Explaining staff teaching qualifications

Guidance about providing information for students

Contents

Introduction

The provision of information for prospective and current students[1] is a topic that has attracted increasing attention following policy changes giving UK students greater responsibility for funding their own higher education.[2] Accessible, reliable and trustworthy information is necessary to ensure that prospective students understand the nature of the learning experience they can expect on particular programmes from a higher education provider. The provision of appropriate information enables applicants to make informed choices in the light of their career aspirations and preferred learning styles, and ensures that the investment they make will be based on an accurate understanding of what is offered.

About this guidance

This guidance, published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA), is one of a suite of publications intended to help providers ensure that transparent and helpful information is available about the teaching methods and learning opportunities associated with their higher education programmes. The provision of such information gives applicants an understanding of the teaching and learning methods, support and contact time, learning opportunities and workload that they can expect to experience while studying for particular qualifications.

The publications offer detailed guidance on providing information about the following topics:

- *Explaining staff teaching qualifications* (this publication)
- *Explaining class size*
- *Explaining students' workload*
- *Responding to feedback from students*

The guidance is intended to be of practical help to programme leaders, quality assurance professionals, academic registrars, educational development practitioners, marketing departments and others involved in providing and managing information for prospective and current students.

The four publications for providers are complemented by a companion set of guides for students on the same themes:

- *Information on staff teaching qualifications: a student guide*
- *Information on class size: a student guide*
- *Information on workload: a student guide*
- *Information on how you can comment on your course: a student guide*

Providers should endeavour, wherever possible, to make clear information available to prospective and current students about the teaching and learning experience, programme structure and the qualifications of the staff who will support that experience. When publishing such information, providers should refer to **Part C of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education**, which addresses how providers make available information that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy, in relation to wider information.

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[1] See Part C of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.
[2] Implementation of proposals in the UK government White Paper *Higher Education: Students at the Heart of the System* (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, June 2011).

The present guidance relates to information about higher education provision that providers publish on their websites and in their promotional material, as distinct from the Key Information Set (KIS) required by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and the Department for Employment and Learning in Northern Ireland (DELNI).

Using this guidance

Providers are encouraged to draw upon this guidance in considering their approach to providing information for prospective and current students regarding the ways in which the range of staff who support the learning experience are qualified appropriately for their specific role. Appendix 2 provides a list of academic teaching qualifications compiled by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) which will be useful to providers as a point of reference.

This guidance should be used to complement the Indicators and Expectations of the relevant Chapters of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, particularly Part C: Information about higher education provision and Chapters *B3: Learning and teaching*, *B5: Student engagement* and *B8: Programme monitoring and review*.

Research indicates that students generally have a well developed understanding of the variety of ways in which their learning is facilitated, together with other related issues, such as class size.[3] Since pedagogic approaches to higher education are therefore familiar to staff and students alike, the present guidance limits its discussion of them to indicative lists in Appendices 3 and 4.

The full list of appendices is as follows:

- Appendix 1: Membership of the Teaching Qualifications Steering Group
- Appendix 2: List of academic teaching qualifications from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) staff record
- Appendix 3: Indicative list of learning and teaching methods
- Appendix 4: Indicative list of assessment methods

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[3] Bekhradnia (2012), NUS (2012), QAA (2011).

Meeting expectations

Prospective and current students expect to be provided with clear and transparent information explaining whom they will come into contact with during the course of their studies, for what purpose, and how these staff might be qualified.

To help meet this expectation, the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) will collect data on the teaching qualifications of academic staff as part of its staff record, with effect from the academic year 2012-13. This guide aims to support providers in considering how best to make this information publicly available, and to encourage them to submit an accurate and current data return in respect of teaching qualifications.

Providers are strongly urged to ensure that up to date information about staff qualifications is captured and included in HESA returns. If the collection exercise results in a large number of 'unknowns', this will present an incomplete and misleading picture of the level of qualified teachers working in higher education.

Providers typically obtain information about staff qualifications when they appoint those staff, holding this information centrally in human resources departments. By contrast, information regarding subsequent professional development activities and the acquisition of qualifications while in post is typically recorded through the appraisal process within schools and faculties. Providers are therefore encouraged to optimise the way they obtain data from their internal systems in order to submit up to date and accurate information on staff qualifications to HESA.

The categories against which to record the different types of teaching qualification held by staff are listed in Appendix 2.

Information about the qualifications of staff delivering higher education in further education colleges is no longer collected by the Data Service as part of their data returns. Further education colleges are advised to publish information about the teaching and subject qualifications of staff who deliver and support their higher education programmes, so that prospective and current students have transparent information to inform their choice.

The level and type of information needed

In addition to the information currently made available (by providers) about the academic qualifications of staff, and their research interests, there are two levels at which providers are encouraged to publish information about the teaching qualifications held by their academic staff. Firstly, at institutional level, providers are encouraged to state the proportion of staff who have recognised qualifications (see Appendix 2), with comparisons being made to any available national data. This information would not refer to individuals. Secondly, schools and faculties are encouraged to make information about staff qualifications available at course level, as prospective and current students have an interest in who will be teaching them. A well established and effective way of doing this is by means of staff profiles published on the provider's website. The usual responsibilities regarding data protection rest with the employing institution.

In the case of modular schemes where students have a large element of choice, it may not be possible to publish full course-level information about staff teaching qualifications. In these instances, institutions need to look at how they can most usefully provide information at the most appropriate level.

When presenting information, providers are recommended to explain the learning experience offered in a way that emphasises the holistic and complementary nature of the various activities contributing to it. Prospective and current students also find it helpful to have full details of the supporting infrastructure (for example libraries, learning support centres and virtual learning environments) available to them. Information should make clear that the learning experience will be delivered and facilitated by a range of staff, all of whom will be suitably experienced and qualified in various ways. Staff could include visiting lecturers, vocational experts, technicians, librarians, postgraduate research students, and supporters of English language and academic writing. The particular approach used could be framed within institutional or departmental teaching and learning strategies.

It is also important that the role of the student as a partner in learning is emphasised. The transition to higher education and the effective development of the required skills as an independent and autonomous learner require a structured learning programme, with appropriate academic support at each stage, so that the learner is able to progress through the levels of the qualifications frameworks,[4] demonstrating the appropriate cognitive outcomes. The learner must be an active participant in this process, and must be made aware that the responsibility for learning is mutual.

Hence, information about staff teaching qualifications, skills and experience should be placed in the context of:

- the range of strategies employed to deliver and support teaching and learning (see Appendix 3)
- the many and various ways in which staff are qualified to teach or support students
- the data on 'higher education staff teaching qualifications' collected by HESA from 2012-13, in addition to that currently collected on academic qualifications.

Points to make clear and transparent

When publishing information for students, providers are encouraged to make the following points explicit.

Different roles require different skills

Teaching and learning are supported by a range of staff, including teachers, technicians, visiting experts, librarians, learning support staff, computer support staff and postgraduate students, who have received training appropriate to their role.

Teaching and learning occur in varied and flexible ways

Teaching and learning are not confined to timetabled activity in designated spaces but can comprise a range of planned and supported activities, including online learning, interaction with peers, workplace experience and skills development (for example, support for academic writing skills). In particular, the teaching of vocational subjects is enhanced by input from current practitioners, who may not possess formal teaching qualifications.

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4 *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland* (FQHEIS). For more information see *Chapter A1: The national level* of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education: www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/quality-code-a1.aspx.

There are various types of relevant qualification or recognition

Teaching qualifications and/or forms of recognition held by the range of staff members supporting students are varied and diverse. Providers should aim to help students understand the contextual significance of these qualifications.

Institutions are likely to have a range of provision for staff, accredited by the Higher Education Academy (HEA) and aligned with the **UK Professional Standards Framework** (see box). Staff taking part in these programmes may gain a teaching qualification and/or recognition against the HEA's Fellowship Scheme (see Appendix 2). Institutions are encouraged to provide explicit information about all such accredited provision.

The UK Professional Standards Framework

The UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF) provides a general description of the main dimensions of the teaching roles in higher education. Written from the perspective of the practitioner, it is a national framework that comprehensively recognises and benchmarks teaching and support roles within higher education. The UKPSF is endorsed by the National Union of Students (NUS), funding councils and representative bodies. It facilitates continuing professional development and the need to 'remain in good standing' as a practitioner in higher education.

Fellowships of the Higher Education Academy are aligned to the descriptors of the UKPSF. They are a nationally recognised and portable form of recognition of teaching roles and learning support roles within the higher education environment.

Staff may also hold other relevant teaching qualifications, such as the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), the Certificate in Education, and the professional recognition of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) or Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS).

Skills are enhanced though continuing professional development

In addition to the initial teaching qualifications of staff, the existence of accredited continuing professional development (CPD) schemes operating in institutions is a significant indicator of the importance that institutions place on enhancing the skills of all staff who support learning, and on the quality of the learning experiences offered to their students

Institutions demonstrate the value that they place upon enhancing the skills of all staff who support learning, and on the quality of the learning experiences offered to their students, by operating accredited CPD schemes. Such schemes enable staff to build on their initial teaching qualifications and add value to their roles.

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Appendix 1: Membership of the Teaching Qualifications Steering Group

The membership of this group represents the major stakeholders in higher education, providing a range of perspectives during the consultation process, and contributing to this guidance.

Jayne Mitchell	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Elizabeth Halford	Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Stephanie Marshall	Higher Education Academy
Richard Brawn	Higher Education Academy
Beth Steiner	Higher Education Funding Council for England
William Locke	Higher Education Funding Council for England
Catherine Benfield	Higher Education Statistics Agency
Helen Bowles	Guild for Higher Education
Greg Wade	Universities UK
Nick Davy	Association of Colleges
Kate Wicklow	National Union of Students

Appendix 2: List of academic teaching qualifications from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) staff record

Note: More than one of the following can apply to an individual staff member.

01   Successfully completed an institutional provision in teaching in the higher education sector accredited against the UK Professional Standards Framework (UKPSF). This includes courses recognised by SEDA against its Named Awards that are accredited against the UKPSF (Supporting Learning; Learning, Teaching and Assessing).

02   Recognised by the HEA as an Associate Fellow

03   Recognised by the HEA as a Fellow

04   Recognised by the HEA as a Senior Fellow

05   Recognised by the HEA as a Principal Fellow

06   Holder of National Teaching Fellowship Scheme Individual Award

07   Holder of a PGCE in higher education, secondary education, further education, lifelong learning or any other equivalent UK qualification

08   Accredited as a teacher of their subject by a professional UK body

09   Other UK accreditation

10   Overseas accreditation or qualification for any level of teaching

90   Not known

99   No qualification held

Appendix 3: Indicative list of learning and teaching methods

The list is presented as indicative to reflect that approaches to learning and teaching vary according to the subject, mode of delivery and institution, and can change over time. Methods are described in terms of how they are used to present course-level information rather than being evaluated from a pedagogical perspective.

Lecture

A presentation or talk on a particular topic
The term 'lecture' covers everything from the traditional model, where a single member of the institution's staff or an affiliate[5] introduces ideas or delivers facts to a group of students, to approaches that might be much more interactive, involve a variety of contributors, make use of a range of media and technologies, and take place virtually as well as in person. Lectures are assumed, in general, to involve larger groups of students than seminars and tutorials, but size will vary depending upon the nature of what is being taught, the size of the overall student cohort, and practical concerns.

Seminar

A discussion or classroom session that focuses on a particular topic or project
Seminars are defined as sessions that provide the opportunity for students to engage in discussion of a particular topic and/or to explore it in more detail than might be covered in a lecture - the extent of interaction will depend on the delivery method. A typical model would involve a guided, tutor-led discussion in a small group. However, the term also encompasses student or peer-led classes with a staff member or affiliate present. Seminars are assumed in general to involve smaller groups of students than lectures, but size will vary depending upon the nature of what is being taught, the size of the overall student cohort, and practical concerns.

Webinar

A virtual lecture or seminar
The term 'webinar' refers to both a virtual lecture and an online seminar, made available through technology-enabled learning (TEL). Participation is regarded as guided independent study.

Tutorial

A meeting that involves one-to-one or small group supervision, feedback or detailed discussion on a particular topic or project
Tutorials may be distinguished from seminars for the stronger emphasis they place on the role of the tutor in giving direction or feedback. Tutorials can be used to provide one-to-one feedback in respect of assessed work and can happen virtually as well as face-to-face.

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[5] A lecturer, researcher, technician, member of support staff or graduate teaching assistant of the institution or a visiting or external specialist.

Project supervision

A meeting with a supervisor to discuss a particular piece of work
The term 'project supervision' is used to refer to the meetings that a student or group of students would have with a supervisor to plan, discuss and monitor progress on a particular piece of work, such as a dissertation or extended project. Meetings can take place virtually or in person. The size of a project supervision meeting will depend upon the number of students involved in the work concerned and the nature of that work, but supervisions will frequently also take place on a one-to-one basis.

Demonstration

A session in which a practical technique or skill is demonstrated
Examples might include the demonstration of laboratory skills, clinical skills, performance art or fieldwork techniques. Demonstrations can take place in person or virtually. The size of a demonstration is likely to depend upon the number of students involved in the work concerned, as well as the nature of that work, but could also take place on a one-to-one basis.

Practical class or workshop

A session involving the acquisition, through practical application, of a particular skill or technique
Examples are wide ranging and could include a laboratory class, recital, artefact handling/identification, language conversation, sports match, and so on. Practical classes and workshops might incorporate elements of teaching or guided learning, and they are at least likely to be supervised or observed. These sessions are more likely to take place in person but, depending on the nature of the subject, may also be conducted remotely. The size of a practical class or workshop will depend upon the nature of the activity. Workshops are likely to involve at least a small group of students but practical classes could take place on a one-to-one basis.

Supervised time in studio/workshop

Time in which students work independently but under supervision, in a specialist facility such as a studio or workshop
Examples might include time spent in an art or design studio, or in a rehearsal space such as a workshop theatre. It could be timetabled or take place on an ad hoc basis. This type of learning frequently involves interaction with peers as well as staff. Due to the nature of the activity, it is unlikely to take place virtually.

Fieldwork

Practical work conducted at an external site
Examples of fieldwork might include survey work and other forms of data collection, excavations and explorations. The work might be unsupervised or supervised, and supervision could be provided by staff or appointed representatives. Fieldwork might occur in groups of various sizes, or by individuals, depending on the nature of the work involved.

External visit

A visit to a location away from the usual learning spaces, to experience a particular environment, event, or exhibition relevant to the course of study
Examples are wide ranging and could include a visit to a business or industrial site, built environment site, museum or collection, or attendance at a performance or exhibition. These visits might be unsupervised or supervised, and supervisors could include staff or appointed representatives. Site visits may be carried out in groups of varying sizes, or by individuals, depending on the nature of the visit and the location.

Work-based and placement learning

Learning that takes place in the workplace
A key example of work-based learning would be a managed placement in an organisation or business. The term covers any learning that takes place through an organised work opportunity, rather than in a university or college setting. Some supervision or monitoring is likely be involved, and may be carried out either by a member of staff or a mentor within the host organisation. Due to the nature of the activity, work-based learning is unlikely to take place virtually. Students might undertake work-based learning individually or in groups, depending on the nature of the workplace and the learning involved.

Appendix 4: Indicative list of assessment methods

The list is presented as indicative to reflect that approaches to assessment vary according to the subject, mode of delivery and institution, and can change over time. Methods are described in terms of how they are used to assess course-level information rather than being evaluated from a pedagogical perspective.

Written examination

A question or set of questions relating to a particular area of study
Written examinations usually occur at the end of a period of learning and assess whether students have achieved the intended learning outcomes. They may be 'seen' (where students are aware in advance of the question(s) they are expected to answer), or 'unseen' (where the questions are only revealed in the examination itself). In an 'open-book' examination, a student is allowed to use a selection of reference materials. A written examination may require a range of different responses, including writing essays, writing short answers, solving problems or use of multiple-choice. Written examinations usually (but not always) take place under timed conditions.

Written assignment, including essay

An exercise completed in writing in the student's own time
A written exercise that typically has a deadline attached but which is not carried out under timed conditions. A well known example is the essay, where students are required to write about a particular topic or answer a question in depth. Other examples include written briefings on particular topics.

Report

A description, summary or other account of an experience or activity
There are many different kinds of report: often students are required to produce a report after participating in a practical activity such as fieldwork, laboratory work, work experience or a placement. Reports typically have a prescribed format and can serve as the culmination of a project.

Dissertation

An extended piece of written work, usually for purposes of summative assessment
A dissertation is a substantial piece of writing deriving from research that a student has undertaken. Dissertations are the result of a student's independent work, carried out under the guidance of a supervisor. Subject areas may follow different conventions in relation to the production of dissertations. (Note that other outputs from projects are listed separately.)

Portfolio

A compilation of coursework produced in response to specific assessment briefs
Portfolios of work are a usual component of art and design programmes, and frequently feature as an assessment method in competence-based qualifications. Typically, a portfolio contains a number of pieces of work, usually connected by a topic or theme. Students are usually required to organise their work and perhaps supplement it with reflective accounts in the form of diaries or logs.

Project outputs

The products of project work, often of a practical nature (excluding report/ dissertation)
Students may be assessed on the output of a period of project work (see also **Report** and **Dissertation**). Examples are diverse and include the staging of a play or other performance, a piece of artwork, a new product or a poster.

Oral assessment/presentation

A conversation or oral presentation on a given topic
Examples of oral assessments and presentations might include conversations, discussions, debates, presentations and individual contributions to seminars. This category would also include the viva voce exam, which is typically used by institutions in specific circumstances, such as to clarify assessment decisions or to test the thesis of a doctoral candidate.

Practical skills assessment

Assessment of a student's practical skills or competence
Practical skills assessment focuses on whether, and/or how well, a student performs a specific practical skill or technique (or competency). Examples include clinical skills, laboratory techniques, identification of or commentary on artwork, surveying skills, language translation or listening comprehension.

In the performing arts context, a performance can be used to assess the practical skills of individual students (or groups of students). It usually takes place as a 'one-off' live performance viewed by an examiner, though sometimes the examiner may review a recorded performance.

Group critique

A method of receiving feedback from both tutors and peers
In the visual arts, the group critique is an established method of receiving either formative or summative feedback from both tutors and peers.

Set exercises

Questions or tasks designed to assess the application of knowledge or of analytical, problem-solving or evaluative skills
Examples might include data interpretation and data analysis exercises, and problem-based or problem-solving exercises.