Context of our move to membership

The way QAA works, is commissioned and funded is evolving. As a result, we need to set out what work we undertake and services we offer in each of the UK’s home nations. Each is now different in a significant series of ways - the policy context is different, student fees and student support are different, the work that QAA is asked to do is different and how it is funded or paid for is different. The relationships we have with providers are also different.

In Scotland we continue to work in partnership with SFC and Universities Scotland under a tripartite outcome agreement. This sets out the work we will deliver in support of Scotland’s Quality Enhancement Framework. We are accountable to both SFC and Universities Scotland for delivery, with our work in enhancement directed and overseen by SHEEC. Our work is funded by both institutional subscriptions and SFC grant. The funding we receive is for the delivery of an agreed programme of work in Scotland and to support UK-wide activity. Part of the funding we receive is disbursed directly back to institutions as part of work for the Enhancement Themes.

Importantly, across the UK QAA continues to be supported by providers, regulators and funders to undertake a core set of UK-wide activity. This will form the core of membership across the UK. All subscribers in Scotland are automatically members of QAA with full access to services and resources.

QAA’s work in Scotland

Funded by SFC and institutional subscriptions, our work in Scotland will continue to embrace all the familiar elements:

- Enhancement-led Institutional Review, including peer review visits, the outcome and technical reports, and follow-up reports by institutions and annual discussions.
- The maintenance of an expert pool of reviewers, the delivery of regular reviewer training (or CPD).
- Continuing evaluation of the operation of ELIR and the further development of the method for 2023 onwards.
- Planning and managing the Enhancement Themes, developing the Enhancement Themes website and resources designed to support, share and embed enhancement practices.
- Identifying and disseminating good practice and areas for development from ELIR including through a continuing programme of Focus On projects.
- Thematic and analytical reporting.
- Supporting SHEEC, the Theme Leaders Group and TQF; working with Universities Scotland and SFC and participation in relevant committees and working groups.
- Through partnership supporting the active participation of students in our work and in quality enhancement in Scotland.
- Contributing to the maintenance and development of UK-wide reference points such as the UK Quality Code and other frameworks and tools.
- The operation of a Concerns Scheme.
- Maintenance and development of international partnerships and engagement to support UK HE in its work and operation internationally.
QAA’s work UK-wide

Policy and issues

QAA will continue to respond to emerging and vital issues on behalf of the sector as part of its overall service. Recent examples of our leadership, our ability to ensure voices and perspectives from across the UK and our role as a catalyst in this context include:

- policy and guidance on contract cheating and academic integrity
- bringing together representatives from across the UK to develop the characteristics statement on higher/graduate/degree apprenticeships - seeking to ensure that apprenticeships meet the needs of employers UK-wide and enabling apprentices to move around the UK
- innovative commissioned research looking at how student opinion can be used as an indicator of quality (The Wisdom of Students: Monitoring Quality through Student Reviews)
- work with UUK and GuildHE on degree standards and outcomes.

UK-wide frameworks and tools

QAA will continue to support the development and maintenance of:

- the UK Quality Code
- the Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland within the SCQF; together with SCQF we will ensure continued compatibility and referencing with European qualifications frameworks as part of the Bologna Process
- updating and evolving Subject Benchmark Statements.

International partnership and engagement

QAA will continue to engage with a wider international network of quality assurance agencies in order to:

- contribute to, and help shape, quality assurance, leading, listening and learning
- helping to ensure the voice of the UK remains strong and informs developments.

We will:

- maintain a series of strategically important MoUs with agencies internationally
- work with local agencies and governments to extend the understanding of the quality of UK HE, increase cooperation and mutual recognition
- seek to minimise obstacles and reduce the regulatory burden on UK providers in delivering TNE
- research and publish material such as Country Reports, organise events, deliver insight webinars and short papers alongside case studies and news updates.

General services

Scottish members will be able to access QAA’s Annual Conference, UK-wide events, guidance, newsletters and updates. These kinds of activities will either be free to members or offered at special rates.

To be decided/finalised

Proposals for the continued review of UK HE’s TNE are yet to be finalised. At present a UUK/GuildHE/QAA working group is looking to propose a UK-wide solution that will continue to provide the assurance sought by quality assurance agencies, governments and students internationally. More details will be available in due course.