



Appointment of Members to the Student Strategic Advisory Committee

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

September 2025

Welcome from the Vice 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 each nation within an underlying commitment to the enhancement of quality and maintenance of clear standards across the UK. An expanded commitment to international activities has allowed QAA to play a central role in promoting UK higher education overseas, while also providing benefits to international institutions and partners, and broadening the Agency's income streams.

QAA has earned a reputation for giving particular weight to the student perspective. SSAC 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 should also have an understanding of the range of stakeholder interests in, and of the challenges and changes facing, tertiary 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 interested in attracting a wide range of individuals who are committed to QAA's purpose, 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.

With best wishes

Rachid Hourizi, MBE
Vice Chair of the QAA Board

About QAA

QAA is the UK's expert quality body for tertiary education and a world-leading quality agency with unmatched experience of providing impartial regulatory and collaborative 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.



"I've loved being a part of SSAC and contributing to the national HE quality agenda, supporting QAA in its excellent work. From great discussions about hot topics, speaking at national events and shaping outputs - being part of SSAC has been really fulfilling. I've enjoyed working with others across the sector to refine thinking, define trends and consider ways to respond - and I've been able to take valuable insights back to my University." (Joe Holmes, VP Education, Essex SU, SSAC Member 2024-2025)

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 plays a vital role in tertiary education across the UK and internationally. We're trusted by universities and other education providers, and by regulatory bodies, to maintain standards and enhance quality. Our collaborations with governments, agencies and institutions globally benefit the UK sector and its students.

The main areas of our work include:

Amplifying the member voice

We have close relationships with institutions, quality agencies, and partner bodies in the UK and internationally, and with professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), sharing the expertise of QAA Members on a global stage.

Developing skills and networks

We work in partnership with institutions to support members with enhancement while respecting their autonomy and the diversity of the sector. Collaborative by design, QAA Membership thrives on building effective relationships, creating meaningful opportunities to network and engage with the wider sector, and helping to develop skills and experience across a whole institution.

Enhancing knowledge and practice

With nearly 30 years of expertise as a world-leading impartial, independent quality body, QAA has helped establish quality systems around the globe. We support members to make practices and processes more efficient and effective, to maximise the impact from using our toolkits, guidance documents and policy and strategy briefings, and one-to-one support as needed.

Addressing priorities

The overarching themes of QAA Membership are crafted to tackle significant sector challenges head on, ensuring members stay ahead in the ever-evolving landscape of higher and tertiary education.

Our themes for 2025-26 are threaded through all membership activity, including the diverse programme of events and suite of resources and are:

- *Supporting high-quality teaching and learning:*
- *Innovation in delivery*
- *Maintaining quality in challenging times*

Products and services

In addition to QAA Membership, we offer a [range of products and 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 bespoke services aimed at supporting the development of quality assurance systems and quality assurance professionals worldwide, as well as supporting collaboration between UK and overseas higher education sectors.

Leadership


As an expert in Quality, QAA uses its experience and insight to influence policy conversations at the national and international level. Drawing on learnings from QAA's quality assurance and enhancement work, we work to ensure that Government policy relating to quality and standards acts in the best interests of students, and the value of their qualifications.

About the Student Strategic Advisory Committee

The Student Strategic Advisory Committee (SSAC) acts as 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.



"My time on SSAC was instrumental in broadening my knowledge and awareness of higher education policy across the UK. Through the conversations I engaged in alongside QAA staff, sector stakeholders and my fellow SSAC members, my interest in the quality of education grew significantly. My hugely positive experience of SSAC played a big role in my decision to apply for a job with QAA a few years later" Kevin McStravock, ex committee member (2017-19), Quality Enhancement Manager, Ulster 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 2025-26

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.

Furthermore, there is the opportunity to lend expertise to events, projects and topics on an ad hoc and voluntary basis in addition to Committee duties. Each year SSAC identifies 3 priority areas of work that represent the key challenges that impact the student learning experience and will co-create outputs for the sector, information about the priorities for 2024/25 can be found [here](#).

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.

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 2025-26, meetings will most likely take place via Microsoft Teams on the following dates*:

- Induction - Tuesday 4 November 2025 (In person – timings and location to be confirmed)
- Tuesday 11 November 2025 (10.00-12.00 - online)
- Tuesday 17 February 2026 (10.00-12.00 - online)
- Tuesday 12 May 2026 (10.00-12.00 - online)


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

***At the induction we will decide on the key priorities areas that we will work on across the year.*

How to apply

To apply, please complete [this expression of interest form](#). When completing your, please demonstrate how you meet the Role Specification (see page 8).

The application period will run between **Monday 8 September at 12 noon** and **Friday 26 September 2025, closing at 23:59**. Shortlisted candidates will be contacted within three weeks with details of the next stage of appointment.



"My time on SSAC was really valuable. I gained great sector level insight from QAA and other committee members, grew confidence in engaging with new topics and was able to take ideas and knowledge back to my own institution. It was rewarding to see our contributions making a difference to the work of QAA and personally the connections formed have helped my career progression in HE." Hannah Reilly ex committee member (2016 – 2018), Senior Learner Engagement Manager, Medr

Role specification

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

Specification	Essential / desirable
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.	Essential
Must be able to attend all three meetings and induction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Induction - Tuesday 4 November 2025 (In person – Timings and location to be confirmed) • Tuesday 11 November 2025 (10.00-12.00 - online) • Tuesday 17 February 2026 (10.00-12.00 - online) • Tuesday 12 May 2026 (10.00-12.00 - online) 	Essential
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: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • higher education in a further education college • small/specialist provider • independent higher education provider • higher education institution in Scotland, Northern Ireland, or Wales. Or, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member of staff of a student representative body 	Desirable

Further information

For further information regarding this role, please contact Ruth Burchell
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www.qaa.ac.uk