



Seventh meeting of the Quality in Higher Education Group

Thursday 22 September 2011, 1030-1330

HEFCE Offices, 12th Floor, Centre Point, 103 New Oxford Street, London

Lunch will be provided

Agenda

1. **Chair's welcome**, including to:
 - Usman Ali, Vice President, Higher Education, NUS (new member)
 - Rob Behrens, Independent Adjudicator and Chief Executive of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (by invitation)
2. **Minutes of the last meeting** on 9 June 2011 (QHEG/2011/15) (approved by correspondence)
3. **Matters arising** from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda
4. **White Paper and associated consultations** (QHEG 2011/16)

To include a presentation on the BIS technical consultation 'A new, fit-for purpose regulatory framework for the higher education sector', by Lewis Allan, Policy Adviser, Higher Education Policy Directorate, BIS

5. Update from the **Higher Education Better Regulation Group** (QHEG 2011/17). *Annex B confidential as subject to later publication.*
6. **UK Professional Standards Framework** (QHEG 2011/18) *Annex A confidential as subject to later publication by HEA.*
7. Progress Report: **Review of higher education in further education colleges in England** (QHEG 2011/19). *Annexes confidential as subject to later publication by QAA.*
8. **HEFCE Policy on unsatisfactory quality** (QHEG 2011/20)- for information only. *Confidential as subject to later publication by HEFCE.*

9. Any other business

Dates of future meetings

- 15 December 2011
- 27 February, 9 July, 25 October 2012

Minutes of the Sixth meeting of the Quality in Higher Education Group

Thursday 9 June 2011, 14.00 – 16.00, Board Room, Woburn House, 20 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9HQ

Attendance

Members:

Professor Philip Jones (Chair)
Mr Alex Bols (Head of Education and Quality, NUS)
Ms Ros Boyne (Academic Registrar, Birmingham City University and Chair of ARC Quality Practitioners' Group)
Sir Rodney Brooke (Chair, QAA Board)
Professor Ruth Farwell (VC, Buckinghamshire New University)
Professor Matthew Harrison (Director Education, Royal Academy of Engineering)
Ms Kate Little (Academic Affairs Officer, Manchester University)
Mr William Locke (Head of Learning and Teaching, HEFCE) for Heather Fry (Director of Education and Participation)
Professor Craig Mahoney (Chief Executive, HE Academy)
Professor Denise McAllister (PVC, University of Ulster)
Mr Anthony McClaran (Chief Executive, QAA)
Professor Jonathan Osmond (Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education and Students, Cardiff University and HEPISG member, for Professor Janet Beer, Chair of HEPISG)
Professor Ian Robinson (Dean of Quality Enhancement, Edge Hill University and QSN nomination)
Professor Saul Tendler (PVC, University of Nottingham)
Mr Clive Turner (HE Quality L&T Manager, City College Norwich)

Observers:

Patricia McVeigh (DELNI)
Cliona O'Neill (HEFCW)
Lesley Sutherland (SFC)
Bev Thomas (BIS)

Secretariat:

Helen Bowles (GuildHE)
Tish Bourke (HEFCE)
Fiona Hoban (UUK)

In attendance:

Stephen Jackson (Director of Reviews, QAA)

Apologies:

Professor Joy Carter, Professor Janet Beer, Heather Fry, John Morgan, Joy Mercer

Chair's welcome

1. The Chair welcomed the Group to the meeting. He explained that, when the date had been set, he had hoped to be able to discuss the Higher Education White Paper, which was likely to include a number of issues either directly or indirectly relating to quality assurance. Given the delay in publication, the White Paper would be a key focus of discussion at the next meeting in September.

Minutes of the last meeting on 26 January 2011 (QHEG/2011/09)

2. These had already been approved by correspondence.

Matters arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)

3. The Group noted the following:
 - a. Paras. 5- 7: The Chair confirmed that the **Institutional Review** handbook was published on 31 March 2011. There would initially be three judgments on: standards, quality and (as QHEG recommended) the 'enhancement of student learning opportunities'.
 - b. Para. 7 h: Anthony McClaran commented on the fit between the QAA's process for **Concerns about Standards and Quality in HE procedure** and Institutional Review. He explained that the Concerns procedure, which had been recently revised, was not routine, but allowed focused and rapid investigation of concerns. The findings could stimulate an Institutional Review and/or be taken account of in planned future Institutional Reviews. The Group agreed that it was very important for the processes to be seen as complementary and contributing to a quality assurance process which took account of risk.
 - c. Paras. 10-12: The Group noted that, following a further round of email correspondence with QHEG members in March 2011, the **first year student experience** had been confirmed as the theme for Institutional Review in 2011/12. This theme had been met with general support both from students and the sector.
 - d. Para. 22: The Group noted that the report on **student charters** had been published by BIS, with recommendations to the sector. A student charter 'or equivalent document' setting out mutual expectations of the institution and of students has been identified as a source of evidence for institutional review.

Outcomes of the QAA consultation on the Academic Infrastructure, oral item

4. Anthony McClaran explained that the QAA was in the process of revising and restructuring the existing UK wide Academic Infrastructure, and renaming it the UK Quality Code for HE (Quality Code). The new review method in England and NI required clearer reference points (in particular, relating to threshold standards), while the Quality Code should also be more prominent and accessible for students and the general public. The new Quality Code would be organised according to the student journey, in three blocks (quality, standards, information). Alex Bols expressed the NUS' support for this

approach. A steering group was overseeing the review, supported by specialist advisory groups on particular elements. Priority would be given to producing the new section on public information, and also to new chapters on student engagement and learning and teaching. The QAA was expected to publish a final report on the consultation soon.

5. The QAA was not aiming to complete all sections of the Code at the same time resulting in major new re-launch but rather to have a steady programme of development and implementation. Anthony indicated that the final report would include a timetable for the process going forward.
6. Ros Boyne noted general support among quality practitioners in the sector for the changes. Cliona O'Neill noted that the Code needed to remain UK-wide, and that a careful approach would need to be taken to public information, where requirements differed by country.

Institutional Review of HE: The judgment on PI (QHEG/2011/10)

7. The Chair reminded the Group that the QAA Board had already agreed that from 2012-13 institutional review of HEIs in England and Northern Ireland would include a judgment on the information provided by higher education institutions. However, the decision on how the judgment would operate in practice was delayed until the contents of the dataset were agreed. Now that HEPISG had agreed the dataset, this Group and the QAA needed to make a decision on how the judgment would operate, so that it could be announced in the HEFCE/ UUK/ GuildHE circular on public information to be published imminently. The Group had received, in confidence, a late draft of this circular, which would be subject to further revisions before publication. Jonathan Osmond explained the contents to the Group, and also commented on the outcomes of the Higher Education Public Information Steering Group held on 8 June 2011. In particular, he noted that technical guidance on the implementation of the Key Information Set would be published by HEFCE in September 2011 [*Secretariat note: it was subsequently agreed that the technical guidance would be published by HESA with a complementary HEFCE circular letter*].
8. Stephen Jackson then introduced the paper about the judgment on public information. He explained that expectations would be set out in reference points in the Quality Code, as discussed under the previous item. The Code would encompass expectations for the whole of the UK. QAA would also make specific reference to a definitive list of the information set for England which would be maintained on the HEFCE website.
9. Alex Bols from the NUS welcomed that reviewers would look at a wide range of information, not just pre-arrival (ie. not just the KIS).
10. The Group then discussed exactly what reviewers would be looking for. The judgments would be made as part of Institutional Review, not as part of a yearly desk-based review. The paper proposed that the teams should look at the accessibility, reliability, completeness and currency of the data. This would include taking into account the views of students, although it would be harder to do this for reviews in 2012-13 since students would not have had the benefit of KIS' before application.

11. There was some discussion about how far the team could consider also “utility”. One member wondered whether it would be problematic to judge utility, if the KIS was, as designed, not going to be very high value for applicants. Stephen explained that the reviewers, in making a judgment on utility, would not look only at the KIS. In addition, the Group agreed that the views of students as collected in Institutional Review could be fed into the evaluation of the KIS and wider information set. This point would be added to the circular.
12. The Group wanted to be clear about the audit question. It understood that the QAA would be considering the management of information, and how HEIs assured themselves about the completeness, currency and utility of the data. The QAA would not be in a position to make comprehensive statements about accuracy, nor would they assess the appropriateness of information against predetermined standards (eg. whether proportion of hours of guided independent learning was too high or too low). The word “management of” would not be included in the judgment, but would be clarified in the accompanying explanatory notes.
13. Stephen explained that it would be difficult for a small team of reviewers to assess accuracy, especially with reference to the KIS which would be primarily pulled together by HEFCE (or HESA in future years). HEFCE and HESA should have their own data assurance methods, eg. for the DLHE and NSS, and so review teams would not seek to comment on or assess the performance of other agencies that had responsibility for the processing and publication of information about individual higher education institutions.
14. The institutional review handbook had noted, subject to confirmation that the judgment would be graded as: ‘commended’, ‘meeting UK expectations’, ‘requires improvement to meet UK expectations’ or ‘does not meet UK expectations’. The Group concurred with the QAA, that it would be more appropriate to refer to national than UK expectations.
15. There was some discussion as to whether the four point grading structure should be maintained; in particular, the Group wondered how commendation would be gained.
16. Stephen explained that the Code would set out good practice on the management of information and, as discussed earlier, this would go well beyond the KIS. Clearly it would be impossible to go above national expectations in the production of the KIS, due to the standard design; however, the reviewers would also be looking at a much richer variety of information (eg. prospectuses, programme specifications and so on), so the QAA would be able to specify guidance for commendation in the presentation of data like these. Anthony McClaran reiterated that it would not solely be a pass-fail judgment on whether data was there/ not there, but that conceptually there was space for good practice. Indeed, the QAA was used to looking at a wider variety of information for the purposes of producing a comment on information in current institutional audit, and assessing how far these were delivered in order to be accessible and useful. BIS and HEFCE both argued that it should be possible to identify excellent practice in public information.
17. The Group seemed broadly convinced by the arguments, especially as the judgment would be about more than the KIS, and this would need to be

explained carefully. It was agreed that the Quality Code supported by the detailed Institutional Review handbook (to be revised by January 2012) would provide more information on the expectations as well as the guidance on how grades will be determined. Relevant sections of these documents should return to QHEG in December 2011 for comment before publication.

18. Clive Turner was concerned that the KIS would be a challenge for HE in FE. In particular, he was worried about where work-based learning would be recorded in the learning and teaching portion of the KIS.
19. The Chair sought reassurance about how the judgment on public information would be separated from the others on standards, quality and quality enhancement. In response, the QAA clarified that, for example, how an institution responded to its NSS scores would be considered in relation to the quality enhancement judgment rather than the public information judgment. The raw results of the NSS would be considered in relation to the quality judgment, as currently where significant issues identified by the NSS will normally form lines of enquiry in the review. The Group agreed that it was important that, with the move from two to four judgments, the judgments should be clearly differentiated.
20. The Group agreed that the Chair and Secretariat, together with the QAA, should finalise the wording which would report the Group's decisions in the joint HEFCE/ UUK/ GuildHE "provision of information about higher education" circular. This wording would note a four grade judgment on the completeness, currency, reliability and accessibility of the information provided by institutions and on the usefulness of the information to potential students, employers and the wider public. Reviewers will not be expected to make a judgment on the accuracy of the detailed information in the KIS. The circular should also explain the links to the Quality Code.
21. The Chair thanked the QAA for a useful paper.

Secretariat note: 'Provision of information about higher education: outcomes of consultation and next steps, a joint report by HEFCE, GuildHE and UUK', was published by HEFCE on 16 June 2011 as HEFCE2011/18.

QAA Review of Collaborative Provision (QHEG/2011/11)

22. Stephen Jackson introduced this paper. He explained that the paper was coming to the Group at an early stage of policy development, given that there was no intention to change collaborative provision review until 2013-14. However, it was helpful for the Group to have early sight, not least as collaborative provision has been identified as an inherently more risky area for quality, as the sector considered that further consideration of this area is needed, and as the nature and extent of collaborative provision seemed to be becoming ever more complicated.
23. The Group received the paper, and noted in particular the QAA's plan to consult on its proposals in October – November 2012. The Group also noted that this paper was closely linked with the next paper, which specifically looked at a particular form of collaborative provision: trans-national education.

Review of transnational education: Next steps (QHEG/2011/12)

24. The Chair noted that review of transnational education (TNE) was a UK-wide method, and that Scotland and Wales would have the opportunity to comment in other fora.
25. Anthony McClaran introduced the paper. He noted that there were now more international students studying for a UK HE award outside the UK than in-country. While the volume and visibility of UK TNE has grown significantly over the past couple of years, there had not been a concomitant growth in the QAA's resource for associated quality assurance activities. Due to the very large numbers involved, a method similar to Institutional Review would be very expensive. However, the current system of TNE review was not necessarily fit for purpose, especially given the importance of the UK HE brand, and so the QAA were at an early stage of thinking about a successor to overseas audit. The QAA was also making immediate changes to overseas audit to reflect these concerns. For example the TNE China review was moving towards a more substantial intelligence based approach centred on a series of desk based studies and more in-country visits. The Group supported these.
26. The Group noted that TNE was a higher risk activity, with substantial reputational issues. For that reason, the paper was generally welcomed. It was noted that the sector needed good indicators of risk, and that there were some merits in the Australian model which might be considered. Desk-based review might not provide sufficient assurance. Cliona O'Neill highlighted the risk of looking only at higher risk TNE provision, as this could potentially give rise to a perception that overseas links were generally poor quality. She was keen that TNE review should look for outstanding provision as well as for any problems.
27. The Chair thanked the QAA for the paper and looked forward to continued discussions in this important area.

Progress report: 'Institutional review of higher education in further education colleges in England' (QHEG/2011/13)

28. Anthony McClaran presented this paper. He explained that the QAA's first draft of arrangements for Institutional Review of HE in FECs in England (to replace the current Integrated Quality and Enhancement Review Process from 2012/13 onwards) broadly aligned with the revised Institutional Review system for HEIs and thus reflected QHEG's key principles and objectives for quality assurance. In particular the draft identified the Academic Infrastructure (now Quality Code) as the key reference point for the system; retained the same judgment system – and grading - as set out in IR; and increased the role of students in reviews. The aim was for the review systems for FECs and HEIs to align as far as possible, while taking into account the difference between HEIs as degree awarding bodies and FECs as institutions responsible for managing the threshold standards of their HE programmes.

29. There was an issue relating to small pockets of provision which needed to be addressed. Clive Turner, as a member of the QAA's advisory group on the development of the successor to IQER, also noted that the FE sector understood the move away from developmental engagements.
30. The Group noted that a wider sector consultation would begin in October 2011.

Follow-on from publication of UUK/GuildHE Review of External Examining Final Report (QHEG/2011/14)

31. The Group noted the recent publication of the GuildHE/UUK final report: Review of external examining arrangements in universities and colleges in the UK.

Any other business

32. There was none.

Date of next meeting

33. The next meeting of the Quality in HE Group was scheduled for 22 September 2011 AM. Key issues would include White Paper and follow-on from Higher Education Academy's Consultation on the UK Professional Standards Framework.

Higher Education White Paper 'Students at the Heart of the System' and associated consultations

QHEG/2011/16
Agenda item 4
22 Sep 2011

Issue

1. The proposals set out in the Higher Education White Paper *Students at the Heart of the System* (June 2011) and the BIS Technical Consultation *A new fit-for-purpose regulatory framework for the higher education sector* (August 2011).

Recommendation

2. Members are invited to:
 - a. Note the response sent by the Chair of QHEG to the White Paper consultation (Annex A)
 - b. Comment broadly on the proposals in the White Paper as they relate to quality assurance, enhancement and information on HE
 - c. Receive a presentation from BIS on the Technical Consultation on Regulation
 - d. Offer comments on the Technical Consultation
 - e. Agree whether these comments should be sent in a formal QHEG response to the Technical Consultation.

Timing

3. The White Paper consultation closed on 20 September 2011. Members' comments are particularly welcome on the Technical Consultation, which closes on 27 October 2011.

Further Information

4. Further information is available from the paper's author, Fiona Hoban, Policy Adviser, UUK (fiona.hoban@universitiesuk.ac.uk, tel 020 7419 5484). Questions about the policy issues raised in the White Paper or the Technical Consultation can be addressed to he.consultation@bis.gsi.gov.uk

Introduction

1. The White Paper *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System* places a strong emphasis on quality assurance and information for students in England. These are issues over which this Group takes a strategic overview (as set out in the Group's terms of reference¹). While the timing of the White Paper consultation was such that QHEG was not able to put in a formal response, the Chair of QHEG submitted a brief response (attached at Annex A). This did not take a detailed view on the proposals in the White Paper, but did highlight the work of the Group, the principles and objectives of the quality assurance system which the Group seeks to promote, and the willingness of the Group to engage with the issues in the future.

Action: Members are invited to:

- a. Note the response sent by the Chair of QHEG to the White Paper consultation (Annex A)
2. The BIS Technical Consultation *A new fit-for-purpose regulatory framework for the higher education sector*, published in August 2011, expands on many of the issues in the White Paper. The consultation period runs to 27 October 2011. (A timeline setting out key dates arising from the White Paper and other HE quality policy initiatives will be on the agenda for the December meeting of QHEG.)
3. This paper sets out a short factual overview of some of the main proposals in the White Paper and Technical Consultation as they relate to quality assurance, enhancement and information. It does not set out particular views or arguments, nor does it attempt to summarise all parts of the papers, rather assuming that members will have read the Paper and Consultation in full.
4. At the QHEG meeting, we will look in particular at the Technical Consultation, and have the opportunity to benefit from a presentation by Lewis Allan, Policy Adviser in the Higher Education Policy Directorate at BIS, about the Technical Consultation. Lewis is happy to take questions and to discuss particular areas of interest to members. Copies of his presentation will be tabled.

¹ Published on the UUK website at <http://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/PolicyAndResearch/PolicyAreas/QualityAssurance/Pages/HigherEducationGroup.aspx>

Overview of the White Paper and Technical Consultation

5. The White Paper *Students at the Heart of the System*² was published by BIS for consultation in June 2011; the consultation has now closed.
6. The White Paper takes the view that increasing informed prospective student choice will improve the quality of their academic experience and increase their educational gain. This translates into support for existing work to publish more information aimed at prospective students (eg. Key Information Sets (KISs)), with a small number of additional ideas for new pieces of information.
7. This is coupled with a move away from existing student number controls and a liberalisation of the system for new providers. The intention is that this more competitive system, in which students make rational choices based on quality (as set out by proxies in the KIS) and/or cost (in particular, relating to cheaper new providers and FECs), will drive up quality and reduce costs to the Treasury. However, this is not left solely to the market. The White Paper and Technical Consultation also contain plans for a strengthening of HEFCE's role as a "consumer champion", and support for the OIA and QAA in protecting students' interests.
8. As well as the unrestrained recruitment of high-achieving students (AAB), 20,000 places in 2012/13 will be allocated to support expansion by providers who "combine good quality with value for money". Although value for money is defined as charging fees of £7,500 or less, "good quality" is not defined in detail in the Paper. HEFCE expect to monitor and report on the "evidence of the impact of increased competition on the basis of quality and price, and its effect on the interests of students and the wider public" (HEFCE 2011/22 para 41).
9. In relation to regulation, the White Paper contains outline proposals for a risk-based approach to quality assurance and a more transparent regulatory framework applicable to all providers. More detail is given in the BIS Technical Consultation on Regulation, which references a risk-based system for both financial and quality assurance ("We expect to achieve substantial deregulatory change for providers that can demonstrate low risk", 2.2.3). The details are deferred to a HEFCE consultation, which will also encompass a risk-based financial monitoring system (2.2.14).
10. The Technical Consultation also contains a number of proposals for simplifying the process for gaining both Degree Awarding Powers and University Title.

² Both the White Paper and Technical Consultation are published at:
<http://discuss.bis.gov.uk/hereform/>

Specific points

Quality assurance (3.15 to 3.22)

11. Reviewing and improving the quality assurance system has been a major line of work for QAA, HEFCE, UUK, GuildHE, NUS, AoC and many others, in particular in 2010 and 2011. QHEG has played an important role in overseeing this work, and should welcome the recognition in the White Paper of the way in which “the sector has already designed new arrangements for institutional review providing a strong platform upon which to build” and “The sector is also updating and strengthening the quality assurance systems that institutions use to maintain quality and academic standards... This should lead to greater transparency, increased consistency of practice and confidence in those arrangements”.
12. The section in the White Paper relating to specific further changes to the quality assurance system is relatively brief. It proposes a risk-based approach, exploring options for less frequent reviews for some providers but more frequent and in-depth reviews for others. The definition of “risk” is not given, but reference is made to a “basket of data” and to track record. HEFCE are asked to consult on the criteria against which overall risk should be assessed and the frequency of review, with a view to achieving “very substantial” deregulatory change for institutions that can demonstrate low risk. HEFCE’s strategy produced in response to the White Paper³ suggests that “the degree of oversight will be reduced from the present level for the majority of universities and colleges” (para 34). HEFCE are also asked to consult on a set of ad hoc triggers which would prompt the QAA to carry out a full or partial review when this was not otherwise expected.
13. The NUS has helpfully contributed a paper to QHEG discussing the proposed risk-based approach; this is attached at Annex B.
14. Chapter 6 of the White Paper refers to a single, transparent regulatory framework for all providers in the higher education system, which will provide a level playing field from 2013/14 (subject to Parliament) for all providers that wish to benefit from public funding (whether grant funding or student loans). Further details are set out in the Technical Consultation. HEFCE will have a role in regulating providers where it does not have a direct funding relationship, including ensuring the quality and standards of provision are assessed. Requirements relating to quality, dispute resolution and information will apply to all designated providers, as a condition of designation for student support or HEFCE teaching grant (Technical Consultation 2.2.2).

³ Opportunity, choice and excellence in higher education, HEFCE (July 2011/22)

15. The Technical Consultation also sets out that all 'designated providers' will be required to subscribe to the OIA and QAA. The role of HEFCE as "consumer champion" and the way in which this fits with the roles of the QAA and OIA needs to be explored carefully. HEFCE are asked to consult in winter 2011-12 on the longer-term future of grant funding to support the priorities such as services which support the whole higher education sector, such as those provided by the HEA and QAA (1.26).
16. The Technical Consultation discusses the role of FECs in a number of places, including setting out that all designated providers including FECs would be required to subscribe to the QAA and be subject to English HE quality assurance arrangements for all eligible courses. The AoC has helpfully provided a commentary which is attached at Annex C.

Student complaints and the role of the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (3.23 to 3.26)

17. The White Paper supports the OIA's drive for increased transparency by publishing summaries of their decisions (naming institutions). It asks the OIA to consult on: use of campus ombudsmen; time targets for resolution of cases; and an OIA kitemarking scheme for university complaint processes.
18. The HEFCE response to the White Paper notes that "Students will be given a greater role in holding higher education institutions to account" (para 22). The Technical Consultation sets out a number of ways in which HEFCE could take forward an explicit new role to promote the interests of students, in a role intended to be complementary to that of the OIA. HEFCE would be able to respond to evidence of areas of concern other than complaints and would be able to take action on behalf of all the students affected not just those making a complaint. The Technical Consultation sets out two options for awarding compensation with regard to collective interest cases brought by HEFCE (1.3.3), and asks whether new provisions should be introduced to require the governing body to pay compensation.

White Paper (Chapter 4: A diverse and responsive sector, Chapter 6: A new, fit-for-purpose regulatory framework)

BIS Technical Consultation (Chapter 4: Reforms to Degree Awarding Powers and University Title criteria)

19. The White Paper notes that control of the power to award degrees and of 'university' title are important safeguards of standards and protected under law. The Paper sets out plans to consult on a new regulatory framework which will make these requirements more flexible, while maintaining quality and academic standards. These are fleshed out in the BIS Technical consultation. One of the proposals is the introduction of a sanction to suspend or remove degree awarding powers, however granted. Other proposals relate to taught degree awarding powers and university title, as follows:

Taught Degree Awarding Powers

- Bringing forward necessary legislation to accommodate applications for taught degree awarding powers (TDAP) from non-teaching bodies
- Reducing the track record for TDAP to two or three years (from four years), and potentially taking into account overseas track record
- Potentially introducing alternative models for entry, for example, single subject TDAP
- Reviewing the requirements around renewable degree awarding powers, so that all new DAP will be given on a renewable basis in the first instance, but with a view to any applicant ultimately being able to acquire DAP indefinitely
- Simplifying the application process for DAP

University Title

- Reviewing the current university title criterion which requires an institution to have at least 4,000 full time equivalent HE students before it can apply for university title. The proposal is to reduce this by 75% to 1,000 FTE.
- Simplifying the application process for university title.

Improving information

20. The section of the White Paper relating to information endorses existing work on information on higher education (including the KIS and Unistats, and the publication of graduate salary and teaching qualifications). New information pieces are proposed, specifically: summaries of internal surveys, class size, spending and information relating to postgraduate students. The Higher Education Public Information Steering Group (HEPISG) will take a view on these proposals.

21. Paragraph 2.11 asks HEFCE, working with the HE sector, to advise on how anonymised information about teaching qualifications can be made available. HESA already intend to publish anonymised information about teaching qualifications.

Presenting information more imaginatively (2.16 to 2.18)

22. The White Paper asks the major holders of student data- HESA, UCAS, HEFCE and the SLC- to make their data more available so that it can be analysed and re-presented, in particular by private companies. HEPIISG expect to discuss this issue.

Action: Members are invited to:

- b. Comment broadly on the proposals in the White Paper as they relate to quality assurance, enhancement and information on HE.
- c. Receive a presentation from BIS on the Technical Consultation on Regulation
- d. Offer comments on the Technical Consultation

23. QHEG may wish, as a Group, to submit a formal response to the Technical consultation by 27 October 2011. This may be helpful, given the unique position of the Group as bringing together the representatives of a wide range of interests in the quality assurance system. However, we acknowledge that any such response would not be 'signed off' by any single party around the table; in particular, it would not represent the views of HEFCE, UUK or GuildHE, each of whom will wish to respond in their own right.

Action: Members are invited to:

- e. Agree whether these comments should be sent in a formal QHEG response to the Technical Consultation.

To: Higher Education White Paper consultation
19 September 2011

I am responding to the consultation as the Chair of the Quality in HE Group. This Group has been set up jointly by HEFCE, UUK and GuildHE, with QAA as expert advisers, to promote a quality assurance system for higher education in England which is accountable, rigorous, transparent, flexible, responsive, enhancement-led and public facing. I was glad to see support for these objectives in the White Paper, and believe that QHEG plays a vital role in overseeing such a system.

In particular, it is vital that the quality assurance system should balance and respond to the needs of a wide variety of stakeholders, including students, prospective students, professional bodies/ employer representatives, HE and FE institutions, professional bodies, funders and others. QHEG brings all of representatives of these interests together around a table, in order to take a strategic overview of the quality assurance system in England. We are therefore uniquely placed to contribute to discussions about quality.

In the short time that QHEG has been established, we have overseen important changes to the institutional review process from September 2011 to make it more vigorous and public-facing; we have established a protocol for increased flexibility to the quality assurance system as a whole from June 2012; and, we have seen important improvements introduced to the information available for prospective and actual students from September 2012.

While QHEG will not be submitting a formal full response to the White Paper, my Group looks forward to engaging with the issues contained therein, in particular where there is detail yet to come. In particular, QHEG looks forward to discussing the BIS Technical consultation on 'a new fit-for-purpose regulatory framework for the HE sector' with BIS officials at its next meeting on 22 September. We will also respond to the HEFCE – led consultation on a risk-based quality assurance system.

At this stage, I would draw the following issues to your attention.

- QHEG's work is underpinned by the principles and objectives set out [at the end of this letter]. It is my personal view that these principles and objectives, which have been the subject of widespread consultation and scrutiny, while they will require some attention (for example, around the increased diversity

of the sector and around risk), continue to provide an excellent underpinning for the kind of HE system set out in the White Paper.

In all of our work, QHEG is particularly careful to take account of the following:

- the enhancement of the student learning experience, and how lessons learned can be shared in the sector. A careful balance needs to be struck between enhancement and assurance.
- The involvement of students in the quality assurance system. We support, for example, the introduction of student reviewers as equal peer members of review teams, and students playing a greater role in quality at an institutional, faculty and course level. The Group benefits hugely from having two members nominated by the NUS.
- the impact of changes to the English quality assurance system on Wales and Scotland. Protecting the coherence of the UK HE brand, as well as the cross-UK systems and functions underpinning it, is important. While QHEG focuses in particular on England, it has due regard for processes which are cross-UK, and where it wishes to make a proposal for England 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.
- Efficiency and a fit-for-purpose system, which takes account of the great diversity of the HE sector. This is particularly important at this time of rapid change, in which a number of changes to the quality assurance system have been introduced in quick succession.

I look forward to continued engagement in this vital policy area.

Yours

Philip Jones
Chair, Quality in Higher Education Group

Principles and objectives for quality assurance in England and Northern Ireland

The system to assure quality and standards should:

- a. Provide authoritative, publicly accessible information on academic quality and standards in higher education.**
 - i Provide timely and readily accessible public information, on a consistent and comparable basis, on the quality and standards of the educational provision for which each institution takes responsibility.
 - ii Report results on a robust, consistent and comparable basis that meets public expectations.
- b. Command public, employer and other stakeholder confidence.**
 - i Ensure that any provision that falls below national expectations can be detected and the issues speedily addressed.
 - ii Apply transparent processes and judgements, and function in a rigorous, intelligible, proportionate and responsive way.
 - iii Assure the threshold standards of awards from higher education institutions in England and Northern Ireland, wherever and however they are delivered.
 - iv Explain clearly where responsibilities lie for the quality and standards of provision and how they are secured.
- c. Meet the needs of the funding bodies and of institutions.**
 - i Enable the funding bodies to discharge their statutory responsibilities to assure the quality of the programmes they fund.
 - ii Recognise the role of institutions as independent autonomous bodies responsible for their own quality management systems and for the standards of awards made in their name.
 - iii Enable institutions to discharge their corporate responsibilities, by providing them with information on how well their own internal systems for quality management and setting and maintaining standards are functioning, and identifying areas for improvement.
 - iv Where relevant, recognise the role of employers as co-deliverers of higher education, taking the quality assurance requirements of such provision into account.

- d. Meet the relevant needs of all students.**
- i Have current and prospective students' interests at its heart, underlying all of the other principles.
 - ii Engage students in the quality process, whether at course, institutional or national level.
 - iii Focus on the enhancement of the students' learning experiences without compromising the accountability element of quality assurance.
- e. Rely on robust evidence-based independent judgement.**
- i Incorporate external reviews run by an operationally independent body (the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education) and professional, statutory and regulatory bodies.
 - ii Incorporate evidence from institutions' own internal quality assurance processes, including those which involve external participants.
 - iii Recognise and support the important role of external examining.
- f. Support a culture of quality enhancement within institutions.**
- i Apply a process of external review, both by academic peers and by students, rather than inspection by a professional inspectorate.
 - ii Include processes based on rigorous institutional self-evaluation.
 - iii Promote quality enhancement in institutions.
 - iv Enable the dissemination of good practice.
- g. Work effectively and efficiently.**
- i Operate efficiently, in order to avoid disproportionate use of institutional effort and resources which could otherwise be directed to the delivery of frontline student teaching.
 - ii Rely on partnership and co-operation between the institutions, Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education and the funding bodies.
 - iii Address both quality (appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and opportunities for learning provided for students) and standards (levels of achievement that a student has to reach to gain an award) as two distinct but interlinked concepts.
 - iv Work on the principle of collecting information once to use in many ways.
 - v Acknowledge that while the quality assurance system applies to England and Northern Ireland only, it is underpinned by reference tools that are UK-wide.

- vi Adhere to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (encompassing internal and external quality assurance).
- vii Maintain sufficient flexibility and responsiveness to meet changing demands and public priorities in a timely manner.
- viii Complement and avoid duplication with, so far as possible, other assurance processes in higher education (for example Ofsted; professional, statutory and regulatory bodies).



national union of students

Contribution by NUS to QHEG discussions, September 2011

Risk based quality

3.19 We propose a genuinely risk-based approach, focusing QAA effort where it will have most impact and giving students power to hold universities to account. All providers must continue to be part of a single assurance framework. But we would explore options in which the frequency – and perhaps need – for a full, scheduled institutional review will depend on an objective assessment of a basket of data, monitored continually but at arms length. For new providers, with an inevitably shorter track record of quality, a more regular and in-depth review is appropriate than has previously been applied. Conversely, for those providers with a sustained, demonstrable track record of high-quality provision, we would expect to see significantly less use of full institutional reviews. (Students at the Heart of the System, White Paper, 2011)

Background

Students numbers have increased by 53% in the last 15 years, there are now more than 50 higher education institutions with over 20,000 students whilst at the same time eight per cent of higher education is delivered through further education colleges – sometimes with just a few hundred students. There are over 200,000 hundred thousand students studying for UK qualifications outside the UK and there are more private providers than ever delivering HE within the UK.

Within this highly complex system, ensuring a comparable and high quality student learning experience will have different challenges. Some institutions will have a long track-record in ensuring high quality provision but may be expanding into new areas, whilst others may be delivering HE qualifications for the first time. There will be different levels of risk associated with each of these activities.

Provider or provision?

It could be argued that it is therefore appropriate to focus resources on those areas that have been demonstrated to be of the highest risk, either in terms of concerns around the quality of provision or the potential reputational damage. These areas of higher risk are likely to include collaborative provision, which have received higher proportions of limited confidence judgements in recent IQERs and Institutional Audit reports; overseas provision where there is a disproportional reputational risk caused by media reports and also there would be more reassurance needed about new providers with a limited track-record of delivering high quality courses.

This raises the question about whether it is the type of provider that is deemed more or less risky or whether it should be the type of provision that should be considered? Should this be reflected in a single review process or should there should remain separate review processes for some types of provision, such as IQER and Collaborative Provision? In addition if we are looking at provision as well as provider are there other areas that should also be deemed higher risk? Might this include subjects that don't currently undergo any form of external accreditation by a professional body? Although this could be mitigated by more transparent processes and information about internal procedures such as periodic review and annual monitoring, which can currently be fairly opaque to current and prospective students.

It should be considered how to mitigate against the unintended consequence of institutions withdrawing from these riskier areas for fear of impacting on their overall risk rating.

However if there are some providers or provision that are considered higher-risk then the converse is also true that there are some providers and provision that should be considered lower risk. A risk-based approach would imply that the frequency, intensity and nature of reviews would alter depending on the perception of risk. It is also worth considering the impact if reviewers only consider high-risk provision it might be harder to provide a comparison with high quality provision.

Assessing Risk

The devil will be in the detail surrounding the way in which risk is assessed – although we would expect a mixed approach including PSRB reviews, external examiners reports, student data including retention, NSS, DLHE – moving beyond just the 6 month stat to longitudinal data and information around perceptions of their degree prepared them for their job, systemic issues identified by OIA and could also include financial stability. However we need to be clear with this basket of data whether they are just looking at the data or the management processes that respond to the data? This risk assessment should consider how to tackle both the question of institutions that are “coasting” along rather than continually enhancing quality and also how the question of adding value based on the cohort of students is addressed – potentially through more effective use of benchmarks.

We should, however, be mindful that the risk register itself could potentially have a destabilising effect on the provider, although conversely this information is likely to be of interest to prospective students. However, it is the data behind the assessment rather than the assessment itself that should be transparent so as not to compromise the frankness of the assessment.

The process of deciding risk must be an ongoing, rather than sporadic, process with triggers – including from the students’ union - that can result in a re-evaluation of the risk status of an institution.

Enhancement

Finally, whilst quality processes are designed to provide assurance to students, the public and Government they should also be designed to enhance the quality of provision. It is often external review that provides the added impetus to focus on improving the student learning experience and so this enhancement aim should be embedded as core to the process, on an equal footing with assurance.

It will be important to ensure that even in low-risk providers the frequency and intensity does not become so irregular or low-intensity that this enhancement aim is lost. We would therefore argue that there should not be a gap of more than 6 years – two full cohorts of undergraduates - between reviews. This frequency would act in part as a deterrent, as we have seen from the banking industry even the best performing institutions can come unstuck without external oversight.

The review report could recommend a date for the next review within the 6 year time-limit but that this could be reviewed on the basis of various triggers if concerns were raised.

Key questions:

- Should risk be based on the type of provider or provision, or a combination of both?
- Should there be a maximum, and minimum, amount of time between audits - what might these be?
- What should be the data for defining risk and for triggering re-evaluation?

Further Information:

Alex Bols and Usman Ali from the NUS will both be at QHEG on 22 September.
Alternatively please contact alex.bols@nus.org.uk or usman.ali@nus.org.uk

Contribution by Association of Colleges to QHEG discussions, September 2011

Higher Education in Further Education Colleges

Colleges play an important role in providing higher education. Over 150,000 students study HE in a College on degree courses funded by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) or 'non-prescribed' HE programmes funded by the Skills Funding Agency, employers or by the students themselves, usually on a part-time basis around work or family commitments.

The following table illustrates how College HE is funded⁴:

Funding mechanism	Number of HE students in Colleges
Funding given direct to the College (primarily by HEFCE)	57,000
Funding given to a College via a university (primarily by HEFCE)	56,000
Funding from the Skills Funding Agency (or other source)	38,000

262 Colleges provide HE courses across all areas and regions of England, enrolling around 10% of all HE students in England.

Quality Issues

1. The establishment of a more market orientated HE system and BIS proposals for a new regulatory framework for the HE sector is welcome.
2. AoC have been fully consulted in the five major QAA reviews of the past year – New Review method (replacement of IQER), new Quality Code, revised causes for concern, External Examination and Public Information – and believe that the outcomes of these appraisals provide a strong basis for QA in the new Higher Education (HE) landscape.
3. The outcomes of the recent review by the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) are the basis for more transparency in the publication of OIA adjudications.

⁴ House of Commons Written Answer given to Kelvin Hopkins MP, 9 June 2010, Col:193W

4. The regulatory proposals outlined in the White Paper, in particular a more risk based quality assurance system (RBQA) for successful providers and, initially, a more in-depth process for new entrants is a sensible development.. Universities UK, GuildHE and AoC have agreed to discuss how quality assurance and other systems can change to support higher education provided in FE Colleges.
5. The new clearer remit for HEFCE relating to lead regulation, oversight over competition issues and promoting the interests of students recognises the complexity of HE provision. We believe there should be a 'level regulatory playing field' for those organisations with taught degree awarding powers and institutions designated to receive financial support for their students. We support the principle that application of the new regulatory framework should be appropriate and proportionate to the circumstances of the institution.
6. In terms of appropriateness and proportionality we are of the view that any new HE QA system, needs to take into account principles established by OFSTED and QAA relating to the size of provision. Namely that smaller providers of HE, as at present, are regulated by a less intrusive and costly system of review that would be based on desk-based and secondary research; and that this type of review would be less expensive to administer. This position is supported by the emerging development of a more diverse HE system that will include all the added extras associated with a three year residential Bachelors degree experience at one end of the spectrum and a part-time evening higher vocational course at a small HE in FE provider at the other. It is also the case that it would be unfair to erect costly and time-consuming entry barriers that would discourage entry to the market.
7. Such a system would still have at its core the review and judgement of academic standards but without the present 3-5 day QAA review visit and associated costs.
8. Improved information to applicants to HE is in line with the establishment of a more market-orientated system. There are anxieties though that the extra information demands required by the WP will stretch the capacity of Colleges with smaller numbers of HE students, and would request that a small fund is established within the 'transition costs' or JISC grant (section 1.26) to support these colleges. Presently, only Colleges with over 400 FTE, can access grants from JISC.

9. However the Key Information Set (KIS) and other information tends to focus on the information needs of young full time applicants seeking a residential three year bachelor's degree when all the trends in HE are for more part-time study and studying from home. Over 50% of College applicants only apply to a single choice - compared to only 15% of all applicants; and over 70% of those accepted to HE in FE live within 25 miles of their chosen College - compared to fewer than 40% of all HE acceptances⁵

10. Although Colleges appreciate that contact hours are not a proxy for quality, consideration should be given to including weekly student contact hours for different courses in the new KIS. It is common practice in schools and further education to delineate class contact hours per week for subjects and courses, The amount of time spent in face to face tuition is part of the choice an applicant needs to make. It is particularly useful for adult and part time students as they juggle with caring responsibilities and employment.

11. We are concerned that the request for data showing the type and subjects of the actual qualifications held by previously successful applicants to a course could be unfair to a sector that often takes applicants with non-traditional qualifications, lower qualifications and those with relevant work experience. Possible pre-HE qualification pathways to professional courses and prestigious courses should also include vocational qualifications.

12. There remains confusion about the place that Skills Funding Agency funded higher skills /qualifications play in the HE landscape. They are rarely the focus of Ofsted inspections (apart from Initial Teacher training). Quality assurance is provided through the awarding bodies. Consideration should be given as to how these courses should be regularised under one regulatory framework and information.

13. The National Student Survey (NSS) and Destinations of Learners in Higher Education (DLHE) present difficulties for College based HE courses. Because the JACs codes do not accommodate comfortably the subjects delivered in Colleges, information on students responses is not always captured effectively.

14. Recently, two Colleges – Newcastle College Group and New College, Durham - have achieved Foundation Degree⁶ Awarding Powers (FDAP), and

⁵ UCAS data

⁶ Foundation Degrees are higher education qualifications that combine academic study with work-based learning. Designed jointly by universities, Colleges and employers, they are available in a range of work-related subjects.

Bradford College is close to attaining Taught Degree Awarding Powers (TDAP). This is a welcome recognition of the role that Colleges can play in Higher Education. However the process took over 3 years and required considerable investment in staff time. Although it is appreciated by Colleges that the ability to award degrees should be subject to a rigorous process, there could be opportunities to revise. In future there needs to be consideration of how consortia of Colleges might work with a College which has awarding powers. This would support smaller providers and would be cost effective.

Update for QHEG from the Higher Education Better Regulation Group (HEBRG)

22 September 2011

1. Work arising from the HE White Paper

HEBRG was tasked with two specific actions from the HE White Paper:-

Paragraph 6.19 states:

... "We will ask the Higher Education Better Regulation Group (HEBRG) to look across this complex landscape to identify areas for deregulation whilst still safeguarding students and taxpayers, and report back by November."

HEBRG has commissioned Capita Consulting to undertake this work and the review is underway. It includes both desk based research and targeted consultation interviews during August and September 2011 with key sector stakeholders and institutional representatives. The key regulatory areas to be considered are the ones listed in 6.19 (health and safety, planning, equal opportunities, Freedom of Information, procurement, and employment law), together with any emerging areas. It will take into account the UK-wide regulatory environment where relevant, rather than focusing solely on England. A workshop to test emerging findings with key interviewees will be held on October 4th in London. The report will be presented to BIS by early November and the findings will be discussed at the HEBRG Conference on November 28th.

Paragraphs 6.22 states:

"We will ask HEFCE, HESA and HEBRG, in collaboration with the Information Standards Board for education and skills (ISB), to redesign the information landscape for higher education in order to arrive at a new system that meets the needs of a wider group of users; reduces the duplication that currently exists, and results in timelier and more relevant data".

This represents the continuation of work led by HESA in collaboration with HEBRG and others. One specific area under investigation is the impact of the reporting requirements of the NHS and other statutory bodies on medical and health related higher education providers. Representatives from HESA, HEBRG and UCAS met with Medical Education England at the Department of Health on September 12th to discuss the potential for seeking greater alignment between NHS reporting requirements and the services offered by HESA. The meeting was very positive and more specific investigation is being planned.

HEBRG has also sent an overall response to the White Paper to BIS. This is available on our website.

2. BIS Technical Consultation

HEBRG's response to the BIS Technical Consultation is under consideration and will be taken forward in collaboration with Universities UK and GuildHE.

3. Contribution to KIS Technical Guidance on a statement about accreditation by PSRBs

HEBRG was invited by HEFCE to advise on input to the KIS Technical Guidance in the section that describes how to enter details of the professional accreditation of courses. Using the 'plain English' statement about professional accreditation previously drafted in

collaboration with QHEG as a starting point, a brief statement was prepared. The list of PSRBs compiled by HEBRG last year has been passed to HESA for use with the KIS. HESA will be maintaining the list in collaboration with HEBRG and QAA.

4. HEBRG's Principles for Better Regulation of Higher Education in the UK

The Principles represent a revised version of the HE Concordat, originally published by HERRG in 2006. After considerable re-drafting, with inputs from HEFCE, QAA, HESA, NUS and others, the document is currently with BIS to seek the Department's endorsement. Once it is published, QHEG may be interested in considering its contents and the process through which regulators, and PSRBs in particular, will be encouraged to adopt the Principles. A copy of the Principles as sent to BIS is attached at Annex B (in pdf format). Members are asked to note that these are provisional and should be regarded as confidential prior to final confirmation and publication.

5. HEBRG Annual Conference

HEBRG's second annual conference is taking place on Monday 28th November at Woburn House. The title is *Deregulating Higher Education: Risks and Responsibilities*. Keynote speakers include Sir Alan Langlands, Mary Curnock Cook and Professor John Craven. Themes for discussion groups will be selected from the findings of the HEBRG deregulation review. Further details and a booking form will be available on our website soon.

6. Review of the impact on HEIs of complying with the points based system for immigration (Tier 4)

This work has been completed and presented to Universities UK, GuildHE and UKBA to consider its recommendations and take forward action where appropriate. The report is available on the HEBRG website.

14 September 2011

For further information, please contact
Brooke Sperry, Policy Officer, HEBRG
brooke.sperry@hebetterregulation.ac.uk
www.hebetterregulation.ac.uk

Update from the Higher Education Better Regulation Group

QHEG/2011/17
Agenda item 5
22 Sep 2011

Issue

1. This paper provides, for information, an update on relevant work currently being undertaken by the Higher Education Better Regulation Group (HEBRG) including in response to proposals set out in the Higher Education White Paper.
2. The note provided by HEBRG is attached as Annex A. The proposed Principles of Better Regulation for Higher Education (a new statement which will supersede the earlier Higher Education Concordat on quality assurance and data collection) are attached at Annex B. Members are asked to note that the Principles are provisional at this stage and should therefore be regarded as confidential.

Recommendation

3. Members are invited to note the work in hand and to comment as appropriate.

Timing

4. HEBRG is due to report to BIS on the work commissioned relating to potential areas for deregulation in November this year. The *Principles of Better Regulation for Higher Education* will be published by the end of 2011.

Further Information

5. HEBRG was established in 2010 as the successor to the Higher Education Regulation Review Group (HERRG) with a remit to support better regulation in higher education across the UK. It is supported by the representative bodies (Universities UK, Universities Scotland, Higher Education Wales and GuildHE) and funded through the four funding bodies. HEBRG has an independent Chair, Sir Graeme Catto, and a membership drawn from across the higher education sector and associated regulatory bodies. More information about the membership and current areas of activity is available on the website at: <http://www.hebetterregulation.ac.uk>
The QHEG terms of reference include provision for liaison with HEBRG.
6. Further information is available from Brooke Sperry, Policy Officer, HEBRG brooke.sperry@hebetterregulation.ac.uk or through the QHEG secretariat.

UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF)

QHEG/2011/18
Agenda item 6
22 Sep 2011

Annex A is confidential as the Framework is subject to later publication by the HEA

Issue

1. The UKPSF was developed more than five years ago by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) on behalf of Universities UK (UUK), GuildHE and the four UK higher education funding councils. It is a flexible framework which uses a descriptor-based approach to professional standards in teaching. The HEA consulted last year on a number of proposals to strengthen the Framework, and intends to publish a revised Framework later this term.

Recommendation

2. Members are invited to note the revised UKPSF.

Further Information

3. This paper was produced by Fiona Hoban, UUK.
4. Further information is available from Craig Mahoney, Chief Executive, Higher Education Academy (craig.mahoney@heacademy.ac.uk). Craig is a member of QHEG and so will be able to speak to this paper at the meeting.

Background

5. Following extensive consultation, the UKPSF was introduced to the sector in 2006 by the HEA on behalf of UUK, GuildHE and the four UK HE funding councils. The intention was to enable a sector-owned approach to learning and teaching standards, and to strengthen professional development for teaching. The UKPSF has been widely used as a reference point against which programmes for the training and development of teaching staff are accredited.
6. There are currently three standard descriptors, each of which is applicable to a number of staff roles and to different career stages of those engaged in teaching and supporting learning. The standard descriptors are underpinned by areas of professional activity, core knowledge and professional values. The framework provides a reference point for institutions and individuals as well as supporting ongoing development within any one standard descriptor.
7. Both the UKPSF, and the accreditation of provision by the HEA, have been widely taken up; by November 2010, 136 institutions had had 357 programmes accredited by the HEA against the Framework. The Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA) estimate that between 70 and 80% of postgraduate certificates in learning and teaching have been mapped to UKPSF standards and accredited by the HEA; others will have been mapped to the UKPSF by individual HEIs but not accredited by the HEA.

Commentary

8. The HEA consulted last year on a number of changes to the UKPSF, given that it had then been in place for five years. The revised Framework, attached at Annex A (as a pdf file), takes a similar approach to the previous Framework, but is somewhat more detailed. The biggest change is the move from three standard descriptors to four, and improved alignment with the HEA recognition scheme (for example, the level of Senior Fellow). The revised Framework also recognises a wider range of teaching and learning support responsibilities, and articulates a more comprehensive progression pathway.

Data on staff qualifications

9. The HEA consultation discussed whether the HEA should publish a sector-wide profile containing data provided by HEIs relating to the numbers of staff who have, for example, completed Academy-accredited provision against each standard descriptor.

10. In July 2011, the White Paper then asked HEFCE, working with the HE sector, to advise on how anonymised information about “teaching qualifications, fellowships and expertise of [teaching staff] at all levels” could be published (paragraph 2.11). This was seen as a way in which HEIs could demonstrate their recognition of the importance of teaching. Although the White Paper did not acknowledge it, at the time it was published, a HESA consultation on precisely this issue was open¹. HESA proposed a broad definition, to include not only HEA-accredited courses, but also other relevant teaching qualifications (including a course in teaching in HE provided by the employing institution accredited against the UKPSF; a PGCE in FE/LLL, or other relevant and equivalent qualification, including from outside the UK; and/ or accreditation as a teacher of their subject from a professional body). The HEA are helping HESA with this new field, for example, offering advice on the coding frame, and we expect it to be introduced from 2012/13.

Next Steps

11. It is an important principle that the Framework is sector-owned, and to that end it was endorsed by UUK on 6 September 2011. It was also considered by the GuildHE Executive on 15 September. The Framework also went to the DELNI Board (1 September); SFC Board (2 September); HEFCW Board (15 September). It will go forward to the NUS Executive Council on 26 September and the HEFCE Board on 13 October 2011. The intention is to publish it with the endorsement of all of these parties named above, at the HEA subscribers meeting on 2 November 2011.

12. The revised UKPSF will be published alongside Framework Guidance Notes (currently in production), which will offer more detail, explanatory guidance and exemplars of good practice. These are likely to provide more details relating, for example, to mentoring, teaching observation and external examining, which were the subject of consultation but which have not been specifically incorporated in the revised Framework as formally required elements.

Action

Members are invited to note the revised UKPSF.

¹ HESA Staff Record Circular 11/01, May 2011,
<http://www.hesa.ac.uk/index.php/content/view/2115/128/>

**Progress Report:
'Review of higher education in further
education colleges in
England'**

**QHEG/2011/19
Agenda Item 7
22 September 2011**

**Annexes are confidential as the
Operational Description is subject to later
publication by the QAA**

Issue

1. Arrangements for the consultation on a new method of review for higher education in further education colleges in England to be introduced in academic year 2012-13.

Recommendation

2. The Group are invited to receive and comment on the paper.

Timing

3. The consultation with the sector on the Operational description for the revised arrangements for the review of higher education in further education colleges is scheduled for the period between October and December 2011. The revised method will be implemented in October 2012. A handbook and student guide will be published in June 2012.

Further Information

4. Further information is available from Ian Welch (i.welch@qaa.ac.uk) Assistant Director, QAA, telephone: 01452 557032.

Report to QHEG on the consultation with the sector on the new method of review for higher education in further education colleges (Review of higher education in further education colleges in England)

Background

- 1 QAA has been asked to develop a new method of review for higher education in further education colleges in England to be introduced in academic year 2012-13. The principles for the design of the new method were set out in a letter from UUK, Guild HE and HEFCE to QAA on 3 June 2010.
- 2 QAA has formed a Project group to develop the new method, to be called Review of higher education in colleges in England. The group started work in September 2010 and is working to a project plan. The main stages of the development of the new method are: consultation on the operational description in October 2011; publication of the handbook and the student guide in June 2012; and the start of the new method with briefing and training from October 2012.
- 3 QAA has also set up an Advisory group of external representatives with an interest in higher education in colleges. This runs alongside the internal Project group to provide a forum for the discussion of developmental and support activities. In addition, the Advisory group receives reports on, and comments on the progress of method development and acts as a sounding board for proposals and changes to the method. Later, QAA will ask the group to contribute to the evaluation of the implementation of the new method.
- 4 In developing the new method the Project group has taken into account the advice of the contract reviewers who lead IQER reviews as well as the analyses of IQER evaluation reports.

Consultation on the new method

- 5 The development of the Operational description for the Review of higher education in colleges in England is on schedule. The planned consultation on the operational description will go ahead in October 2011.
- 6 In preparation for this consultation the Project group examined the Operational description, considered comments from The Advisory group and from coordinators and devised a set of questions for stakeholders to respond to in the consultation.
- 7 These comments were tabled at the Advisory group meeting following the Project group meeting and, following discussion, were amended. These amended questions were further

refined in response to comments from HEFCE in response to their reading of the draft Operational description.

8 The consultation will be aimed at all key stakeholders, including heads of Further education colleges who offer higher education in England, Heads of higher education institutions in England and students studying for HE awards in colleges.

9 The consultation will involve the distribution of the Operational description, the letter from UUK, Guild HE and HEFCE to QAA issued on 3 June 2010 and a set of questions which we will ask recipients to respond to in commenting on the Operational description.

10 The consultation will be followed by an analysis of comments which will inform the further development of the Review for higher education in further education colleges in England.

Ian Welch
September 1st 2011

DRAFT

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