

## Summary of the Consultation on the Handbook for the Review of Degree Apprenticeships in Wales

1 QAA consulted on the handbook for the developmental review of Degree Apprenticeships in Wales for the 2020-21 academic session from 13 August to 14 September 2020.<sup>1</sup>

2 Respondents were invited to comment on the proposed approach, sufficiency of information provided, timeline, considerations for virtual delivery, review outcomes and unintended consequences of the review process (for example, potential effects on equality, diversity and inclusion or opportunities to use the Welsh language).<sup>2</sup>

3 10 responses were received representing providers, partners and other sector bodies.

4 The principal themes raised by respondents were:

- a. Timescales for the review process
- b. Relationship of the review to the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales
- c. Challenges with engaging with apprentices
- d. Impact of COVID-19 on conducting the review.

5 The following table outlines the responses to polar questions in the survey.

Question	Response
2: Do you believe the proposed approach can achieve its purpose as a developmental review and support providers' learning and development in the delivery of Degree Apprenticeships?	Yes - 100% No - 0 %
3: Does the draft handbook provide sufficient information to prepare and conduct the reviews?	Yes - 100% No - 0 %
3b: Are there any areas that require further information/ clarification?	Yes - 60% No - 40%
4: Considering the timescales for the overall delivery of the review programme, is the review programme for an individual review (Annex B: Provider review timeline) reasonable?	Yes - 30% No - 70%
4b: Are there any recommendations for adjustments in terms of timing and order of activities?	Yes - 60% No - 40%
5: Is the proposed approach to use programme trails appropriate?	Yes - 100% No - 0%
5b: Are there any adjustments that would ensure these are used effectively?	Yes - 60% No - 40%

<sup>1</sup> The review is only concerned with Degree Apprenticeships funded through HEFCW, made available on a pilot basis since 2018-19, covering three priority areas: Digital, Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing.

<sup>2</sup> See Annex 1 for full consultation question set.

6: Are there any further considerations to take into account if part or all of the review needs to be conducted virtually?	Yes - 70% No - 30%
7: Are the review outcomes (recommendations and good practice) appropriately defined?	Yes - 100% No - 0%
7b: Will the reporting process enable effective sharing of practice?	Yes - 70% No - 30%
8: Are there any unintended consequences that could arise from the proposed review process, for instance, in terms of equality and diversity or the Welsh language?	Yes - 20% No - 80 %

6 Based on the information received in the consultation, QAA has amended the handbook on the review process to support providers, partners, apprentices and employers undertaking the review in the 2020-21 academic session.

7 The following table demonstrates how QAA has responded to the principal concerns highlighted in the consultation responses.

<b>Principal theme/ area for clarification</b>	<b>Amendment to the handbook/review process</b>
Timeline of review activity	Following extensive concerns on the timeline for the review process, QAA has amended the Review Programme Timeline (Annex A) to allow providers more time to prepare the appropriate documentation by extending the preparation period to February, with the review visits rescheduled to take place in March and April 2021. This timeline will ensure that the overview reports are finalised and submitted to HEFCW by June 2021 (see Annexes A and B).
Relationship between the Review of Degree Apprenticeships and the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales	The handbook has been updated to note that this review does not form part of the Quality Assessment Framework for Wales. Therefore, this sits outside of the Quality Enhancement Review (QER) for regulated institutions in Wales. However, the provider may wish to share their report as part of future external quality assurance engagements (see paragraph 5).
Engagement with apprentices/ apprentice voice	<p>QAA has amended references to learners on Degree Apprenticeship programmes from 'students' to 'apprentices' to reflect that their primary place of learning is their workplace (see paragraph 7). Consequently, the role of the 'Lead Student Representative (LSR)' has been amended to 'Lead Apprentice Representative (LAR)' (see paragraphs 37-41) and the 'student submission' has been renamed the 'apprentice submission' (see paragraphs 34-36 and Annex C).</p> <p>The Lead Apprentice Representative (LAR) should, where possible, be appointed by apprentices themselves. However, a student representative may assume this role, for example, an elected officer from the student representative body (see paragraph 37).</p> <p>Consultation responses noted concerns with engaging with apprentices as part of the review process. QAA has updated the handbook to reflect this concern and noted that an apprentice submission may not be possible. Therefore, apprentice submissions may be prepared through student representative</p>

	bodies in partnership with apprentices (see paragraphs 34-36 and Annex C).
Reviews during COVID-19	The handbook acknowledges that COVID-19 restrictions remain in place across the UK, including local lockdowns for many county councils in Wales. QAA recognises that the method of delivery for the review will need to be flexible and will ensure that review teams operate according to the latest public health guidance. With reviews taking place in the Spring Term, QAA recognises that there is the potential for some or all of the review process to take place virtually. QAA will provide further guidance on the delivery of online reviews to ensure confidence for all parties involved in the review process (see paragraph 9).
Developmental focus of the review	QAA has updated some of the language and key terms in the handbook to reflect the developmental nature of the review: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflective analysis (RA) - the 'self-evaluative analysis (SA)' has been amended to 'reflective analysis (RA)' to represent the constructive process of considering the development of current provision (see paragraphs 28-32).</li> <li>• Areas for development - 'recommendation' has been amended to 'area for development' with a revised definition to reflect the developmental nature of the review: 'an area for development is an area in the design, structure and delivery of Degree Apprenticeships that can be improved or modified in order to strengthen and enhance the delivery of the characteristics/distinctive features of the provider's Degree Apprenticeship provision' (see paragraph 26).</li> </ul>

8 The revised handbook will be published on the week beginning 12 October 2020 with a provider briefing taking place on Monday 2 November at 1400hrs for up to 90 minutes via webinar.

# Annex 1 - Consultation questions

## Consultation questions

### Information about you

We collect this information in order to aid our understanding of the different constituencies of respondents and their perspectives. In line with our information retention schedule, we delete individual consultation responses within six months of receipt. If you want to know more about how we store your data, please read our [Privacy Notice](#). Comments in our analysis will not be attributed to individuals or particular organisations.

While you are not obliged to provide this information, we would find this information helpful in our analysis of comments.

#### Question 1: Information about you

- Your name
- Your role
- Your institution/ organisation
- Are you responding:
  - on behalf of your provider
  - as an individual
  - as an employer
  - on behalf of a partner college
  - on behalf of a student representative body
  - other (*please specify*)

### The overall approach

The Degree Apprenticeship review is designed to be a developmental review focused on higher education providers' delivery of Degree Apprenticeship programmes including work-based learning. It is aimed at providing information about how Degree Apprenticeships are being developed and providing information that can inform future policies and priorities.

The review will use the QAA [Characteristics Statement for Higher Education in Apprenticeships](#) as its primary reference point. It will identify good practice and make recommendations to secure reliable arrangements for quality and standards. A sector-wide report will share learning and development across all providers in Wales.

The purpose of the review is set out in the introduction to the draft handbook and the aims of the review process are set out in paragraph 7.

#### Question 2: Do you believe the proposed approach can achieve its purpose as a developmental review and support providers' learning and development in their delivery of Degree Apprenticeships?

Yes/ No

*Please provide comments on your answer*

An overview of the review process is explained in paragraphs 9 and 10 of the draft handbook. Subsequent sections of the handbook explain these elements of the review in more detail including the annexes.

**Question 3: Does the draft handbook provide sufficient information to prepare and conduct the reviews?**

Yes/ No

*Please provide comments on your answer*

**Are there any areas that require further information/ clarification?**

Yes/ No

*Please provide comments on your answer*

### **Detail of the review process**

This is a one-off review taking place in academic year 2020-21 and planned to deliver its outcomes to inform a wider evaluation of apprenticeship provision. While the degree of flexibility in timing is limited, QAA is keen to ensure that the programme and timing of activities enables providers and their partners to engage fully in the review process.

**Question 4: Considering the timescales for the overall delivery of the review programme, is the review programme for an individual review (Annex B: Provider review timeline) reasonable?**

Yes/ No

*Please provide comments on your answer*

**Are there any recommendations for adjustments in terms of timing and order of activities?**

Yes/ No

*Please provide comments on your answer*

The sampling of Degree Apprenticeship provision for each lead provider is a required feature of the review. The review method uses programme trails, based on a previous review of Foundation Degrees in Wales, to sample provision. The approach will be to select one trail for each Degree Apprenticeship Framework. Programme trails form the basis for selecting visits to employers. The approach needs to make the outcomes of the review as useful to the sector as possible while being proportionate in terms of the scale of provision and reasonable for providers involved in the review. Further details about how programme trails are proposed to work are explained in paragraphs 51 to 56 of the draft handbook.

**Question 5: Is the proposed approach to use programme trails appropriate?**

Yes/ No

*Please provide comments on your answer*

**Are there any adjustments that would ensure these are used effectively?**

Yes/ No

*Please provide comments on your answer*

It is likely that some, if not all, review visit activity will need to be conducted virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. QAA will work closely with providers, partners and employers to ensure the review operates according to their procedures and public health advice and guidance. Providers will already have had experience conducting their business virtually and learnt valuable lessons about conducting meetings online.

**Question 6: Are there any further considerations to take into account if part or all of the review needs to be conducted virtually?**

Yes/ No

*Please provide comments on your answer*

The review has been designed as a developmental review with outcomes that will assist various stakeholders in taking forward the provision. The review outcomes, recommendations and good practice (see paragraphs 23 and 24), have been designed to support the development of the characteristics of degree apprenticeships.

Lead providers will receive an unpublished report and a published overview report will be produced to share learning from the review programme as a whole (paragraph 25).

**Question 7: Are the review outcomes (recommendations and good practice) appropriately defined?**

Yes/ No

*Please provide comments on your answer*

**Will the reporting process enable effective sharing of practice?**

Yes/ No

*Please provide comments on your answer*

## **Closing questions**

For this review work, QAA is obliged to adhere to HEFCW's Strategic Equality Plan.<sup>3</sup> In addition, QAA will also work in line with its own Equality and Diversity policy<sup>4</sup> which informs its work with employees, customers and partners.

QAA acknowledges the right of any person to use the medium of Welsh and the right of any bilingual reviewer to speak in Welsh. We respect these differences and seek to appoint bilingual review managers and reviewers. The draft handbook includes a statement on our commitment to the use of Welsh language in our reviews (see Annex D).

**Question 8: Are there any unintended consequences that could arise from the proposed review process, for instance, in terms of equality and diversity or the Welsh language?**

Yes/ No

**How could QAA mitigate these implications?**

*Please provide comments on your answer*

**Question 9: Do you have any additional comments on the proposed approach?**

*Please provide comments on your answer*

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<sup>3</sup> [www.hefcw.ac.uk/working\\_with\\_the\\_providers/equality\\_and\\_diversity/strat\\_eq\\_plan.aspx](http://www.hefcw.ac.uk/working_with_the_providers/equality_and_diversity/strat_eq_plan.aspx)

<sup>4</sup> [www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/how-we're-run/qaa-policies](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/how-we're-run/qaa-policies)

*This publication is available in English and Welsh*

October 2020

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