THE QUALITY ASSURANCE OF HIGHER EDUCATION: ACCOUNTABILITY AND ENHANCEMENT

Carolyn Campbell
Head of International

c.campbell@qaa.ac.uk
OUTLINE

- Why quality assurance?
- The Quality Assurance of UK Higher Education
- International Standards and guidelines for quality assurance
- Sources and resources
WHY QUALITY ASSURANCE?: THE EXPECTATIONS OF STAKEHOLDERS

- Accountability
  - Value for money
  - Contribution to economic and social well-being
  - Protection of student interests
  - Reputation and recognition

- Improvement and the quality culture

- Information
  Balancing the interests and demands of multiple stakeholders is a challenge
QAA, an independent organisation, was established in 1997

Purpose:
to assure standards and improve the quality of UK higher education

Offices in England, Scotland & Wales

Around 170 staff and a database of more than 650 reviewers

www.qaa.ac.uk
QAA TODAY

Some of QAA’s main UK activities today:

- **Review** universities, colleges and alternative providers of higher education
- Advise Privy Council on applications for degree-awarding powers and university title
- **UK Quality Code for Higher Education**
- **Educational oversight**, on behalf of the UK Border Agency - now the Home Office
CHARACTERISTICS OF UK HIGHER EDUCATION

- Higher education providers are recognised but not owned by government
- Autonomy and independence
- Diversification – new types of provider and methods of course delivery
- QAA reviews – at institutional level – the quality and standard of higher education provision
- QAA no longer reviews at subject level nor assesses the quality of research
HOW QAA FITS INTO THE SYSTEM

- Universities and colleges: take responsibility for their own quality and standards
- QAA: conducts external reviews that check on internal quality assurance systems, and publishes reports
- Students: QAA works with students who are increasingly involved in both internal and external reviews
- PSRBs and employers: QAA works with others having a mutual interest in the quality of HE, such as professional bodies and employers
A COMMON UK FRAMEWORK

“All UK higher education, irrespective of how it is funded, should be underpinned by the same quality assurance framework.”

QAA response to 2011 technical consultation

- A UK-wide framework of quality assurance
- Applied to all providers of UK higher education
- Adapted in different countries
- Recognising the value of enhancement
UK Quality Code for Higher Education

Part A • Setting and maintaining academic standards

Part B • Assuring and enhancing academic quality

Part C • Information about higher education provision
Chapters of the Quality Code

**Part A: Setting and maintaining threshold academic standards**

A1: UK and European reference points for academic standards

A2: Degree-awarding bodies’ reference points for academic standards

A3: Securing academic standards and an outcomes-based approach to academic awards

**Part C: Information about higher education provision**

**Part B: Assuring and enhancing academic quality**

B1: Programme design development and approval

B2: Recruitment, selection and admission

B3: Learning and teaching

B4: Enabling student development and achievement

B5: Student engagement

B6: Assessment of students and recognition of prior learning

B7: External examining

B8: Programme monitoring and review

B9: Academic appeals and student complaints

B10: Managing higher education provision with others

B11: Research degrees

General introduction
Common characteristics across the UK

- Institutional review
- Evidence based
- Peer review
- Trained reviewers including students
- The UK Quality Code
- Summative, graded judgements on quality and standards not rankings
- Published reports

QAA has undergone a second review to confirm its full compliance with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance
COUNTRY OVERVIEW REPORTS

“The only example of data gathering of overseas provision collected in a systematic way was found to be the country reviews conducted by the UK’s QAA.”

“The UK’s QAA approach to auditing the exports of UK providers is a good practice.”

Delivering Education Across Borders in the European Union  European Commission, July 2013
CURRENT INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITY

- QAA TNE reviews in 2013-14:
  - UAE (Dubai and RAK)
  - West Indies

- Review of Macao Polytechnic Institute

- Working with international partners:
  - CDGDC (PR China)
  - HKCAAVQ (SAR Hong Kong)
  - CPE (Singapore)
  - KHDA (Dubai, UAE)
  - MQA (Malaysia)
  - NIAD-UE (Japan)
  - TEQSA (Australia)
  - QWI (Ireland)
INTERNATIONAL GUIDELINES FOR QA (1)

- European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance

- INQAAHE Guidelines for Good Practice
  [http://inqaahe.org/admin/files/assets/subsites/1/documen
ten/1231430767_inqaahe---guidelines-of-good-practice[1].pdf](http://inqaahe.org/admin/files/assets/subsites/1/documen
ten/1231430767_inqaahe---guidelines-of-good-practice[1].pdf)

- OECD-UNESCO guidelines for quality provision in cross border education
INTERNATIONAL GUIDELINES (2) AND NETWORKS

- The Chiba principles of the Asia Pacific Quality Network (APQN)
  [http://www.apqn.org/files/virtual_library/other_reports/higher_education_quality_assurance_principles_for_the_asia_pacific_region_chiba_principles.pdf](http://www.apqn.org/files/virtual_library/other_reports/higher_education_quality_assurance_principles_for_the_asia_pacific_region_chiba_principles.pdf)

- Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ANQAAHE) [www.anqahe.org](http://www.anqahe.org)


- Central and Eastern Europe Network of QA Agencies in HE (CEENQA) [www.ceenetwork.hu](http://www.ceenetwork.hu)
Universities will have effective systems covering:

- Policy and procedures for quality assurance
- Approval, monitoring and periodic review of programmes and awards
- Assessment of students
- Quality assurance of teaching staff
- Learning resources and student support
- Information systems
- Public information
QAA SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPMENT AND ENHANCEMENT

- Enhancement themes in Scotland
- Quality Enhancement Network
- Developmental engagements
- Study tour programmes and briefings
- International Quality Assurance Programme (IQAP)
- World Bank HERC project Sri Lanka
QUALITY ASSURANCE: SIX QUESTIONS

- What are you trying to do?
- Why are you trying to do it?
- How are you doing it?
- Why are you doing it that way?
- Why is it the best way of doing it?
- And
- How do you know it works?

Peter Williams: *The result of intelligent effort? Two decades in the quality assurance of higher education.* IoE 2009
QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education is a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales number 3344784.
Registered office Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786.