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Future arrangements for quality assurance in England and Northern Ireland

Quality Assurance System in HE Group,
February 2010

Department for Employment and Learning

www.delni.gov.uk

hefce

Focus of consultation (HEFCE 2009/47)

- Open and wide consultation
- Addresses challenges and builds on strengths of current system
- Broad principles and direction- detail follows

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What should be the principles and objectives of the quality assurance system?

- Provide authoritative, publicly accessible information on academic quality and standards in higher education
- Command public, employer and other stakeholder confidence
- Meet the needs of students
- Meet the needs of funders and of autonomous institutions
- Rely on independent judgement
- Support a culture of quality improvement within institutions
- Work effectively and efficiently

Q1, 2

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What should the revised institutional audit method look like?

- Be more pro-active and flexible – eg. moving away from the “cycle” approach
- Be better explained, bearing a public audience in mind
- Show better recognition of the importance of providing accessible and accurate information
- But, as far as possible, cause no overall increase in burden

Q3, 4, 9

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How could comparability of standards be better addressed?

- Could audit and/ or the Academic Infrastructure be strengthened to assure further the threshold standards of awards (that is, the level of achievement that a student has to reach to gain an award)? If so, how?

Q5

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What judgements should be made?

- Should the QAA review the language of judgements, particularly “limited confidence”?
- Should the current “comment” on accuracy and completeness of published information be raised to “judgement”?

Q6, 7

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What should audit reports look like?

- Should the QAA provide summaries of institutional audit reports for a non-specialist audience?

Q8

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Commitment from all partners

HEFCE, DEL NI, UUK, GuildHE, QAA, NUS, AoC

We are committed to a quality assurance system which is accountable, rigorous, transparent, flexible, responsive and public-facing. We want to tackle concerns about quality and standards and make real changes to improve the student experience and the reputation of HE.

What more could we do?

Q10

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Next steps (1)

- Consultation closes 5 March 2010
- Careful analysis of responses
- QASHE Group considers responses on 26 March 2010 and agrees recommendations to the Boards of UUK and HEFCE, and GuildHE Executive

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Next steps (2)

- QAA development of operational description (detail of how institutional audit will operate), and consultation in Autumn 2010
- Early 2011- publication of final handbook
- 2011-12 Audit process begins

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Questions

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