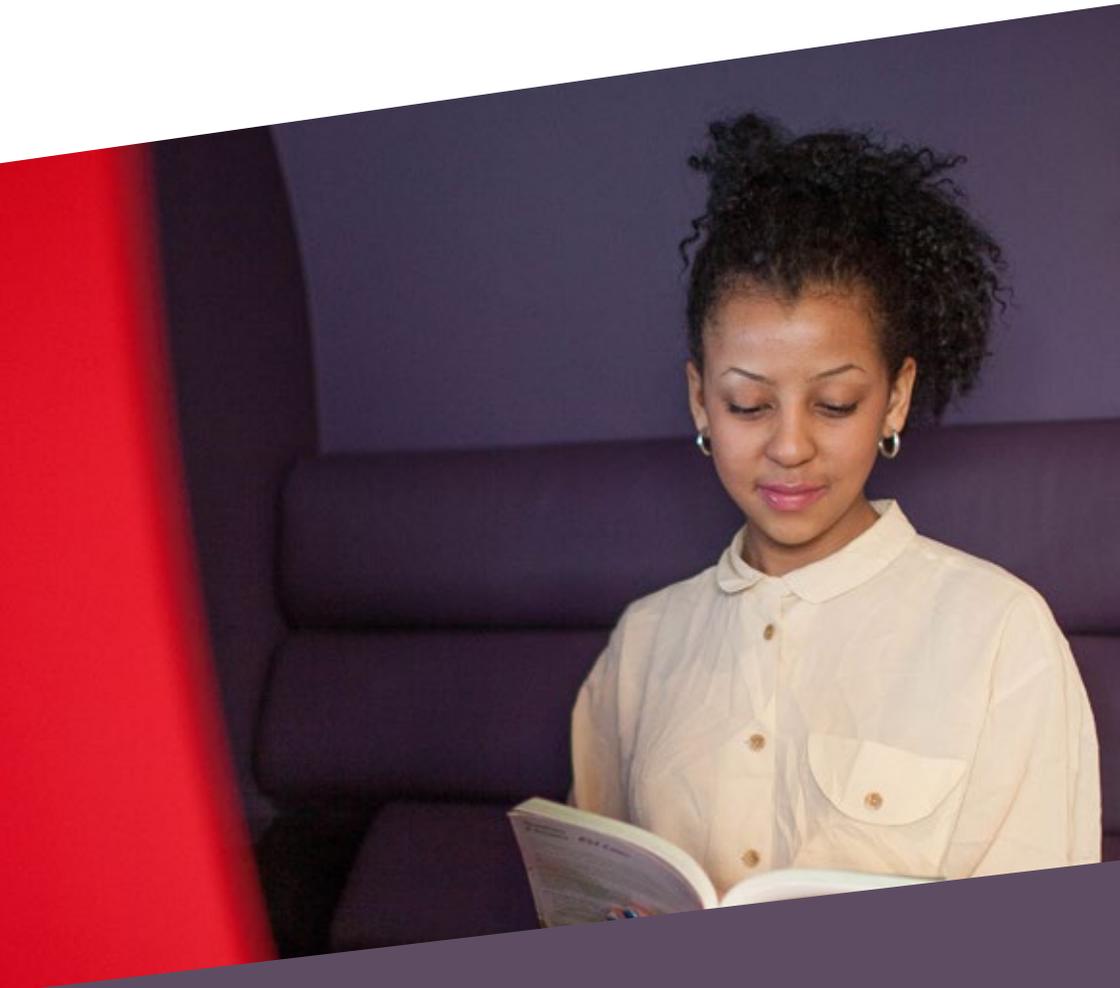




Higher Education that Works

Involving Employers in Quality Assurance



Guidance

This guide is for all employers – whether large, medium or small enterprises; private companies; or public organisations. It is published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), the independent agency dedicated to safeguarding standards and improving the quality of UK higher education wherever it is delivered around the world. We review universities and colleges, produce reports on what those reviews find, and work with providers to encourage continual improvement.

The guide explains how we support UK universities and colleges (higher education providers) in meeting UK expectations for standards and quality, and in ensuring that graduates have relevant skills and attributes. It also explains how employers can get involved in our work of assuring quality and helping higher education adapt to emerging economic, social and environmental needs.

Why should employers be interested in higher education?

Our society and economy need high-quality graduates with the right skills for employment, not just for vacancies available here and now but also for jobs that may exist in the future.

It's therefore important that employers take an interest in higher education. We encourage them to work with higher education providers in the development of courses, and to have an input into our processes for assuring standards and quality.

This will help to ensure that graduates leave university or college with appropriate skills, and that future developments in higher education are relevant to the workplace. It will also enable employers to build important connections so that knowledge can be transferred productively into the economy.



Key UK reference points for standards and quality

We publish and maintain the key reference points that universities and colleges use in planning and monitoring their higher education courses. These are drawn up in close collaboration with universities, colleges and other relevant organisations (such as professional, statutory or regulatory bodies). All providers are expected to adhere to them, and in our reviews we check that this is the case.

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) sets out the formal UK Expectations for standards, quality and the provision of public information that all providers of UK higher education are required to meet. Universities and colleges use it in their course planning and monitoring, and to inform their policies. As autonomous bodies, they make their own decisions about how best to meet its Expectations, following the Indicators and supporting text provided.

 qaa.ac.uk/quality-code

The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies set out what type of skills and attributes are expected of graduates at the different higher education levels (for example, a foundation degree, a bachelor's degree with honours, a postgraduate certificate, or a master's degree). They are used by UK higher education providers in establishing the type of challenge, including breadth and depth of study, that is expected of the student at a particular level.

 qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/qualifications

Subject Benchmark Statements are subject-specific publications, one for each subject or disciplinary area. They outline the learning expected of graduates, including what they need to be able to do/demonstrate in order to meet a minimum (threshold) standard in that subject at that level. There are Statements for both bachelor's and master's-level study, and there are also separate Statements for the healthcare professions.

 qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/subject-benchmark-statements

Further guidance for universities and colleges

The Higher Education Credit Framework for England guides universities and colleges in England on how academic credit (measured as one unit for approximately ten hours of study at a given level) can be used to acknowledge the learning accomplished in modules and whole programmes of study. Credit is used for both campus-based and workplace/placement learning and plays an important role in structuring courses.



[qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/
publication?PubID=2730](http://qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2730)

Similar guidance is available for universities and colleges in Wales and Scotland; these frameworks are not published by us, but details can be found on our website.



[qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/
academic-credit](http://qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/academic-credit)

The Foundation Degree Qualification Benchmark sets out expectations for work-related foundation degrees.



[qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/
the-quality-code/qualifications](http://qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/qualifications)

Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education: Guidance for Higher Education Providers is a document specifically aimed at encouraging universities and colleges to nurture an entrepreneurial mindset and to include authentic, business-related tasks in the curriculum.



[qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/
skills-for-employability](http://qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/skills-for-employability)

At the above link you can also find the complementary publication **Education for Sustainable Development: Guidance for Higher Education Providers**, which encourages universities and colleges to take a future-facing approach to the demands of a changing economy and environment, including the emergence of jobs that may not yet exist.

Involving employers in Subject Benchmark Statements

One area of our work in which employers play a particularly important role is the development and updating of Subject Benchmark Statements.

These Statements set out expectations about standards of degrees. They explain what gives a subject its identity and define what can be expected of a graduate in terms of the abilities and skills needed to develop understanding or competence in that subject. They are therefore relevant to employers when considering graduate recruitment.

In developing and revising the Subject Benchmark Statements we have worked with a range of employers, including AstraZeneca, the Office of the Police and Crime Commissioner Gloucestershire, the Fitzwilliam Museum (Cambridge) and the Local Government Association.

We are encouraging more employers to get involved in this important area of our work.

Would your company like to influence, change or even introduce a Subject Benchmark, such as Engineering, English or Medicine?

Taking part in the development or review of Subject Benchmark Statements can take many forms.

- Employers can attend an initial meeting to help shape the Statement and plan its content. These meetings are usually held in London.
- Employers can take part in the review of a Statement by means of correspondence.
- There is a further opportunity to comment when each Statement is released for consultation before being published in its final form.

We review Subject Benchmark Statements every five to seven years. Below is a full list of undergraduate degree subjects for which we publish Statements. If you believe your business can make a positive contribution to our next review of one or more of these Statements, or in developing a new one for which there is a need, please do get in touch with us. Contact enquiries@qaa.ac.uk.

Accounting	Counselling and psychotherapy	History	Physics, astronomy and astrophysics
Agriculture, horticulture, forestry, food and consumer sciences	Criminology	History of art, architecture and design	Politics and international relations
Anthropology	Dance, drama and performance	Hospitality, leisure, sport and tourism	Psychology
Archaeology	Dentistry	Housing studies	Social policy and administration
Architectural technology	Early childhood studies	Landscape architecture	Social work
Architecture	Earth sciences, environmental sciences and environmental studies	Languages and related studies	Sociology
Area studies	Economics	Law	Theology and religious studies
Art and design	Education Studies	Librarianship and information management	Town and country planning
Biomedical Science	Engineering	Linguistics	Welsh/Cymraeg
Biosciences	English	Materials	Youth and community work
Construction, property and surveying	Finance	Mathematics, statistics and operational research	
Chemistry	Forensic science	Annex to Mathematics, statistics and operational research to cover integrated master's degrees	
Classics and ancient history (including Byzantine Studies and Modern Greek)	General business and management	Optometry	
Communication, media, film and cultural studies	Geography	Osteopathy	
Computing	Health studies	Philosophy	

Creating opportunities to share ideas

Getting involved in higher education enables employers to ensure a supply of graduates who are properly equipped for the jobs they have available, and at the same time to support the world-class and diverse UK higher education sector of which we are justly proud.

We recognise that many companies do not appoint a specific staff member to maintain links with higher education; however we would greatly appreciate input and information from a wide range of employers, including small and medium enterprises.

We hold events on a regular basis that offer the opportunity to network with those working in higher education and to hear about important developments. If you would be interested to know more, please email [**enquiries@qaa.ac.uk**](mailto:enquiries@qaa.ac.uk)





Find out more

For more information about anything in
this leaflet, email **enquiries@qaa.ac.uk**

Contact us



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