



QAA

Strategy



Chair's Introduction

As UK higher education shifts from the emergency response to the global COVID-19 pandemic into a new and changed sector, we face a particular set of challenges. The pandemic has prompted renewed questions concerning the fundamental nature of higher education, as well as the social and economic role the sector plays in society. As the independent quality body for UK higher education, the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) is here to maintain and enhance quality and standards through what may be a challenging period ahead.

From the many conversations I have had across the sector, it is clear that the changes higher education continues to experience will have permanent implications. Many trends were apparent prior to the pandemic: the financial challenges ahead, the changing climate of external trust, concerns about academic integrity and essay mills, degree classifications, drop-out rates, expectations of more technical and vocational education including micro-credentials, grade inflation, a new regulatory environment in England, and strong interest in tertiary reform in Wales and Scotland. Others are new: the unique forms of blended learning, for example, or the exceptional student support needs.

It's in guiding and collaborating in these areas where I believe we can add huge value to the sector. QAA is internationally recognised for our expertise in quality assurance. We are trusted by higher education providers and regulatory bodies to maintain and enhance quality and standards. We provide expert services to our UK higher education members, so that they can give their students the best possible experience. And we work with governments, agencies and institutions globally to benefit UK higher education and its international reputation.

This strategy will guide QAA in its strategic priorities over this period. As with everything we do, we have been listening to our members and the wider sector. We are very proud to support a diverse UK-wide sector with a world-leading reputation for quality; as a new decade begins, I am confident that QAA is in a stronger position than ever to promote, support and collaborate with the sector.



Professor Simon Gaskell, Chair of the QAA Board

Purpose of QAA

The purpose of QAA is to safeguard academic standards and ensure the quality and global reputation of UK higher education.

We do this by working with higher education providers, regulatory bodies and students' bodies with the shared objective in supporting students to succeed.

Delivering for UK higher education

Considering our purpose, and the changing context that the organisation is working within, the following strategic priorities will guide QAA until 2025:

1

The trusted expert independent body supporting the enhancement and regulation of higher education across a diverse UK

2

Providing expert advice that secures standards and supports quality enhancement

3

Strengthening the global reputation of UK higher education

1

The trusted expert independent body supporting the enhancement and regulation of higher education across a diverse UK

We will achieve this by providing independent assessments of standards and quality within the relevant assurance, enhancement and regulatory frameworks of all the nations of the United Kingdom. Our assessments, and what we learn and share from them, will:

- Deliver principles-based regulation through our responsibilities as the Designated Quality Body in England
- Innovate through partnership, going beyond assurance, through the Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland
- Embed the Quality Enhancement agenda for Wales
- Support government and the sector in Northern Ireland in future approaches

2

Providing expert advice that secures standards and supports quality enhancement

We will both support and challenge our member institutions in enhancing the quality of UK higher education provision, to give students the best possible experience. This will be achieved through:

- Keeping the UK Quality Code relevant and providing thought leadership on standards and quality to support our members in responding to contemporary challenges
- Development and delivery of enhancement partnerships, sharing learning from each nation across the UK and internationally
- Relevant and dynamic enhancement activities for each nation, UK wide and informed by international practice and participation
- Supporting effective student partnership in quality assurance
- Providing advice to governments across the UK
- Partner effectively with UK PSRBs and employers in support of our members
- Improving routes to higher education through the Access to HE Diploma

3

Strengthening the global reputation of UK higher education

Our collaborations with governments and higher education quality agencies internationally give us a unique breadth of global expertise. We will use this breadth and depth to:

- Provide confidence in the quality of UK trans-national education
- Expand partnership with overseas quality agencies and governments to build trust and confidence in UK higher education
- Advance UK interests in the policy agenda in the European Higher Education Area and in wider quality assurance debates
- Host INQAAHE 2021 in Glasgow and ENQA 2022 in Cardiff
- Grow participation in our capacity building programmes for overseas higher education systems
- Build our international accreditation programme and open membership to credible international institutions

