



Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (“QAA”)

Advisory Committee for Degree Awarding Powers (“the Committee”)

Specific Terms of Reference

Introduction

1. The duties of the committee are organised in two distinct parts. The first part is concerned with applications for degree awarding powers and university title from providers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and from providers in England under the 2004 and 2015 criteria. The second part is concerned with applications made under the Office for Students’ Regulatory Framework in England.

Duties with respect to applications for degree awarding powers and university title from providers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland under the 2004 and 2015 criteria

2. In establishing this committee, the QAA Board delegates authorities to the committee to carry out the following duties in respect of applications for degree awarding powers and university title from providers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland under the 2004 and 2015 criteria:
 - oversee the degree awarding powers and university title scrutiny processes and associated criteria and guidance, making periodic recommendations on their development to the QAA Board, as appropriate
 - undertake preliminary consideration of degree awarding powers or university title applications referred to QAA by devolved government bodies
 - determine whether applicants have made a case to proceed to detailed scrutiny of their applications and the evidence on which applications are made, appointing scrutiny teams who will report their findings to the Committee
 - receive scrutiny team reports and determine action to be taken on the basis of ACDAP’s discussion of the reports
 - make recommendations to the QAA Board on the nature of the confidential advice to be given to Ministers.

Duties with respect to applications made under the Office for Students' Regulatory Framework

3. In establishing this committee, the QAA Board delegates authorities to the committee to carry out the following duties in respect of applications made under the Office for Students' Regulatory Framework:
 - oversee the elements of the processes and guidance for degree awarding powers that are designed and operated by the QAA, making periodic recommendations or suggestions on their development to the QAA Board, as appropriate
 - receive assessment team reports and provide advice to the Office for Students.
4. In discharging the authorities delegated to it under paragraph 3 the committee must ensure that it formulates advice appropriate in the context of the Office for Student's overall approach to regulation as set out in the Regulatory Framework, and in particular the Framework's commitment to promoting competition and choice for students by removing unnecessary barriers to entry to the higher education sector. It will also ensure that its advice promotes diversity of providers in the sector through a focus on the outcomes a provider is expected to achieve, rather than determining how this should be done.

Chairing arrangements

5. With respect to the duties described in paragraph 2 (applications for degree awarding powers and university title from providers in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland under the 2004 and 2015 criteria), the committee shall be chaired a member independent of the QAA Board.
6. With respect to the duties described in paragraph 3 (applications made under the Office for Students' Regulatory Framework), the committee shall be chaired by an independent QAA Board member.

Membership of the Committee

7. The Committee membership shall be representative of the diversity of providers of UK higher education, and will take account of the purpose of, and different audiences served by, higher education. The Committee will normally comprise 15 members, with a possible further two by co-option. Membership shall include:
 - the Chair (see 'Chairing arrangements' above)
 - two Board members
 - six members with current or recent (within the last two years) UK degree awarding powers experience at a strategic level, and/or having senior level responsibility for areas covered by the criteria governing the grant of degree awarding powers or university title
 - one member with experience in a higher education provider in England without degree awarding powers
 - two members providing an employer of graduates or professional body perspective

- one member from an English further education provider
 - one student member, or otherwise representing or promoting the interests of students
 - one member with experience of encouraging competition in industry or another sector of society.
8. Appointments to the Committee shall be for a period of three years, extendable by no more than an additional three-year period, as long as members continue to meet membership criteria. For members in the category 'students', appointments shall be for a period of one year, extendable by no more than one additional one-year period, provided the membership criterion continues to be met.

Frequency of meetings

9. The committee will normally meet four times a year at appropriate intervals in the academic cycle and otherwise as required.

Quorum

10. The quorum necessary for the transaction of the business of the committee shall be seven members, including one Board member.

Reporting

11. The committee will report routinely to the Board and will produce formal reports on any aspects of its business at the Board's request.

ACDAP sub-panels

12. Where ACDAP considers it necessary to appoint an ACDAP sub-panel, it will issue this panel with specific terms of reference outlining the membership of, and authorities delegated to, the panel by ACDAP. The panel will report to ACDAP on all its proceedings.

Secretariat

13. The Director of Colleges and Alternative Providers shall provide the Secretariat of the Committee.

Observers

14. The committee invites observers from the following, as appropriate:
- the UK Department for Education
 - the Office for Students
 - Scottish Government, Directorate for Advanced Learning and Science
 - Northern Ireland, Department for the Economy
 - Welsh Government, Department for Education and Skills
 - UK higher education funding bodies.

Annex

15. All QAA Committees are expected to familiarise themselves with and adhere to the standard provisions applicable to all QAA Committees, contained within the document entitled Annex to QAA Committee Terms of Reference.