Membership 2020-21 in Northern Ireland

Developing and delivering a dedicated and distinctive service in Northern Ireland
What membership means for you

Our work in Northern Ireland

As a QAA Member in Northern Ireland, we will work with you to develop a range of activities specific to Northern Ireland, working collaboratively to support your commitment to enhance and enrich the learning experience of students.

We will offer a dedicated programme of work, resources and events, and provide access to other QAA events that meet the needs of providers in Northern Ireland. The model we will draw upon for this is the very successful Focus On approach in Scotland, where recent projects have focused on technology enhanced learning and graduate skills.

Across the UK, some of our events and activities will be particularly relevant to you - find out what’s on offer through our Membership calendar.

We will work together with members on challenges shared across a number of higher education providers, build on common strengths and areas of good practice. QAA has established expertise in designing effective programmes to explore views and progress practice, and would like to make full use of this to offer bespoke work in Northern Ireland.

QAA will continue to support the active participation of students as partners in our work and in quality enhancement in Northern Ireland, seeking further ways to deepen and strengthen student involvement.
We can provide commissioned quality reviews for individual institutions. External quality assurance by QAA is valued and respected, provides assurance to governing bodies, to your institutional partners, to staff, students, graduates and the wider public. Commissioned reviews are enhancement and peer-led and responsive to the context of each institution, as well as the policy context in Northern Ireland.

Looking ahead, we aim to work with you to develop a new enhancement-oriented review method drawing on the experience of enhancement review in similar sectors. This will be developed in conjunction with stakeholders and designed specifically for Northern Ireland.

In 2020–21, we will also support the delivery of a tertiary conference in Northern Ireland, focused on the enhancement-led approach to quality. This in-person event was originally scheduled for May 2020 but was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This conference will present an incredibly valuable opportunity for colleagues to join together and help shape the future of the further and higher education sectors in Northern Ireland.

Non-membership work in Northern Ireland

Importantly, we will continue to work closely with the Department for Economy (DfE) and will liaise with Northern Ireland representatives on the range of UK committees and groups. We will also undertake Unsatisfactory Quality and Standards Investigations should DfE commission us to do so.

UK-wide membership programme for 2020-21

In addition to the Northern Ireland specific activities outlined above, as a QAA Member in Northern Ireland you have access to all of QAA's UK-wide membership activities and services. Our overarching theme for the UK-wide membership programme for 2020–21 is Resilience, Innovation, Enhancement, helping you to develop organisational resilience through innovative approaches to quality assurance and enhancement. Detailed information about the new 2020–21 QAA membership year and all it has to offer is provided in Annex A.
Annex A: UK-wide membership programme 2020-21

Our overarching theme for 2020–21 is Resilience, Innovation, Enhancement, helping you to develop organisational resilience through innovative approaches to quality assurance and enhancement.

We will work jointly with all our members and partners across the UK, sharing learning from all four UK nations and international partners, supporting new ideas and models for innovation, and providing opportunities to network and share practice.

This is complemented by additional nation-specific work, in particular the new Enhancement Theme in Scotland – Resilient Learning Communities – that will commence early in the new academic year.

Embracing this overarching theme, membership outputs in 2020–21 will focus across five key interest areas:

- Protecting standards and enhancing quality
- Engaging students in standards and quality
- Risk-based and data-led quality assurance
- Academic integrity
- International engagement and TNE provision

These five areas spread across all membership packages: Core Membership, Quality Insights and International Insights.

Members in Northern Ireland have full access to all packages through your annual subscription to QAA.
The five key areas of interest chosen have been developed in consultation with members and informed by QAA’s quality specialists, horizon scanning and emerging sector policy. Our work will continue to be driven and shaped by the significant changes to the delivery of higher education and evolving practice in quality assurance and enhancement following the COVID-19 crisis, particularly in relation to modes of study and the need for flexibility in the provision of learning and assessment.

Membership in 2020–21 will build on the materials published in 2019–20 to create further guidance, resources and opportunities to network and share practice, exclusively for members during the new academic year. In 2019–20 we published more than 150 resources including over 30 separate pieces of guidance and supporting materials developed in response to COVID-19.
Cross-cutting activities

Each year we continue to deliver core activities that cut across some or all of the annual areas of interest.

Opportunities for all staff with a direct or indirect responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement in your institution, keeping your internal knowledge and skills relevant and current.

In addition to training on specific topics, your Core Membership offers the chance for staff and students to participate in two specially-designed training programmes:

- **Introduction to Quality** - for new quality team members, academics and other staff who need to understand the role of quality in higher education.

- **Quality in Practice** - for individuals who have worked in quality assurance for at least two years to support them in developing practical techniques across the key elements of higher education quality assurance and enhancement.

Each programme will run three times per year and is open to all staff and students at member institutions, although we limit this to one place per institution, per programme. Additional programmes may be scheduled if member demand requires this.

In 2019-20 we redeveloped the delivery model to run these programmes virtually, each one taking place across a period of 10 days allowing participants to engage flexibly in both asynchronous and synchronous activities throughout the programme. Following positive feedback about this approach, together with the travel-related time and cost savings to members, we have decided to continue this online approach in 2020-21.
Briefings

A horizon scanning function, keeping you up to date on emerging policy, global trends and issues and the implications for quality assurance and enhancement.

This will comprise:

- **Termly written briefings**
  - in-depth analysis of two or three topical issues from a quality enhancement and standards perspective, highlighting the implications for UK higher education providers.

- **Monthly headline update webinars**
  - updates on QAA Membership activities; a round-up of recent news and global trends that have a quality and standards perspective, together with more in-depth analysis on the quality enhancement and standards implications of one of the most relevant topics.

**Quality clinics**

Dedicated online clinics providing members with direct access to QAA Quality and Standards specialists.
Networking opportunities that bring together UK higher education quality professionals, from both academic and professional services backgrounds, to share innovative approaches, develop knowledge and benefit from the expert guidance of QAA’s team, building strong communities of practice across the UK.

- In England, Regional Network events will take place in November and May.
- Wales Quality Network meetings are scheduled for November, March and June.
- Engagement in Scotland continues through the Quality Enhancement Framework in which QAA Scotland works in partnership with the Scottish Funding Council, Universities Scotland, NUS (Scotland), sparqs and Advance HE.
- Member networking events in Northern Ireland will also be introduced in 2020-21.

Regular forum events, strengthening the engagement with PSRBs across the higher education sector.

These forums facilitate discussion and provide a platform for resolution of issues relating to accreditation and qualification challenges, particularly when planning for more flexible delivery of higher education.
Access to HE Diploma

Promotion and development of the Access to HE Diploma which brings more than 23,000 students into higher education each year, many from under-represented groups, improving routes to higher education.

In 2020–21, we will also reframe current approaches to the effective management of the QAA Recognition Scheme for Access to HE, collaborating with Access Validating Agencies to adjust to the longer-term implications of COVID-19.

Quality Insights Conference

Our flagship event in February which includes practical insights and effective practice on key topics: protecting standards and enhancing quality, academic integrity, risk-based and data-led quality assurance and engaging students in standards and quality.

Members in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, and those in England who have purchased the Quality Insights enhancement package, are entitled to one free delegate place. Additional places may be available on a first come, first served basis.
QAA will continue to work with you to safeguard academic standards across UK higher education.

- Working proactively with government, UKSCQA and other agencies to ensure that key issues are understood and embedded in new policy initiatives and other developments.

- Working with you to keep the UK Quality Code for Higher Education and other sector reference points relevant.

- Collaborating with you to produce guidance that provides solutions to current challenges and opportunities for innovation.

- Providing thought leadership on standards and quality to support you in responding to contemporary challenges.
You will benefit from:

Maintaining UK standards and frameworks

- Updating key publications
- Updating and developing key Subject Benchmark Statements in line with sector priorities
- Supporting webinars, training and resources (*Quality Insights*)

New guidance on education for sustainable development

- Publication of new guidance document
- Supporting webinars and resources (*Quality Insights*)

Safeguarding degree standards: supporting members on degree classification, degree algorithms and degree outcome statements

- Regular updates and briefings, and opportunities for networking
- Case studies on key areas (*Quality Insights*)

Focus on micro-credentials and their use in higher education, considering the implications for the development of the English credit framework, and addressing issues around recognition of prior learning and academic integrity
Maintaining quality in a digital environment

- Responding to the COVID-19 crisis, a programme to help quality professionals understand what a ‘quality’ digital learning experience should look like and what this means for an institution’s quality assurance and enhancement practices.

QAA’s expert voice on quality and standards: through the media, and UK-wide and international forums

Responding to consultations and inquiries on quality and standards-related issues, and other liaison with governments, government committees, regulators, funding bodies and international bodies

- Responding to governmental legislation, policy proposals and initiatives. In 2020-21 this might involve the Welsh Government’s reform of Post Compulsory Education and Training, the Scottish Funding Council’s review of coherent provision and sustainability, and the Post-18 review of education and funding in England.

- Engaging with issues that UK governments believe might impact upon quality and standards in higher education. For example, grade inflation, essay mills, unconditional offers and the value of higher education.

- Identifying policy objectives arising from work undertaken by QAA (and in collaboration with sector partners), presenting evidence-based arguments for sector change. For example, credit transfer and micro credentials.
Engaging students in standards and quality

In 2020–21 we will extend our work on student engagement in quality through wider collaboration with students’ unions, student representative bodies, higher education staff and students. Through this work we will prepare and support student representatives and sabbatical officers at member institutions to engage meaningfully in the quality assurance and enhancement processes of their provider.

You will benefit from:

- A quarterly newsletter focusing specifically on student engagement
- Resources developed to inform students and student representatives of current concepts of quality and standards
- Two conferences to support all those involved in student engagement in quality including staff, students’ unions, sabbatical officers, and student representatives – Quality Matters and Evolving Student Engagement
- Opportunities for networking and building communities of practitioners
Practical toolkit to support students’ unions to evaluate and demonstrate the impact of their student engagement projects and initiatives

Webinar series to provide insight and guidance, and to facilitate the sharing of members’ innovations and enhancement

Case study programme sharing members’ innovations and enhancement
Risk-based and data-led quality assurance

In 2020–21 we will build on our work to support you as you embed new quality assurance processes and practices. We will develop new guidance and toolkits, and identify effective practice on how to use data to improve student experience, to evidence outcomes and inform risk-based monitoring, with particular focus on:

- data sources, their relevance to, and their application in quality and standards
- using risk evaluation and data to develop internal quality assurance and enhancement processes
- quality enhancement-led approaches.

You will benefit from:

- Practical guidance/toolkit for quality teams on effective use of data to support risk-based and enhancement-led quality processes
- Enhancement partnerships working on embedding risk and data analysis into members’ quality practices
New research on establishing and embedding a data-led quality culture, developed in response to member feedback with input from the Membership Advisory Group. The research aims to establish how higher education providers develop a whole-institution culture that fosters and promotes data-led quality assurance and enhancement, and how its impact is monitored and evaluated.

Guidance and resources developed in-line with the research findings.

Training programmes - Introduction to Quality for data teams, and Introduction to Data and Metrics for Enhancing Quality for academics.

Webinar and case study programmes to share practice and lessons learned in developing risk-based and data-led quality processes.
Academic integrity

QAA will continue its campaign to combat essay mills and other threats to academic integrity.

We will build on the revised guidance on contract cheating published in June 2020 and endorsed by government ministers across the UK to support you in your efforts to detect and deter cheating and maintain academic integrity.

We will liaise with governments, sector bodies and expert academics and develop communities of practice with members to guide policy development and institutional practice.

You will benefit from:

- Enhancement partnership focusing on academic integrity, specifically looking at the introduction of new modes of learning and assessment
- Guidance on online proctoring
- New research into sector-wide approaches to intervention and sanctions
Guidance and resources developed in-line with the research findings

Toolkit to support the Academic Integrity Charter

Webinar series on combating education fraud, covering strategic approaches, information and support for students, training for staff, reducing opportunities to cheat, detecting education fraud, and regulations and policies

Case study programme to share effective practice and lessons learned
QAA will continue our work with governments, agencies and institutions around the world to benefit UK higher education and its international reputation, advancing UK higher education’s leadership and voice in global quality assurance and enhancement.

You will benefit from:

Continued expansion of partnerships with overseas quality agencies and governments to build trust and confidence in UK higher education; extending understanding of the quality of UK higher education, strengthening cross-border cooperation and mutual recognition.

Shaping the development of pan-European approaches to quality enhancement through strong links within the European Higher Education Area and in wider quality debates.
Up to four Country Reports on the landscape and regulatory environment in key countries for UK higher education, supporting the quality enhancement of your transnational (TNE) provision.

Webinar series covering TNE delivery in key countries, managing risk, and emerging markets.

Institutional case studies on a range of TNE provision in key countries.

Regional studies and guidance on emerging markets in TNE.
QAA Membership is for your whole organisation

Everyone with an institutional email address can access member resources

- students and students’ unions
- academic staff
- quality professionals
- senior leaders
- data and planning teams
- international teams
- governors