



Data protection policy

Introduction

In order to operate efficiently the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) needs to collect and use information about the people with whom we work. This includes current, past and prospective employees, reviewers, professional experts, stakeholders, delegates and others with whom we communicate.

This policy describes how this personal data must be collected, handled and stored, to meet QAA's data protection standards and to comply with the law.

The Data Protection Act 1998 (the Act) regulates the way in which all personal data is held and processed and gives individuals certain rights to access information held about them. The Act applies to QAA as a registered data controller and to all QAA employees.

Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that everyone handling personal information at QAA is fully aware of the requirements of the Act and complies with data protection procedures, and that data subjects are aware of their rights under the Act.

Scope: information covered by the Act

'Personal data' covered by the Act is essentially any recorded information which identifies a living individual. Personal data held by QAA will include contact information for a variety of stakeholders and other personal details.

Responsibility for QAA's compliance with the Act

The Information and Records manager has specific responsibility for data protection at QAA and reports to the Head of Information Management and Infrastructure.

The Chief Executive has overall responsibility for compliance with the Act but individual members of staff are responsible for the proper use of the data they process.

The Information and Records Manager may be contacted via <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/contact-us> or

Information and Records Manager
Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Policy statement

The principles of the Act require that personal information must:

1. be processed fairly and lawfully
2. not be used for a purpose for which it was not collected
3. be adequate, relevant and not excessive for the purpose
4. be accurate and up-to-date
5. not be kept longer than necessary
6. be processed in accordance with the data subject's rights
7. be kept secure and protected from unauthorised processing, loss or destruction and
8. be transferred only to those countries outside the European Economic Area that provide adequate protection for personal information.

In order to meet the requirements of the principles QAA will:

- be clear why we are collecting personal data and how we will use it
- obtain consent to process personal data
- not collect more personal data than is necessary
- keep personal data up to date
- keep personal information for as long as is necessary for the relevant purpose, or as long as required in any relevant contract or agreement and then destroy it securely
- uphold data subjects' rights including the right of access to their personal data
- take appropriate technical and organisational security measures to prevent loss, destruction or unauthorised disclosure of personal information and
- ensure that personal data are not transferred outside the EEA without suitable safeguards.

QAA will ensure that:

- everyone managing and handling personal information understands that they are responsible for following good data protection practice;
- this policy is available to each member of staff
- everyone managing and handling personal data is appropriately trained and supervised
- queries about handling personal information are promptly and courteously dealt with
- the Information and Records Manager reports to the Information Governance Group, which approves all changes to policy and procedure.

Staff responsibilities for data protection and confidential information

- All staff are expected to be aware of and abide by the data protection principles.
- All staff must complete induction, annual training and any other related activity as required.
- All staff have a responsibility to ensure that they respect confidential information in their possession and to maintain information security.
- All staff are required to contact the Information and Records manager or their line manager if they are in any doubt about their responsibilities relating to personal data or are aware of any risk to individuals' rights or risk of contravening the Act.

Disciplinary consequences of this policy

Staff should not disclose personal information gained as part of employment, or assist others to disclose, to a third party unless authorised to do so. Such breaches of the Data Protection policy could result in formal action being taken including QAA's Disciplinary policy or being reported to the Information Commissioner and/or the police.

Privacy notice

QAA respects your privacy whether you are an employee or a third party. The information that you provide us with, or that is gathered automatically, supports your employment or helps us to monitor our services and provide you with the most relevant information. More information on how QAA safeguards your privacy in relation to websites, email, voicemail, social media, employment, testing and training can be found on our website: <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/privacy>

Subject Access Requests

Under the Act individuals have the right to access personal information QAA may hold about them; the right to prevent processing in certain circumstances; and the right to correct, rectify, block or erase information which is regarded as wrong information.

If you wish to request such information please contact us <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/contact-us> or consult our [guidance on making a subject access request](#).

Data Protection Complaints Procedure

QAA aims to comply fully with its obligations under the Act. If you have any questions or concerns regarding QAA's management of personal data including your right to access data about yourself or if you feel QAA holds inaccurate information about you please contact QAA's Information and Records Manager (details on page 1 above).

If you feel that your questions or concerns have not been dealt with adequately or that a subject access request you have made to QAA has not been fulfilled you can use QAA's complaints procedure <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/complaints-about-qaa-and-appeals-against-decisions>

If you are still dissatisfied, you have the right to contact the office of the Information Commissioner, the independent body overseeing compliance with the Act <http://ico.org.uk/>.