Consultation on a draft handbook for the review of Degree Apprenticeships in Wales

QAA is consulting on a review handbook for the review of Degree Apprenticeships in Wales for the academic year 2020-21. More details on the timing and review programme can be found in Annex A of the handbook.

QAA has been commissioned to undertake the review by the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW). 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.

The Degree Apprenticeship review is designed to be a developmental review focused on higher education providers' delivery of the programme including work-based learning. A key feature of the review is the use of the QAA Characteristics Statement for Higher Education in Apprenticeships. The review will result in an unpublished report for each lead provider which will be shared with HEFCW. There will be a published sector-wide report which will provide an anonymised summary of the provision and findings for all the reviews and make recommendations for the future delivery of apprenticeship programmes.

The consultation is open until **midday on Monday 14 September 2020**. All responses must be submitted via our [online survey](#). As the survey needs to be completed at one time, we have provided the consultation questions in a separate document for your reference.

We will publish the key findings of the consultation when the finalised review handbook is published. We plan to publish the finalised handbook during week commencing 5 October. A detailed timeline can be found in Annex A of the draft handbook.

**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.¹ In addition, QAA will also work in line with its own Equality and Diversity policy² 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

This document is available in English and Welsh.

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www.qaa.ac.uk

¹ www.hefcw.ac.uk/working_with_he_providers/equality_and_diversity/strat_eq_plan.aspx
² www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/how-we're-run/qaa-policies