



Joint statement: educational oversight of Tier 4 sponsors

A joint statement from educational oversight bodies the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and the Independent Schools Inspectorate (ISI)

We are aware that there is a very diverse field of providers in the further education/higher education (FE/HE) sector that may have difficulty in establishing which educational oversight body to apply to for an inspection.

For some learning providers, clear guidelines are in place as described in the [Home Office Sponsor Guidance](#).

QAA will review:

- listed bodies
- other private higher education providers offering courses normally awarded in accordance with the [frameworks for higher education qualifications](#), published by QAA. There is a framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ), and a separate framework for Scotland
- 'embedded' colleges offering courses as a pathway into higher education.

ISI will inspect:

- English language schools
- privately funded further education colleges offering courses on the [Qualifications and Credit Framework \(QCF\)/National Qualifications Framework \(NQF\)](#).

The Bridge School Inspectorate (BSI) will inspect:

- further education colleges with a clear religious purpose.

The School Inspection Service (SIS) will inspect:

- further education Montessori and Steiner providers.

However, for some institutions the distinction between FHEQ and the QCF is not sufficient to separate further and higher education provision, especially at level 4 and above or where qualifications appear on both frameworks.

In further consultation with UKBA it has been agreed that institutions that offer predominantly higher level qualifications at level 6 and above of the NQF/QCF should also apply to QAA for review.

For levels 4 and 5 we recognise that further clarification is needed for a number of providers in the FE/HE sector and have therefore agreed that for providers of mixed provision a self-categorisation will apply. This means that where there is no clear category, the provider

themselves choose whether they wish to apply to ISI or QAA depending upon how they wish to represent their institution (FE or HE) in line with their mission, purposes and values. ISI and QAA will share information about applications and cooperate to ensure institutions receive the most appropriate form of inspection or review.

Both the ISI and QAA will accept applications of providers in this category.

Further details

More information can be found on the websites of the educational oversight bodies.

- QAA - www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Pages/Educational-Oversight-.aspx
- ISI - www.educationaloversight.co.uk/home/

Contact details

If you have any further queries about who to apply to, please email:

- QAA - edoversight@qaa.ac.uk
- ISI - Tier4@isi.net