Appointment of Members to the Student Strategic Advisory Committee

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

May 2024
Welcome from the Chair of the QAA Board

Welcome and thank you for your interest in joining QAA’s Student Strategic Advisory Committee (SSAC).

QAA is a world-leading, trusted authority on quality and standards in learning and teaching, standing at the forefront of UK higher education, and increasingly contributing to other areas of tertiary education. During times of substantial change, QAA has refreshed its approaches across all four nations of the UK, meeting the specific needs of the nations within an underlying commitment to the enhancement of quality and maintenance of clear standards across the UK. An expanded commitment to international activities has broadened our income streams while providing clear benefits to UK institutions and foreign partners alike.

QAA has a well-justified reputation for giving particular weight to the student perspective. SSAC therefore acts as a crucial advisory body to QAA’s Board of Directors, providing objective strategic advice and guidance to inform the Board’s decision-making. The Committee specifically offers strategic direction to QAA in relation to its engagement with students, and their representatives, recommending specific programmes or initiatives to enhance practice within this area.

Members of SSAC are appointed based on their experience and knowledge, and their ability to contribute to the representation of the full range of students across the UK higher education sector. They are expected to bring a student perspective based both on their own experiences and those of others.

Applicants for the role must also have an understanding of the range of stakeholder interests in, and of the challenges and changes facing, higher education in the UK, alongside a demonstrable appreciation of the increasingly diverse contexts (political, social, financial) within which academic standards and quality in higher education are managed.

We are particularly interested in attracting individuals who are committed to the mission and values of QAA, and who bring the skills and experience required to play a full and active part in the Committee’s work.

QAA welcomes applications from people in all sections of the community; we value diversity and the contribution it makes to fully-informed debate.

You will find more information about SSAC and QAA in this pack and on our website. I do hope you will apply to join our Committee at this exciting time of change for QAA.

Yours faithfully,

Professor Simon Gaskell
Chair of the QAA Board
About QAA

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is a world-leading quality agency with unmatched experience in quality assurance and enhancement. We work across the UK and internationally to ensure that students and learners experience the highest possible quality of education.

We are an independent charity, trusted by governments and funding bodies. We work in partnership with higher education providers and colleges, including through constructive challenge, supporting them with enhancement while respecting their academic autonomy. We ensure that students are involved in all aspects of our work.

The work we do supports our mission to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education wherever it is delivered around the world.
An overview of QAA’s work

Our purpose is to ensure that students and learners experience the highest possible quality of education. Our four focus areas are:

**Standards**
Providing custodianship of sector reference points and targeting guidance to secure academic standards and the value of qualifications.

**Assurance and enhancement**
Delivering respected and innovative approaches to quality, enabling institutions and learners to work collaboratively to evaluate their practice and keep improving their learning experience.

**International**
Expanding our international activity, capitalising on the excellent global reputation of QAA and UK higher education, into new areas for the benefit of UK tertiary education.

**Leadership**
Influencing and supporting policymakers, universities and colleges, students and learners through clearly communicated expert insight.

QAA is distinctive in our international reputation, our UK-wide remit, our collaborative approach, our mandate from the sector and, crucially, our approach to students as partners in all our work.

"QAA puts student voice at the heart of what they do with a holistic view of student experience. I would highly recommend interested students in applying to join the committee."

Emily Bastable, current Committee member (2023-25), University of Southampton Students’ Union
The main areas of our work under each focus area includes:

**Standards**

- Custodianship of the [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#), which articulates the fundamental principles for higher education quality across the UK.
- Custodianship of the [Subject Benchmark Statements](#), which describe the nature of study and the academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas.
- Regulating the [Access to Higher Education Diploma](#), which provides an alternative route into higher education for adults.

**Assurance and enhancement**

- Conducting evidence-based external reviews and assessments of higher education providers.
- Conducting research and sharing information about good practice to improve quality.
- Involving students in our quality assurance work, our governance and our reviews.
- Consulting and working with all those who have an interest in the quality of UK higher education.
- Providing training and events to help higher education providers develop and improve their own quality assurance processes.
- Advising governments and regulators on applications for degree awarding powers and the right to be called a university in the UK.

**QAA Membership**

QAA Membership covers a wide range of activity. We work with our members UK-wide to secure standards and quality, as well as enhance the student experience. Our global reach and strong network of international partnerships enable us to support members in securing and reinforcing UK higher education’s global reputation for excellence and enhancing the student learning experience wherever they are studying.

**Assessment Services**

In addition to QAA Membership, our we offer a [range of services](#) that deliver bespoke guidance and support relating to the quality and standards of higher education to providers in England.

**International**

QAA takes a leading role in international developments in standards and quality, working not just to maintain but to enhance and reinforce both the quality and integrity of the UK higher education sector and its reputation in the international sphere.

We are a member of several organisations and networks including [ENQA](#) and [INQAAHE](#). We also have close relationships with many quality assurance agencies and government bodies around the world.

Through QAA Global we also offer specially designed products and services aimed at supporting the development of quality assurance systems and quality assurance professionals worldwide.
About the Student Strategic Advisory Committee

The Student Strategic Advisory Committee (SSAC) acts is an advisory committee to QAA's Board of Directors, providing objective strategic advice and guidance to inform the Board's decision-making, particularly in relation to the Agency's work for students. The Committee also offers strategic direction to QAA in relation to its engagement with students, and their representatives, recommending specific programmes or initiatives to enhance practice within this area.

QAA is currently looking to appoint up to eleven new members of SSAC, including up to three students' union/representative body staff members.

QAA recognises the positive benefits of equality, diversity and inclusion. Our aim is to be truly representative of all sections of society, and for all to feel respected, free to be themselves no matter what their identity or background, and able to give their best. We value the differences that a variety of backgrounds, experiences, perspectives and skills brings, and strongly encourage suitably qualified applicants to apply and join us.

SSAC brings together amazing voices from across HE and has allowed me to build relationships and connections with so many incredible people.

Connor Naughton, outgoing member (2022-2024), Educational Developer specialising in student engagement, Nottingham Trent University

Applications are sought from the following:

- any current learner, student, apprentice
- a recent graduate (within two years)
- current elected student representative, and students' union/representative body staff members.

At this time, we would particularly welcome applications from those with experience of the following, as they are generally underrepresented within the Committee's membership:

- individuals with experience of progressing into higher education through an Access to HE course
- individuals currently studying at higher education level within a college, independent higher education provider, or small / specialist institution
- individuals currently studying a degree or higher-level apprenticeship
- individuals with experience of studying internationally.
Main responsibilities during 2024-25

The main responsibility of the Committee will be to:

- **provide a student perspective and objective advice** to QAA regarding the legislative, regulatory, funding and policy environment likely to affect the experience of students in UK higher education.

- **contribute to discussions and provide student-focused responses** to developments and changes in the legislative, regulatory, funding and policy environment likely to affect the experience of students in UK higher education.

- **advise QAA staff** on the development of any work that has substantive implications for current or prospective students studying higher education.

- **advise the Board** regarding the continued validity, appropriateness and relevance of QAA’s work for students in UK higher education.

- **provide independent and objective counsel** to, and acting as a sounding board, for the Board.

Membership of the Committee also gives an opportunity to influence the work of a national agency, meet like-minded people and become more involved in QAA’s work in the higher education sector. Since its inception, the Committee has played a key role in advising QAA on the development of our review methods, revising our organisational strategy, and making QAA’s work more accessible to students across the UK.
Meetings

There will be three meetings held over the academic year and members are expected to attend all of them and actively participate. Currently it is expected that the meetings will be held online for the next academic year.

New members will be invited to attend an induction, which whilst not compulsory, is strongly recommended. Induction will enable new members to:

- forge networks with other new SSAC colleagues
- meet key QAA staff and existing members
- discuss priorities and ideas for the coming year
- learn more about QAA and its work
- learn about the key terms you are likely to hear about in the role.

In 2024-25, meetings will most likely take place via Microsoft Teams on the following dates*:

- **Induction** - Tuesday 5 November 2024 (Details to be confirmed)
- **Monday 11 November 2024** (10.00-12.00)
- **Wednesday 19 February 2025** (10.00-12.00)
- **Tuesday 14 May 2025** (10.00-12.00)

*Please note that dates may change - as much notice as possible will be given if that is the case.

Membership

The Co-Chairs of the Committee are the independent QAA Student Board Member and the NUS-nominated QAA Board Member. In addition to the joint chairs, there will be a minimum of 13 members and a maximum of 15 members including:

- one of the student representatives/members from each of the QAA Board committees with student membership
- a minimum of five student members
- a minimum of two students’ union staff members
- QAA’s appointed lead for the SSAC (ex-officio).

The Chair of the QAA Board and an independent Board Member, as well as the Chief Executive, may also attend the meetings.

For more information, see the Student Strategic Advisory Committee Terms of Reference and Role Specification, which are available as part of this pack.
How to apply

To apply, please [complete the application form](#). When completing your application form, please demonstrate how you meet the Role Specification (see page 9).

The application period will run between [Thursday 16 May at 12 noon](#) and [Thursday 20 June 2024](#), closing at 23:59.

Shortlisted candidates will be contacted within three weeks with details of the next stage of appointment.

---

“Being on the Student Strategic Advisory Committee has been great to widen my knowledge of quality across the sector and gain a greater understanding of what is going on, what we can be doing locally at our own institutions and what the QAA are doing to support this. I work with an amazing range of colleagues and have thoroughly enjoyed my time on the committee.”

Charlotte Baker, current committee member (2023-25), President, University of Winchester Students’ Union
# Role specification

When completing your application form, please demonstrate how you meet the Role Specification. This will be used in the selection process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specification</th>
<th>Essential / desirable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is a current student, graduate (within two years), or elected sabbatical officer at a UK higher education institution. OR Is a student union or student representative body organisation staff member.</td>
<td>Essential</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Must be able to attend all three meetings (and preferably induction):</td>
<td>Essential</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • Induction - Tuesday 5 November 2024 (Details to be confirmed)  
• Monday 11 November 2024 (10.00-12.00)  
• Wednesday 19 February 2025 (10.00-12.00)  
• Tuesday 14 May 2025 (10.00-12.00) | |
| Demonstrates understanding of the complexities of the UK higher education sector and regulatory landscapes. | Essential |
| Experience in representing students in quality assurance and enhancement. | Essential |
| Demonstrates the ability to communicate effectively with a wide range of audiences and stakeholders in the higher education sector. | Essential |
| Demonstrates the ability to work effectively as part of a committee or team, including evidence of impartiality, independence of mind, sound judgement and collegiate approach. | Essential |
| Demonstrates willingness to accept the duties and responsibilities of membership and to commit to the demands of the role. | Essential |
| Currently based in one of the following higher education providers:  
• higher education in a further education college  
• small/specialist provider  
• independent higher education provider  
• higher education institution in Scotland, Northern Ireland, or Wales. | Desirable |

For further information regarding this role, please contact Ruth Burchell r.burchell@qaa.ac.uk