Farwell, VC, Buckinghamshire New University
<b>QAA nominee</b>	Sir Rodney Brooke, Chair of the QAA Board
<b>Chair of Academic Registrar Council's Quality Practitioners' Group</b>	Ros Boyne, Academic Registrar, Birmingham City University
<b>Head of Quality (nominated by Quality Strategy Network)</b>	Ian Robinson, Dean of Quality Enhancement, Edge Hill University
<b>Association of Colleges nominee</b>	Clive Turner, HE Quality Learning and Teaching Manager , City College Norwich
<b>PSRB representative</b>	Matthew Harrison, Director: Education Programmes, Royal Academy of Engineering

<b>Pre-HE sector representative</b>	John Morgan, President of the Association of School and College Leaders (ASCL)
<b>NUS nominees</b>	Charlie Leyland, Vice-President Education at University of York Students' Union
	Aaron Porter, Vice-President Higher Education
<b>HE Academy Chief Executive</b>	Sean Mackney, Acting Chief Executive
<b>QAA Chief Executive</b>	Anthony McClaran, Chief Executive
<b>HEFCE Director for Education and Participation</b>	John Selby (to end April 2010) (Heather Fry from May 2010)

### Observers

<b>BIS</b>	Bev Thomas
<b>HEFCW</b>	Cliona O'Neill
<b>SFC</b>	Lesley Sutherland
<b>AoC</b>	Joy Mercer

### Secretariat

<b>UUK</b>	Fiona Hoban
<b>GuildHE</b>	Helen Bowles
<b>HEFCE</b>	Emma Creasey/ Chris Taylor
<b>DELNI</b>	Helen Gartley

### Practicalities

The Group should meet at least three times per year, but will also operate by correspondence. From 2011, meeting dates will be canvassed with a choice of dates where timetables permit. Where a member is unable to attend a meeting and would like to nominate an alternate, this will be at the discretion of the chair (applications should be made through the secretariat). All observers will be invited to every meeting of the Group.

The Group will operate transparently, including through publishing papers on a dedicated web page. In order to ensure that the Group is fully informed by a wide range of expertise, time-limited sub-groups or one-off meetings of interested parties may be set up.

### Programme of meetings in 2010

#### *25 February 2010*

The first meeting of the Group will take place during the consultation period on future arrangements for quality assurance in England and NI (which closes on 5 March 2010). The Group should agree their Terms of Reference and receive papers to bring it up to date on all developments within the Quality Assurance System.

#### *26 March 2010*

At the second meeting the group will consider the results of the consultation and agree proposals to be put to the UUK Board (23 April 2010), GuildHE Executive (by correspondence) and HEFCE Board (6 May 2010).

#### *16 September 2010*

This meeting allows the opportunity to consider the Operational Description for institutional audit prepared by the QAA prior to its publication for open consultation. It also offers the opportunity to consider one or more of the following workstreams: review of external examining arrangements, review of Teaching Quality Information, evaluation of the Academic Infrastructure, review of Integrated Quality Enhancement and Review.

*6 December 2010*

Again, this meeting offers the opportunity to consider one or more of the following workstreams: review of external examining arrangements, review of Teaching Quality Information, evaluation of the Academic Infrastructure, review of Integrated Quality Enhancement and Review. It may also offer the opportunity to consider early responses to the consultation on the Operational Description.