

Memorandum of Understanding between the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW), the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) and the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales

Introduction

1. Under the terms of the Further and Higher Education Act 1992, HEFCW is required to secure that provision is made for assessing the quality of education provided in institutions for whose activities it provides, or is considering providing, financial support.
2. The QAA was established in 1997 to provide an integrated quality assurance service for UK higher education. It is an independent body funded by subscriptions from universities and colleges of higher education, and through contracts with the main higher education funding bodies. Its mission is to safeguard the public interest in sound standards of higher education qualifications, and to encourage continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education.
3. The Inspectorate is responsible for providing independent inspection of the quality of all education and training funded by the Welsh Assembly Government (excluding higher education but including initial teacher education and training and youth and community work training). The Inspectorate's aim is to raise standards and quality in education and training in Wales through inspection and advice, in support of the vision and strategic direction set out by the Welsh Assembly Government.

Purpose and basis of the memorandum of understanding

4. This document is intended to provide a framework for working relationships between HEFCW, the QAA and The Inspectorate ("the organisations"), to ensure efficient and effective cooperation. It commits them to working together to:
 - avoid duplication of effort;
 - minimise administrative burdens on institutions;
 - identify and pursue activities that are of mutual interest, where their joint involvement would produce greater benefits for learners in higher education in Wales;
 - ensure that the respective expertise of the organisations involved is mutually recognised and used in partnership whenever appropriate;
 - share expertise in the development and support of continuous improvement in the management of the quality of higher education;
 - take each other's interests into account, where appropriate, in policy and procedural development.
5. It establishes relationships for consultation and co-operation based on a common understanding of each organisation's business and a joint wish to make best use of finite resources for mutual benefit.

6. The organisations recognise, and have regard for, the respective statutory roles and responsibilities where appropriate. They also recognise the independence of their remits and the how the aims and objectives of the organisations complement one another.

Working in partnership

7. HEFCW, the QAA and the Inspectorate will identify the areas where their complementary roles and independent functions inter-relate, and agree strategies and actions within these to:
 - avoid duplication of effort on the part of either the organisations or providers;
 - ensure clarity of expectations and requirements of providers;
 - avoid unnecessary bureaucratic burdens on providers or other agencies;
 - maximise the values and mutual benefits of the QAA's Institutional Review Process in Wales and the Inspectorate's Common Inspection Framework;
 - ensure appropriate coverage across Wales of the full range of HE provision, by inspection and review arrangements;
 - develop joint processes for areas of provision where appropriate and of mutual benefit;
 - develop a shared understanding of the roles and contributions of each body in improving the quality of education and training;
 - share information, including changes in review and inspection processes, timetables and outcomes, the Inspectorate to share in confidence any shortcomings or concerns identified in advance of publication of the final reports and inform the other organisations prior to the emergence of any sensitive messages or outcomes which might impact on them, as identified in **Schedule 1**;
 - invite each organisation to key strategic conferences, training and events;
 - facilitate quality enhancement and the sharing of good practice among HE providers in Wales.
8. Each organisation will advise and, where appropriate, consult the others at an early stage of development of new or revised inspection or review arrangements for HE provision in Wales.

Management, monitoring, reporting and confidentiality arrangements


9. This Memorandum shall take effect from the date of signature by all three organisations and continue until any organisation gives notice that it wishes to terminate the agreement. The Memorandum of Understanding will be reviewed annually and may be modified at any time by joint agreement of the organisations.
10. Management of the Memorandum will be conducted by officers on behalf of HEFCW, the QAA and The Inspectorate: at the date of signature as detailed below:

HEFCW	Celia Hunt	029 2068 2222	celia.hunt@hefcw.ac.uk
QAA	Dr Julian Ellis	014 5255 7000	j.ellis@qaa.ac.uk
The Inspectorate	Lin Howells	029 2044 6466	linda.howells@estyn.gov.uk

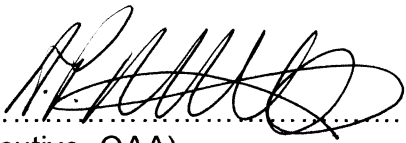
11. The named contacts shall agree detailed arrangements for regular communication and exchange of information between the HEFCW, the QAA and The Inspectorate, which shall include annual review meetings.
12. The arrangements detailed in this Memorandum will be monitored by the named contacts. Each contact will be responsible for notifying the organisation of which s/he is an officer of any concerns. Such concerns may lead to the termination of this Memorandum.
13. Each organisation will observe confidentiality as required in relation to shared information which is not in the public domain.

Legal effect of the memorandum of understanding


14. It is recognised and accepted that this Memorandum does not create any rights, liabilities or obligations which would have binding effect in law.

Signed..... 
 (Chief Executive, HEFCW)

Dated..... 27.1.10

Signed..... 
 (Chief Executive, QAA)

Dated..... 27.1.10

Signed..... 
 (Chief Inspector)

Dated..... 27.1.10

Schedule 1: Protocol for sharing information between QAA and the Inspectorate

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This protocol sets out the means by which the QAA and the Inspectorate will share information.

2 Sharing information

- 2.1 In order to share information effectively, reduce burden on institutions, and encourage a perception that the organisations act in a coherent and integrated manner, both parties will do the following:
- provide their schedule of review/inspection for the coming year to the tripartite liaison meeting;
 - provide early notification in confidence to the other parties of any shortcomings or concerns identified in the review/inspection processes, in advance of publication of the final reports, as such matters arise;
 - notify the other parties of any issues of mutual interest arising at the liaison meeting, or via electronic communications where earlier notice would be beneficial to either party;
 - attend the HEFCW Student Experience, Teaching and Quality Committee meetings and draw any points of interest to the attention of members;
 - include the other party in any consultation on the development or amendment of processes, policies or procedures as these issues arise;
 - invite the other parties to key conferences, events and relevant training as they arise;
 - The Inspectorate will be members of the QAA mailing list, which will draw their attention to publication of key documentation as appropriate;
 - The Inspectorate will contact the QAA regarding publication of relevant documentation as it is published.
- 2.2 The QAA will include any updates to its timetable of activities within its progress report to HEFCW and HEW and will share such updates with The Inspectorate via electronic communication.
- 2.3 The Inspectorate will provide any updates to its schedule during the year via electronic communication as these arise.