

## Decision on the Substantive Change Report by Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

Register Committee

Ref. RC/C106

Ver. 1.0

Date 2023-12-22

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Decision of:	2023-12-22
Result:	Take note
Report received on:	2023-10-26
Agency registered since:	2013-07-01
Last external review report:	2023-06-28
Registration until:	2028-06-30
Absented themselves from decision-making:	Beate Tremel
Attachments:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <a href="#">Substantive Change Report, 2023-10-26</a></li> <li>2. <a href="#">Substantive Change Report, 2023-11-21</a></li> </ol>

1. The Register Committee considered the Substantive Change Report of 2023-10-26 and the Substantive Change Report of 2023-11-21.
2. The Register Committee learned from the above reports that QAA has introduced the following changes within the scope of the ESG:
  - A. Changes to an existing quality assurance activity: Quality Enhancement Review (QER)
  - B. Development of a new external quality assurance activity: Elective Quality Review (EQR)
3. QAA has further introduced three new services that are activities outside the scope of the ESG:
  - New Provider Service
  - Degree Awarding Powers Service
  - Targeted Quality and Standards Service

### A. Changes to the Quality Enhancement Review (QER)

4. The Register Committee noted that the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) has revised the requirements for external quality review as well as for the quality assurance framework in Wales (2022). Institutions in Wales wishing to remain regulated are normally required to undertake an external quality assurance review once every five years. The review process undertaken for this purpose by QAA is the

Quality Enhancement Review (QER). These changes in legal framework also led to a revision of the QER procedure.

5. The main changes to the QER (as noted in QAA's Quality and Enhancement Review Handbook) concern e.g., the introduction of a new method design checklist, streamlining of the information requested from the provider, discussions about the scope and enhancement priorities of the review at an early stage, providing reviewers with access to key evidence, a one-day First Team Meeting, a Key Outcomes letter two weeks after the visit, the development of one Review Report suitable for the provider and the general audience, more flexibility in the size and composition of the QER team, the option to hold staff and student meetings online as part of the visit, including joint student staff meetings etc.
6. The Register Committee understood that the new characteristics introduced into the QER procedure take into account the agency's Internal Quality Assurance Manual. The method was overseen in its design by QAA's advisory group and key stakeholders. The agency explained that as part of the consultation process, sector workshops and meetings with sector bodies were undertaken (**ESG 2.2**).
7. The Committee noted that while the selection, appointment and training of reviewers remains largely unchanged, the revised method introduces the role of a specialist reviewer who can bring an appropriate area of expertise to support the review. The specialist can be a core member of the review team or an additional member (**ESG 2.4**).
8. The Committee took into account that there are two separate judgements, on whether the institution meets the requirements of the ESG Part 1 and the relevant requirements of the baseline standards for the Quality Assessment Framework in Wales (**ESG 2.5**). **The Committee welcomed the agency's intention to introduce the recommendation made by the review panel regarding its approach to ensure consistency of outcomes in strengthening the validation of reports and final decision making, but underlined that this has not yet been implemented.**
9. **Based on the information provided in the Substantive Change Report and the agency's QER Handbook, the Register Committee considered that the changes are appeared to be aligned with the ESG and therefore took note of the change with no further remarks.**

## B. Elective Quality Review (EQR)

10. The Committee noted from the change report of 2023-11-21 that QAA has introduced a new voluntary external quality assurance activity – the **Elective Quality Review (EQR)**. The EQR has been developed following QAA's conclusion of its first period of designation as the Designated Quality Body in England (DQB).

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11. The review may be carried out only for registered higher education providers based in England and deemed compliant by the Office for Students (OfS).
12. **ESG 2.1:** The Register Committee noted that EQR explicitly reviews a provider against the standards outlined in Part 1 of the ESG and produces judgements on whether the provider satisfies the expectations for each Standard. To avoid duplication, the EQR takes into account explanation on how Standards 1.2, 1.6 and parts of 1.5 are addressed on account of the higher education provider maintaining its registration with the OfS.
13. **ESG 2.2:** The aims of EQR are stated in the Guidance for Providers. In the development phase of the procedure, representatives from the main mission groups i.e., UniversitiesUK, GuildHE, Association of Colleges, Independent HE and QAA's Strategic Student Advisory Committee were consulted.
14. **ESG 2.3:** The methodology is published on the agency's website (EQR Guidance for Providers<sup>1</sup>). As part of the process a site-visit is carried out lasting between two and a half to four days according to the scale and complexity of the academic provision. Exceptionally, QAA may consider conducting the whole visit online where this is considered appropriate, such as for providers who operate exclusively online or for exceptional cases where extreme weather and/or significant travel disruption make it unfeasible to attend in person.
15. **ESG 2.4:** The EQR will be conducted by external experts selected from QAA's reviewer pool, including a student in each review. Reviewers will be trained specifically on the method in advance of undertaking the review activity.
16. **ESG 2.5:** The criteria for assessment for the review and the assessment framework form part of the published Guidance for Providers. A judgement matrix is used by the panel to determine whether the standard is met or if there are recommendations for improvement in relation to the standard to be made. An overall judgement is made on whenever the provider meets all the standards/ meets all the standards subject to meeting specific conditions or does not meet the standard(s).
17. **ESG 2.6:** According to QAA's Guidance for Providers, once the report is considered final it will be published on the QAA website. The report is considered final after the provider have had the opportunity to comment on factual accuracies at the end of the review and/or after any changes required due to a successful appeal.
18. **ESG 2.7:** The Committee understood that QAAs' consolidated Appeals' Procedure will apply to this review, but that QAA has yet to update its Complaints Handling Procedure so that any complaints received

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<sup>1</sup><https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/eqrguidance-for-providers.pdf>

regarding the conduct of the review can be addressed in case of this procedure.

19. **Based on the information provided in the Substantive Change Report and annexed documentation, the Register Committee considered that the newly developed Elective Quality Review activity appears to be aligned with the ESG and therefore took note of the change with no further remarks. The Committee nevertheless expects that this activity will be analysed in full as part of QAA's next renewal of registration.**

### C. Activities outside the scope of the ESG

20. The Committee noted that QAA expanded its consulting activities and introduced a number of new services<sup>2</sup> as follows.
21. The Committee learned that QAA launched the **New Provider Service**, designed to support providers in England seeking to make an initial registration with the regulator (Office for Students). The service may include workshops and training on requirements.
22. The Committee noted that QAA developed **Degree Awarding Powers Service**, offering tailored specialist advice and guidance to providers seeking a recognition from the Office for Students in becoming eligible to award their own degrees. The service may be offered e.g., pre-application but also on specific advice on certain criteria.
23. The Committee also considered the launch of the **Quality and Standards Service**. The service allows providers to commission an assessment by QAA to help them address a specific quality and standards issue, from one aspect of academic activity e.g. assessment to on just one programme, or at faculty or school level.
24. **The Register Committee underlined that when consultancy activities carried out by the agency are related to issues covered by the ESG (i.e. teaching and learning in higher education), that the agency is expected to take appropriate precautions to prevent any conflicts of interest that may arise from its consultancy services and its current review procedure within the scope of the ESG. In particular QAA is expected to ensure that the standards of ESG Part 1, namely ESG 1.2, 1.6 and parts of 1.5 (which are also covered by the Office for Students B1-B5 Conditions) are not offered as part of its consulting services to providers also applying for or trying to maintain their registration with the Office for Students.**
25. **QAA is further expected to develop, enact and publish measures or principles that ensure the separation of its newly launched services from its EQR activity.**
26. **Given the earlier concerns on QAA's separation of consultancy activities from the agencies other activities within the scope of the ESG, the**

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<sup>2</sup>More details are published on QAA's website at:  
<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/products-and-services/>

Committee find this matter deserves special attention and thus expects QAA to provide a further report within the next six months detailing how it has addressed the above matter.

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27. Register Committee further noted that all the above changes should be analysed in-depth in the next external review of QAA.

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## EQAR Substantive Change Report

Agency #1	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Agency acronym	QAA
Expiry date #1	30/06/2028
Contact #1	David Gale
Phone #1	07899 903160
Email #1	<a href="mailto:d.gale@qaa.ac.uk">d.gale@qaa.ac.uk</a>
Other organisations?	No
A. Has the organisational identity of the registered agency changed?	No
B. Has the organisational structure changed?	No
C. Changes in EQA activities	2. Substantive changes carried out to one or several existing external QA activities (e.g. changes to their methodology, criteria or procedures)
Description new/changed	Changes to an existing quality assurance activity arose from a new cycle of external quality review commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) for regulated and funded institutions in Wales. HEFCW produced revised requirements for External Quality Review (2022) and a revised Quality Assurance Framework (Wales) (2022). Changes were made on the basis of an existing external quality review known as Quality Enhancement Review.
2. Changed EQA activity	
1	Quality Enhancement Review
ESG 2.1	The Agency has an internal quality assurance manual which sets the expectations for method design which includes a method design checklist.

QAA maps the UK Quality Code against the ESG Standards 1.1 to 1.10 and ensures its approach reflects the ESG standards. The method includes a judgement on whether the provider meets the requirements of ESG Part 1.

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## ESG 2.2

The revision of the methodology has taken account of the Agency's Internal Quality Assurance Manual which sets out the characteristics and expectations of QAA's review methods and method level expectations. This includes a method design checklist that must be adhered to. The development of the review method has been overseen by a method advisory group with members drawn from key stakeholders. The method development process also requires consultation with stakeholders at a formative stage. Sector workshops and meetings with sector bodies were undertaken. A formal consultation was undertaken prior to finalising the method. The revised method has then to be signed off by the Agency's Assessment and Reviews Group which has oversight of all the Agency's review activity.

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## ESG 2.3

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[www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/quality-enhancement-review](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/types-of-review/quality-enhancement-review)

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## ESG 2.4

The selection, appointment and training of reviewers remains unchanged. The size of review teams also remains unchanged along with the option of adding additional reviewers. The revised method introduces the role of a specialist reviewer who can bring an appropriate area of expertise to support the review. A specialist reviewer can either be a core member of the review team or an additional member, or even both. The specialist reviewer could be for,

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example, an international reviewer, an additional student reviewer with particular knowledge of, for instance, postgraduate research, or a Welsh medium education reviewer.

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**ESG 2.5**

The Agency ensures consistency through: 1. a published judgement criteria, 2. training of reviewers, 3. a trained QAA officer attending the full review and discussing the outcomes, judgements and findings with the team, testing the evidence and providing advice and help to the reviewers in decision making, 4. referencing of evidence behind the reviewers findings which is checked by the officer, 5. moderation of the review findings by an experienced and senior review manager, and 6. second reading of review reports. The Agency is currently considering the recommendation made by 2023 ENQA review panel to reflect on the approach to ensure consistency of outcomes and will be taking further steps to strength the validation of reports and final decision making.

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**ESG 2.6**

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1	<a href="http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports">www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports</a>
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2	<a href="http://www.qaa.ac.uk/cy/adolygu-addysg-uwch/adroddiadau-sicrhau-ansawdd">www.qaa.ac.uk/cy/adolygu-addysg-uwch/adroddiadau-sicrhau-ansawdd</a>
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<b>D. Activity outside the scope of the ESG</b>	No
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<b>File #1</b>	<a href="#">map-of-esg-to-quality-code.pdf (218 KB)</a>
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<b>Submit form?</b>	I am ready to submit the change report form
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## EQAR Substantive Change Report

Reference #	25966522
Status	Complete
Agency #1	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Agency acronym	QAA
Expiry date #1	30/06/2028
Contact #1	Alastair Delaney
Phone #1	+441452557000
Email #1	<a href="mailto:dceo@qaa.ac.uk">dceo@qaa.ac.uk</a>
Other organisations?	No
A. Has the organisational identity of the registered agency changed?	No
B. Has the organisational structure changed?	No
C. Changes in EQA activities	1. One or several new external QA activities were introduced
Description new/changed	<p>QAA has introduced a new voluntary review mechanism – Elective Quality Review (EQR).</p> <p>The EQR has been developed following QAA's conclusion of its first period of designation as the Designated Quality Body in England (DQB), which has been considered in prior Substantive Change Reports.</p> <p>QAA identified that there was the potential need for providers in England to be able to undergo external quality assurance activity that was aligned with the European Standards and Guidelines, noting that QAA had given up the role of DQB as it had not been possible to</p>

reconcile the requirements of the higher education regulator in England with the expectations in the ESG.

QAA therefore sought to develop from scratch a method that was proportionate to the needs and context of providers in England (noting that the regulator's conditions of registration are designed to give some assurance regarding baseline quality and standards requirements), but also would be in scope of the ESG and allow assessment to be conducted, and reports to be developed that are presented as such.

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**1. New EQA activity:**

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<b>1</b>	Elective Quality Review
<b>Focus</b>	study programmes or higher education institutions
<b>ESG 2.1</b>	<p>EQR explicitly reviews a provider against the Standards outlined in Part 1 of the ESG and produces judgements on whether the provider satisfies the expectations for each Standard.</p> <p>As all providers will be subject to meeting the Office for Students (English HE regulator) ongoing conditions of registration, a mapping exercise has been completed in order to avoid duplication of external scrutiny. This detailed mapping is presented as annex 2 in the Guidance for Providers (attached) and demonstrates that two and a half of the ESG Standards Part 1 are covered by the OfS B Conditions. EQR will therefore only focus on the remaining seven and a half ESG conditions, although the report will include all 10 ESG Standards and include an explanation on how Standards 1.2, 1.6 and parts of 1.5 are</p>

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addressed on account of the provider maintaining its registration with the OfS. Further information on this is outlined in the Guidance for Providers (document attached)

We have included a requirement within the Guidance that providers will need to notify us if they are considered by the OfS to no longer be compliant with the OfS B conditions, as this could mean they no longer meet the ESG requirements.

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## ESG 2.2

The aims of EQR are clearly stated in the Guidance for Providers and the method has been designed in the context of the current regulatory approach to provision in England.

The review has been designed to be proportionate, recognising the existing oversight by the regulatory body (as noted in our response to the previous question) and focusing in more detail on the areas of the ESG Part 1 not currently covered by the OfS approach to regulation. This removes any duplication or overlap in scrutiny between the QAA and regulator. The review has been designed to include only the essential elements of a compliance review and allows for evaluation above the baseline in order to support institutions in improving quality above the baseline. Clear information on follow-up activity is provided in the Guidance.

Representatives from the main mission groups (UniversitiesUK, GuildHE, Association of Colleges and Independent HE) and QAA's Strategic Student Advisory Committee were consulted in the development phases to inform the design. Feedback will be routinely obtained

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from providers undergoing review to inform continuous improvement.

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**ESG 2.3**

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<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/eqr-guidance-for-providers.pdf>

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**ESG 2.3**

A visit is anticipated as standard as part of the process.

We do make allowance for online activities to be undertaken in exception circumstances, which is set out in the handbook and states "Exceptionally, we may consider conducting the whole visit online where this is considered appropriate, such as for providers who operate exclusively online or for exceptional cases where extreme weather and/or significant travel disruption make it unfeasible to attend in person. Fully online visits will only be undertaken where we can ensure that the team is in a position to validate the evidence provided and carry out meetings with different stakeholders as it finds appropriate."

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**ESG 2.4**

The review will be conducted by external experts selected from the QAA reviewer pool. These will normally have experience of conducting other QAA reviews with good feedback and the team will collectively have experience of the type of provision and type of provider under assessment. Student reviewers will be included on all review teams as an equal contributor.

Reviewers will be trained specifically on the method in advance of undertaking any review activity.

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**ESG 2.5**

The criteria for assessment for the review and the assessment framework form part of the

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published Guidance for Providers. Reviewers will be supported on the interpretation and application of the criteria and the outcomes will be subject to internal moderation through an internal quality assurance process that thoroughly tests the judgements and the basis for the decision.

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**ESG 2.6**

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<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/quality-assurance-reports>

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**ESG 2.7**

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QAA's Consolidated Appeals Procedure will apply to this review and will be updated to clarify that the QAA's Complaints Handling Procedure will also apply to any complaints received regarding the conduct of the review.

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**ESG 3.4/ESG 3.6**

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Outcomes from the reviews and mid-cycle engagements will be used in thematic analysis (once a critical mass of reports is available) and in case studies to share good practice and innovation with the sector.

Feedback on the method will be evaluated on an ongoing basis and inform ongoing developments that will be documented through the annual monitoring report for the method. In-cycle changes can be made to the method where available and a periodic review will also be undertaken within 5 years of launch.

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**D. Activity outside the scope of the ESG**

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Yes

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**Context**

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QAA has introduced three new services that are designed at supporting providers in England in capacity building in their own quality assurance activity and practice. None of these services carry any regulatory weight, and the reporting activity will differ from provider to provider

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according to their needs. The reports are not generally designed to provide assurance to third parties, and are intended for use solely by the providers who commission them. These reports are confidential and not published.

The three services are:

**New Provider Service** – this service offers specialist advice and guidance to providers in England seeking to make an initial registration with the regulator. The service is modular, and is designed to provide support in understanding the requirements of the regulator, and where a provider may have gaps in policies, procedures, or evidence required. The service may also include workshops and training on requirements.  
<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/products-and-services/new-provider-service>

**Degree Awarding Powers Service** – this service offers specialist advice and guidance to providers in England seeking to apply to the regulator for the power to award their own degrees. The service is modular and tailored to the individual needs of the provider depending on where they are in the DAP process (i.e. pre-application, needing specific advice on certain criteria etc).  
<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/products-and-services/degree-awarding-powers-service>

**Targeted Quality and Standards Service** – this allows providers to commission an assessment by QAA to help them address a specific quality and standards issue...

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... (i.e. troubleshooting activity) or could be used as a focused review to support internal quality enhancement. The service is variable in scale and scope, for example could look at one aspect

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of academic activity (e.g. assessment), on just one programme, or at faculty or school level (for example).

<https://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/products-and-services/targeted-quality-and-standards-service>

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**File #1**

[eqr-guidance-for-providers.pdf \(2.01 MB\)](#)

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**Submit form?**

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**Last Update**

2023-11-21 16:04:15

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**Start Time**

2023-11-21 14:20:21

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**Finish Time**

2023-11-21 16:04:15

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## **A Map of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area to the UK Quality Code for Higher Education**

This document illustrates how the standards set out in the [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area](#) (ESG 2015) maps to the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the Quality Code) and associated reference points. Providers can use the table to ensure their processes for quality assurance and enhancement align with the European Standards and Guidelines.

The Quality Code features high-level Expectations which are followed by providers operating in all nations of the UK. The Quality Code articulates these Expectations through Core and Common practices. Core and Common practices are not regulatory requirements in England, but should be demonstrated by providers operating in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. The third column in the table includes short excerpts from other sector reference points which, while non-mandatory, are used by providers in UK higher education (such as the Quality Code Advice and Guidance; and *The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree Awarding Bodies* (FHEQ)). They set out advice on how the Quality Code Expectations and practices may be met.

The Quality Code is expressed primarily as outcomes rather than processes to be followed. Higher education providers use external reviewers as part of periodic review to gain an external perspective on any proposed changes to academic courses, to ensure threshold standards are being achieved and the content is appropriate for the subject. There are separate external quality processes operating in the different parts of the UK taking into account the diverse nations' contexts and regulatory or quality frameworks. Useful links for further information on those are provided at the end of this document.



ESG Standard	Quality Code Expectations and Core/Common practices	Other reference points (such as Quality Code Advice & Guidance, FHEQ)
<p><b>1.1 Policy for quality assurance</b>            Institutions should have a policy for quality assurance that is made public and forms part of their strategic management. Internal stakeholders should develop and implement this policy through appropriate structures and processes, while involving external stakeholders.</p>	<p><b>Core practice 3, standards</b>            Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.</p> <p><b>Core practice 4, standards</b>            The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.</p> <p><b>Core practice 2, quality</b>            The provider designs and delivers high-quality courses.</p> <p><b>Core practice 8, quality</b>            Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.</p> <p><b>Common practice 1, quality</b>            The provider reviews its Core practices for quality regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.</p> <p><b>Common practice 2, quality</b>            The provider’s approach to managing quality takes account of external expertise.</p>	<p><b>Advice and Guidance, Course Design and Development</b>  <b>Guiding principle 2</b> - Accessible and flexible processes for course design, development and approval facilitate continuous improvement of provision and are proportionate to risk.</p> <p>‘Good Practice might include clarity and availability of information about processes, such as handbooks or policy documents, being available to all stakeholders involved.’</p> <p><b>Advice and Guidance, Enabling Student Achievement</b>  <b>Guiding principle 2</b> - Clear, accessible and inclusive policies and procedures to enable students and staff to identify when support mechanisms may be required for academic and personal progression.</p> <p><b>Advice and Guidance, Research Degrees</b>  <b>Guiding principle 1</b> - Provision of information is clear and accessible to research students and staff.</p> <p>Explicit academic frameworks and regulations, policies, guidance and Codes of practice for research degrees are made available to prospective and current research students and staff.</p>

ESG Standard	Quality Code Expectations and Core/Common practices	Other reference points (such as Quality Code Advice & Guidance, FHEQ)
		<p><b>Advice and Guidance, Student Engagement</b>  <b>Guiding principles 1, 2, 6</b> - Student engagement strategies and culture advice</p> <p>Providers make explicit their commitment to student engagement and partnership working by incorporating clear principles and goals in institutional and departmental strategies. To ensure this is developed, these activities will need to be supported by quality assurance and enhancement policies and procedures.</p>
<p><b>1.2 Design and approval of programmes</b>  Institutions should have processes for the design and approval of their programmes. The programmes should be designed so that they meet the objectives set for them, including the intended learning outcomes. The qualification resulting from a programme should be clearly specified and communicated, and refer to the correct level of the national qualifications framework for higher education and, consequently, to the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area.</p>	<p><b>Expectation 1, standards</b>  The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework.</p> <p><b>Expectation 1, quality</b>  Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.</p> <p><b>Core practice 1, standards</b>  The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks.</p> <p><b>Core practice 4, standards</b>  The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.</p>	<p><b>Advice and Guidance, Course Design and Development</b>  <b>Guiding principle 2</b> - Accessible and flexible processes for course design, development and approval facilitate continuous improvement of provision and are proportionate to risk.</p> <p><b>Guiding principle 3</b> - Internal guidance and external reference points are used in course design, development and approval.</p> <p><b>Guiding principle 6</b> - Course design, development and approval processes result in definitive course documents.</p> <p><b>Guiding principle 7</b> - Design, development and approval processes are reviewed and enhanced.</p>

ESG Standard	Quality Code Expectations and Core/Common practices	Other reference points (such as Quality Code Advice & Guidance, FHEQ)
	<p><b>Common practice 1, standards</b> The provider reviews its Core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.</p> <p><b>Core practice 2, quality</b> The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses.</p> <p><b>Core practice 7, quality</b> Where the provider offers research degrees, it delivers these in appropriate and supportive research environments.</p>	
<p><b>1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment</b> Institutions should ensure that the programmes are delivered in a way that encourages students to take an active role in creating the learning process, and that the assessment of students reflects this approach.</p>	<p><b>Core practice 2, standards</b> The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.</p> <p><b>Core practice 4, standards</b> The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.</p> <p><b>Expectation 1, quality</b> Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.</p>	<p><b>Advice and Guidance, Assessment</b> <b>Guiding principle 1</b> - Assessment methods and criteria are aligned to learning outcomes and teaching activities.</p> <p><b>Guiding principle 2</b> - Assessment is reliable, consistent, fair and valid.</p> <p><b>Guiding principle 3</b> - Assessment design is approached holistically.</p> <p><b>Guiding principle 4</b> - Assessment is inclusive and equitable.</p> <p><b>Guiding principle 5</b> - Assessment is explicit and transparent.</p>

ESG Standard	Quality Code Expectations and Core/Common practices	Other reference points (such as Quality Code Advice & Guidance, FHEQ)
	<p><b>Core practice 5, quality</b> The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.</p> <p><b>Core practice 6, quality</b> The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.</p> <p><b>Core practice 9, quality</b> The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.</p> <p><b>Common practice 3, quality</b> The provider engages students individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience.</p>	<p><b>Guiding principle 6</b> - Assessment and feedback is purposeful and supports the learning process.</p> <p><b>Guiding principle 9</b> - students are supported and prepared for assessment.</p> <p><b>Advice and Guidance, Learning and Teaching</b> <b>Guiding principle 2</b> - Effective learning and teaching is underpinned by a focus on student achievement and outcomes.</p> <p><b>Guiding principle 6</b> - Effective learning and teaching activities, facilities and resources make the learning environment accessible, relevant and engaging to all students.</p> <p><b>Guiding principle 8</b> - Effective learning and teaching encourages and enables students to take an active role in their studies.</p> <p><b>Guiding principle 9</b> - Providers encourage and enable students to evaluate and manage their own learning development, supported by opportunities for ongoing dialogue with staff.</p>

ESG Standard	Quality Code Expectations and Core/Common practices	Other reference points (such as Quality Code Advice & Guidance, FHEQ)
<p><b>1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification</b> Institutions should consistently apply pre-defined and published regulations covering all phases of the student “life cycle,” e.g. student admission, progression, recognition and certification.</p>	<p><b>Common practice 1, standards</b> The provider reviews its Core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.</p> <p><b>Expectation 2, quality</b> From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.</p> <p><b>Core practice 1, quality</b> The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system.</p> <p><b>Common practice 1, quality</b> The provider reviews its Core practices for quality regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.</p>	<p><b>Advice and Guidance, Research Degrees</b> <b>Guiding principle 1</b> - Provision of information is clear and accessible to research students and staff.</p> <p>Providers that have research degree awarding powers have specific regulations and codes of practice for research degrees that are clear, regularly reviewed and accessible to research students and staff, including examiners.</p>
<p><b>1.5 Teaching staff</b> Institutions should assure themselves of the competence of their teachers. They should apply fair and transparent processes for the recruitment and development of the staff.</p>	<p><b>Core practice 3, quality</b> The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.</p>	<p><b>Advice and Guidance, Assessment</b> <b>Practical advice - Professional standards of staff</b> Providers ensure, through recruitment processes and staff development, that everyone involved in the assessment of student work and associated processes is competent to undertake their roles and fulfil their responsibilities.</p>

ESG Standard	Quality Code Expectations and Core/Common practices	Other reference points (such as Quality Code Advice & Guidance, FHEQ)
		<p><b>Advice and Guidance, Course Design and Development</b>  <b>Guiding Principle 5</b> - Development of staff, students and other participants enables effective engagement with the course design, development and approval processes.</p> <p><b>Practical advice</b> - Development of staff, students and other participants enables effective engagement with course design, development and approval process.</p>
<p><b>1.6 Learning resources and student support</b>  Institutions should have appropriate funding for learning and teaching activities and ensure that adequate and readily accessible learning resources and student support are provided.</p>	<p><b>Expectation 2, quality</b>  From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.</p> <p><b>Core practice 4, quality</b>  The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.</p> <p><b>Core practice 7, quality</b>  Where the provider offers research degrees, it delivers these in appropriate and supportive research environments.</p> <p><b>Core practice 9, quality</b>  The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.</p>	<p><b>Advice and Guidance, Complaints and appeals</b>  <b>Guiding principle 6</b> - Concerns, complaints and appeals procedures are fair and impartial. Procedures follow principles of procedural fairness and are applied consistently. Decision-makers are properly trained and resourced and have no conflict of interest in the matter. Providers give clear, detailed reasons for their decisions.</p> <p><b>Advice and Guidance, Enabling Student Achievement</b>  <b>Guiding principle 3</b> - Training and resources are allocated to student support services to enable effective delivery, ensure comprehensive evaluation and subsequent development.</p>

ESG Standard	Quality Code Expectations and Core/Common practices	Other reference points (such as Quality Code Advice & Guidance, FHEQ)
		<p><b>Advice and Guidance, Learning and Teaching</b>  <b>Guiding principle 6</b> - Effective learning and teaching activities, facilities and resources make the learning environment accessible, relevant and engaging to all students.</p> <p><b>Advice and Guidance, Student Engagement</b>  <b>Guiding principle 6</b> - Student engagement and representation processes are adequately resourced and supported.</p>
<p><b>1.7 Information management</b>  Institutions should ensure that they collect, analyse and use relevant information for the effective management of their programmes and other activities.</p>	<p><b>Expectation 1, quality</b>  Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.</p> <p><b>Core practice 5, quality</b>  The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.</p> <p><b>Core practice 6, quality</b>  The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.</p> <p><b>Common practice 1, standards</b>  The provider reviews its Core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.</p>	<p><b>Advice and Guidance, Monitoring and Evaluation</b>  <b>Guiding principle 3</b> - Providers clarify aims, objectives, activities and actions, and identify the key indicators, issues, questions, targets and relevant information/data.</p> <p><b>Guiding principle 5</b> - Providers evaluate, analyse and use the information generated from monitoring to learn and improve.</p> <p><b>Practical advice - Information and data</b></p> <p><b>Advice and Guidance, Research Degrees</b>  <b>Guiding principle 1</b> - Provision of information is clear and accessible to research students and staff.</p>

ESG Standard	Quality Code Expectations and Core/Common practices	Other reference points (such as Quality Code Advice & Guidance, FHEQ)
		<p><b>Advice and Guidance, Work-Based Learning Practical advice - Information, advice and guidance</b> The education provider should ensure that clear information is available for candidates and students to understand the obligations of work-based learning requirements, such as travel to different work settings and mandatory hours, so they can make an informed decision about their choice of course and/or work-based learning opportunity.</p>
<p><b>1.8 Public Information</b> Institutions should publish information about their activities, including programmes, which is clear, accurate, objective, up-to date and readily accessible.</p>	<p><b>Expectation 2, quality</b> From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.</p> <p><b>Core practice 1, quality</b> The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system.</p>	<p><b>Advice and Guidance, Learning and Teaching</b> <b>Guiding principle 7</b> - Effective learning and teaching ensures that information about, and support for, learning and teaching is clear and accessible to all students and stakeholders.</p> <p><b>Advice and Guidance, Concerns, Complaints and Appeals</b> <b>Guiding principle 3</b> - Information is clear and transparent. Providers explain key terms clearly, describe processes and time limits accurately, covering all types of course and partnership arrangements.</p> <p><b>Advice and Guidance, Research Degrees</b> <b>Guiding principle 1</b> - Provision of information is clear and accessible to research students and staff.</p>



ESG Standard	Quality Code Expectations and Core/Common practices	Other reference points (such as Quality Code Advice & Guidance, FHEQ)
		<p><b>Advice and Guidance, Work-Based Learning Practical advice - Information, advice and guidance</b>  The education provider should ensure that clear information is available for candidates and students to understand the obligations of work-based learning requirements, such as travel to different work settings and mandatory hours, so they can make an informed decision about their choice of course and/or work-based learning opportunity.</p>
<p><b>1.9 On-going monitoring and periodic review of programmes</b>  Institutions should monitor and periodically review their programmes to ensure that they achieve the objectives set for them and respond to the needs of students and society. These reviews should lead to the continuous improvement of the programme. Any action planned should be communicated to all those concerned.</p>	<p><b>Expectation 1, quality</b>  Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.</p> <p><b>Core practice 2, standards</b>  The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.</p> <p><b>Core practice 3, standards</b>  Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.</p>	<p><b>Advice and Guidance, Monitoring and Evaluation</b></p> <p><b>Guiding principle 1</b> - Providers agree strategic principles for monitoring and evaluation to ensure processes are applied systematically and operated consistently.</p> <p><b>Guiding principle 2</b> - Providers normalise monitoring and evaluation as well as undertaking routine formal activities.</p> <p><b>Guiding principle 3</b> - Providers clarify aims, objectives, activities and actions, and identify the key indicators, issues, questions, targets and relevant information/data.</p> <p><b>Guiding principle 4</b> - Providers decide whom to involve in the different stages of monitoring and evaluation, clearly defining roles and</p>

ESG Standard	Quality Code Expectations and Core/Common practices	Other reference points (such as Quality Code Advice & Guidance, FHEQ)
	<p><b>Common practice 1, standards</b> The provider reviews its Core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.</p> <p><b>Core practice 5, quality</b> The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.</p> <p><b>Common practice 1, quality</b> The provider reviews its Core practices for quality regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.</p> <p><b>Common practice 2, quality</b> The provider’s approach to managing quality takes account of external expertise.</p>	<p>responsibilities and communicating them to those involved.</p> <p><b>Guiding principle 5</b> - Providers evaluate, analyse and use the information generated from monitoring to learn and improve.</p> <p><b>Guiding principle 6</b> - Providers communicate outcomes from monitoring and evaluation to staff, students and external stakeholders.</p> <p><b>Guiding principle 7</b> - Providers take account of ethics and data protection requirements when designing and operating monitoring and evaluation systems.</p>
<p><b>1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance</b> Institutions should undergo external quality assurance in line with the ESG on a cyclical basis.</p>	<p><b>Common practice 2, quality</b> The provider’s approach to managing quality takes account of external expertise.</p>	

## Useful links

- [Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area](#)
- [The UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (and [Advice and Guidance](#))
- Relevant qualification and credit frameworks ([Qualifications frameworks](#), [Credit Framework for England](#), [SCQF](#), [CQFW](#))

## Regulatory requirements/guidance:

- [Office for Students regulatory framework](#)
- [Northern Ireland Quality Assurance of Higher Education](#)
- [Scottish Funding Council guidance to higher education institutions on quality from August 2017-2022](#)
- [Quality Enhancement Framework Scotland](#)
- [Quality Assessment Framework for Wales](#)