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.

Over the last few years HEFCW has developed and established Wales’s Quality Assessment Framework (QAF). In Wales we work in partnership with Universities Wales and a number of colleges to deliver commissioned reviews to enable HE providers to meet their obligations under the QAF. We also deliver a range of enhancement services and fulfil fundamental UK-wide services on behalf of Wales.

Our work is funded by both institutional subscriptions and contracts for services with providers. This reflects HEFCW’s move to a ‘provider pays’ model. We are accountable primarily to individual institutions and to Universities Wales as the universities’ coordinating and representative voice.

In addition, we have small contracts with HEFCW to develop the method and retain the capacity to deliver Gateway Reviews (providers pay for their review) and to conduct any Unsatisfactory Quality & Standards Investigations. Whilst these are not part of our membership services, they are part of the overall quality landscape in Wales and some of the infrastructure costs do draw on subscriber funding.

QAA, as a regulator, licences Access Validating Agencies including Agored Cymru in Wales. 83% of Access to HE students in Wales went on to HE within Wales helping providers meet widening access ambitions.

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

QAA’s work in Wales

Our work in Wales will continue to embrace:

- The delivery of Quality Enhancement Review (QER), including peer review visits on a six-year cycle and the publication of outcome and technical reports for each review.
- The maintenance of an expert pool of reviewers, the delivery of regular reviewer training (or CPD)
- Continuing evaluation of the operation of QER and the further development of the method.
- The flexibilities in QER required by the QAF including to deliver commissioned or required partial reviews.
- Identifying and disseminating good practice and areas for development from QER including through a programme of enhancement projects, resources and events.
- Supporting the Wales Quality Network.
- Working with Universities Wales and HEFCW, Estyn and Colleges Wales and participation in relevant discussions, committees and working groups.
- Through partnership supporting the active participation of students in our work and in quality enhancement in Wales.
- Supporting the HE sector and HEFCW in the developing approaches to quality as part of the Welsh Government's reform of the post-compulsory education and training sectors in Wales and other relevant policy changes.
- Contributing to the maintenance and development of UK-wide reference points such as the UK Quality Code and other frameworks and tools.
• Maintenance and development of international partnerships and engagement to support UK HE in its work and operation internationally.
• Delivering our obligations under the Welsh Language Standards including maintaining relevant Welsh language content on our websites and ensuring the availability of a cadre of Reviewers who are Welsh speakers.

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 form 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 outcome.

UK-wide frameworks and tools

QAA will continue to support the development and maintenance of:

• the UK Quality Code
• the Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (including contributing to continued compatibility and referencing with European qualifications frameworks as part of the Bologna Process)
• 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
• 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 webinars and produce short papers alongside case studies and news updates.

General services

• Welsh members will be able to access QAA’s Annual Conference, UK-wide events, guidance, newsletters and updates. These kinds of activities will mainly be free to Welsh members or offered at special rates.
• Continued regulation of AVAs and support for Access to HE.

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.