

QAA's Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability Policy 2022-25

This policy outlines QAA's approach to corporate social responsibility and sustainability. It supports the Strategic Plan and QAA's values, helps to enhance QAA's wider public reputation and provides opportunities for colleague development and retention. As an organisation that operates worldwide, the policy references how we uphold the principles of the 17 [United Nations Sustainable Development Goals](#).



Introduction

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) describes a company's sense of responsibility towards the community and environment (both ecological and social) in which it operates.

Corporate social responsibility and sustainability in QAA

At QAA we understand CSR and sustainability to mean working in an ethically and socially responsible manner across all areas of our business, and how we contribute to wider societal aims. We understand sustainability to mean meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs



QAA's work itself makes a positive contribution to society. Our work safeguards standards and improves the quality of UK higher education wherever it is delivered around the world. As an independent, not-for-profit organisation, we check that students working towards a UK qualification get the education they are entitled to expect. We use our expertise to support the development of quality assurance systems worldwide, and provide guidance and support required to encourage the continuing improvement of the student experience of higher education; as such, it directly supports the United Nations (UN) sustainability goal of quality education for all.

Our business approach considers the impact of our work on the environment, our staff, our suppliers, our communities, the tertiary education institutions with whom we work, government and the wider society.

Our CSR Policy sets out our aims and the kind of activities in which we engage to support these aims. It covers work undertaken in our offices, at home and in the field with other colleagues from the higher education sector. It comprises four aims.

QAA's corporate social responsibility aims:

- 1 To uphold an ethical, transparent business culture and approach to our work
- 2 To reduce our negative impact on the environment
- 3 To contribute to the development of our communities
- 4 To respect our colleagues and encourage their development.

1: To uphold an ethical, transparent business culture and approach to our work



In our work we operate within agreed standards of ethical conduct and QAA engages with all our stakeholders in a spirit of openness, honesty and transparency. Our core commitment to working in the public interest and in the

interests of students contributes to a perception (internally and externally) of QAA as an ethical organisation.

Our corporate governance operates in line with principles of accountability, transparency and ethical behaviour exemplified in our:

- Code of Best Practice for Board Members
- Ethical Conduct and Anti-Bribery Policy
- Conflicts of Interest Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy
- Modern Slavery Statement

In addition, we ensure that we meet all relevant legal requirements, and implement and maintain the internal processes that enable us to meet the standards required of us in all these respects, including those relating to organisational governance, human rights, due diligence, labour practices and fair operating practices.

2: To reduce our negative impact on the environment



QAA is continually improving management of its impact on the environment. We will work to reduce the impact of:

- where and how we work, measuring our impact
- resources we use to support our work.

3: To contribute to the development of our communities



QAA aims to make an active contribution to the development of the communities in which colleagues work and live.

Flex+ means that colleagues can choose to work remotely and QAA encourages staff to support their own individual communities as well as those where it has an office space. Colleagues are given paid time to volunteer in their communities.

4: To respect our colleagues and encourage their development



We are committed to equality and diversity within QAA and in the ways we seek to support and guide the higher education sector - for example, through the Quality Code for Higher Education. All staff receive annual training on Equality and Diversity.

For QAA to succeed, we rely on the skills, talents and innovative attitude of our staff. We seek to create an empowering organisational culture through our five core values that support our mission and vision. This involves encouraging colleagues to use their expertise, be collaborative, innovative, accountable and to work with integrity; we strive to ensure that the whole organisation understands and shares the same view of QAA's priorities and values.

In addition to complying with all legal requirements, in relation to people we support flexible working and encourage a positive work-life balance through our Flex+ Philosophy. We treat colleagues fairly with integrity and respect, and maintain a healthy, safe working environment. Colleagues are supported through wellbeing initiatives, Employee Assistance Programme, private healthcare and trained Mental Health First Aiders.

We recognise, and engage in dialogue with, the Public and Commercial Services Union (PCS) as the union operating on behalf of QAA's employees.

Finally, we seek to provide colleagues with opportunities for appropriate personal and professional development. This may be through formal learning and development or by supporting volunteering.

Governance

QAA's Executive and the Audit and Risk Committee oversee the CSR Policy and monitor performance. The Governance team has responsibility for the implementation of the CSR Policy and initiatives around it; it will also produce an annual plan for the year and report on performance for the Executive in the autumn term. In addition, CSR activity will be included in QAA's annual report and reported at SSAC.