



Degree Awarding Powers in Wales

Handbook for Applicants

July 2022

Contents

Introduction	1
Legislative context	1
Guidance and criteria	2
QAA's role	3
Main stages of DAPs assessment	4
Your application	5
Welsh language applications	5
Documentary requirements	5
Submitting your application	6
Initial assessment by ACDAP	8
Detailed scrutiny stage	9
The scrutiny team and its role	9
Aims and duration of the detailed scrutiny	9
Preliminary visit by the QAA Officer	10
Planning the visits to your organisation	10
The planning meeting	11
Visits to your organisation by the scrutiny team	11
Other evidence	13
Concerns scheme in Wales	13
Report and recommendations	14
Matters requiring clarification	14
Insufficient evidence that criteria are met	14
The Privy Council's decision	15
Evaluation and follow-up	16
Written representations to the QAA Board	16
Annex 1: Contacts, guidance and further information	17
Annex 2: Roles and protocols	19
Annex 3: Welsh Language	21
Annex 4: Data protection	22

Introduction

This handbook outlines the processes for applying for degree awarding powers in Wales and explains the role played by QAA.

QAA's mission is to safeguard standards and improve the quality of higher education, and the scrutiny of applications for degree awarding powers is one of our most important responsibilities. In undertaking this work, we are mindful of the need to uphold the worldwide reputation of UK higher education and the good standing of UK higher education qualifications.

This handbook has been designed to make the processes involved as clear as possible. Please note that, throughout, 'we' refers to QAA (including the Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers and the QAA Board) and 'you' refers to the provider applying for degree awarding powers.

The handbook covers:

- foundation degree awarding powers (FDAP)
- taught degree awarding powers (TDAP)
- research degree awarding powers (RDAP).

A general outline of what these powers signify, who is suitable to apply for them, and how the application process works, is given in our guide [The Right to Award UK Degrees](#) (2018).

Legislative context

The status of all Welsh universities and degree-awarding bodies is recognised and protected by UK law. The term 'degree' is similarly protected. In order to be able to award a recognised degree in Wales, a higher education provider must be authorised to do so by virtue of a Royal Charter, by Act of Parliament, or by the Privy Council. Older (pre-1992) universities operate under Royal Charters.

In 1992, [Section 76](#) of the *Further and Higher Education Act 1992* (FHEA) empowered the Privy Council to specify institutions as competent to grant awards: in other words, to award their own taught and research degrees.

[Section 259](#) of the *Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Act 2009* amends Section 76 of the FHEA to enable the Privy Council to make Orders specifying institutions in Wales within the further education sector (namely those bodies incorporated under Section 15 or 16 of the FHEA or designated under Section 28 of that Act) as competent to grant foundation degrees.

To understand what these powers mean in practice, see Table 1.

Table 1: UK degrees and the power to award them

Type of degree	Level in UK frameworks for higher education qualifications		Level in European qualifications framework	Powers necessary
	England, Wales and Northern Ireland	Scotland		
Doctoral degree (or doctorate)	Level 8	Level 12	End of third cycle	Research degree awarding powers (RDAP)
Research master's degree	Level 7	Level 11	End of second cycle	
Taught master's degree				
Bachelor's degree with honours	Level 6	Level 10	End of first cycle	Taught degree awarding powers (TDAP)
Ordinary bachelor's degree		Level 9		
Foundation degree	Level 5		Short cycle	Foundation degree awarding powers (FDAP)

Guidance and criteria

Applications must be in accordance with the [Applications for the Grant of Degree Awarding Powers: Guidance and Criteria for Applicants in Wales](#) (2017). The Guidance states the prerequisites for an application and specifies the information and evidence that must be provided. It contains, and explains, the criteria to be satisfied, and the further evidence that will be required.

Foundation degree awarding powers (FDAP)

The criteria for FDAP focus on:

- governance and academic management
- academic standards and quality assurance
- scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff
- the environment supporting the delivery of foundation degree programmes.

An FDAP scrutiny includes visits to work-based learning sites to understand how the provider manages the standards and quality of off-site foundation degree provision.

Taught degree awarding powers (TDAP)

The criteria focus on:

- governance and academic management
- academic standards and quality assurance
- scholarship and the pedagogical effectiveness of academic staff
- the environment supporting the delivery of taught higher education programmes.

A TDAP scrutiny may also include visits to work-based learning sites, where such activity is significant.

Research degree awarding powers (RDAP)

Applicants seeking RDAP following the successful grant of TDAP are expected to provide evidence that they continue to satisfy the criteria governing the grant of TDAP, and that they are exercising appropriate stewardship of those powers.

The additional criteria for RDAP focus on:

- staff capacity and expertise to supervise and teach at doctoral level
- satisfaction of relevant guidance relating to the award of research degrees
- the number of doctoral degree conferments received by their students through existing validation arrangement(s) (more than 30).

QAA's role

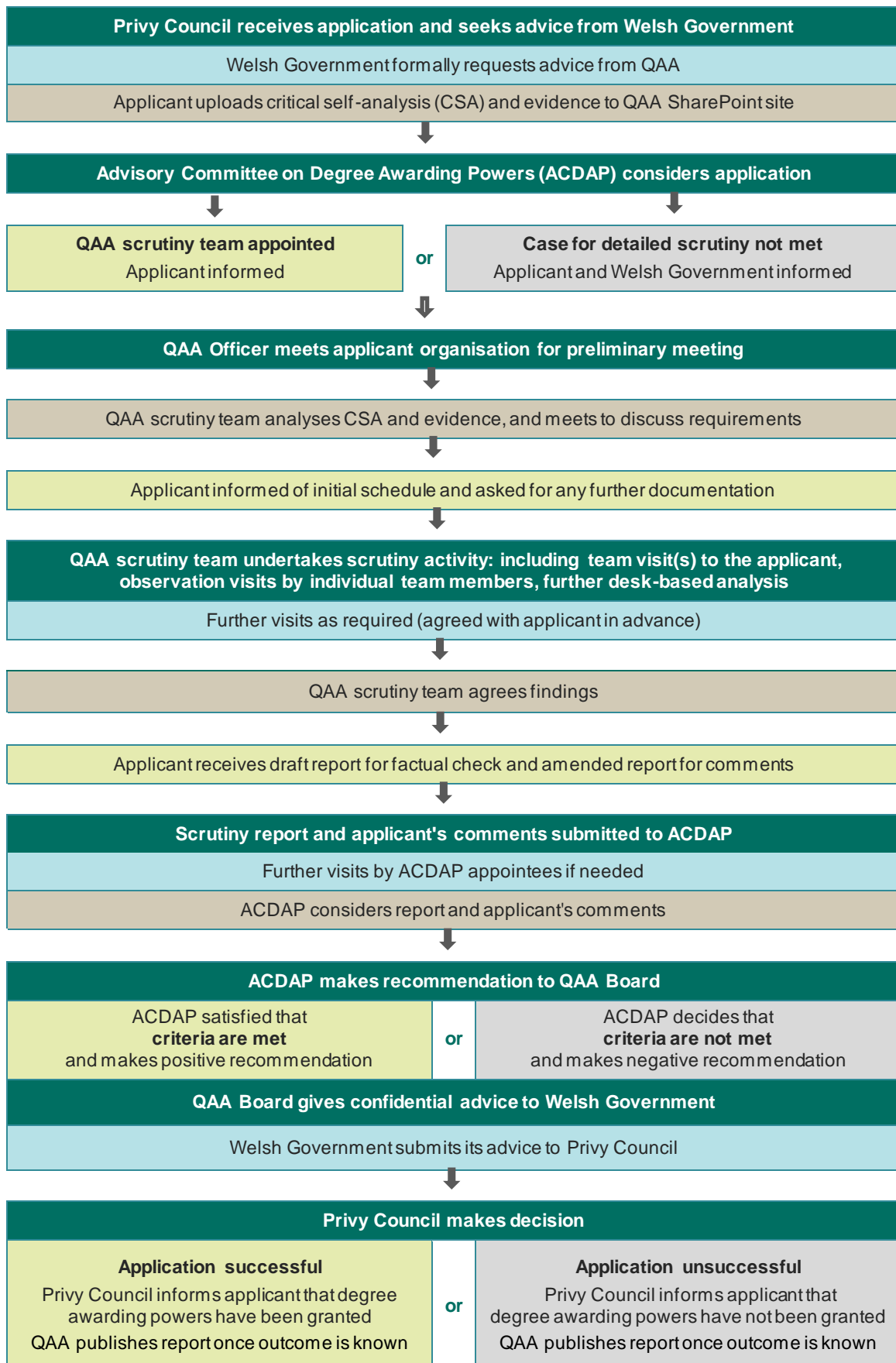
QAA advises the Privy Council, through the Welsh Government, on degree awarding powers applications. This work is the responsibility of the [Advisory Committee on Degree Awarding Powers \(ACDAP\)](#) - an expert committee of the QAA Board which considers each application passed to QAA by the Privy Council and decides whether a case has been made to proceed.

If the application does proceed, ACDAP:

- agrees that a team be appointed to conduct a detailed scrutiny of the evidence submitted by the applicant
- gives close and careful consideration to the scrutiny team's reports, together with the application and supporting evidence, and forms a judgement on them
- makes a recommendation to the QAA Board concerning whether the applicant meets the relevant criteria for the powers it seeks.

Having received ACDAP's recommendation, the QAA Board then determines the nature of the advice to be given to the Privy Council.

Main stages of DAPs assessment



Your application

As a prospective applicant you are advised to approach QAA for informal discussions, and before you make a formal application, to ensure that you have a clear understanding of:

- the relevant Welsh Government Guidance, this Handbook and the evidence requirements
- the importance of a robust evidence base to inform and support your application
- the scrutiny process
- the obligations placed on a body holding UK degree awarding powers.

This initial discussion with QAA should help you to make an informed decision about the likely timing of any future application, should you decide to proceed. Before submitting an application, you should consider carefully what internal resources will be needed during the preparation and subsequent consideration of your application.

Although it is not a requirement, it may be helpful to establish an external advisory group to provide advice and guidance on organisational development, both as part of the application process and subsequent to it. In this context, you should bear in mind the important contribution that can be made by representatives from your degree-awarding partners or other external bodies. You should also be aware that, in the interests of obtaining a full and frank appraisal of your capacity to discharge the significant responsibilities associated with the powers you seek, QAA will contact the head of the degree-awarding body or bodies with whom you are in partnership for comment on the nature and efficacy of the collaborative relationship that has been established with you.

Welsh language applications

We work by the principle that in our work in Wales, we will treat the English and Welsh languages as equal and meet the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011 as it applies to us. For more information see [Annex 3](#).

Documentary requirements

Critical self-analysis

The Guidance states that an institution needs to be a self-critical, cohesive academic community with a proven commitment to quality assurance supported by effective quality and enhancement systems.¹ Consequently, in making an application, the onus is on the applicant to demonstrate this in the form of a **critical self-analysis** (CSA).

It is for you to determine how you wish to structure your CSA, but you should bear in mind the need to make close reference to the criteria in the Welsh Government Guidance (see [Annex 1](#)), and to provide evidence to support your case. The CSA should describe, analyse and comment clearly and openly on your ability to meet the criteria associated with the powers you seek. It should include clear references to the evidence that supports your claims. The evidence should be listed in your application.

An effective CSA is likely to be approximately 60 pages in length, although there is no

¹ *Applications for the Grant of Degree Awarding Powers: Guidance and Criteria for Applicants in Wales* (2017), available at: <https://gov.wales/degree-awarding-powers-guidance-and-criteria-applicants>

penalty for longer or shorter submissions.

The CSA, and the evidence on which it is based, should be uploaded to the QAA SharePoint folder allocated to your application. Further guidance on how to upload documents to the site will follow. In addition, you will need to complete the relevant templates for the powers you are seeking, as detailed in the following subsection.

An applicant considering an application should contact QAA for advice on the information required and any templates available.

To help us plan observation visits by the scrutiny team, you should upload a copy of your academic calendar, setting out the dates and times of board and committee meetings, including governing body and subcommittee meetings, and key academic decision-making meetings. If the calendar does not cover other major activities (for example, validation and review events, away days and assessment boards), please provide details of these too.

Submitting your application

At least five weeks before the ACDAP meeting at which you expect your application to be considered² you should submit the following to the Clerk of the Privy Council:

- letter of application from the Chair of your Governing Body
- a description of your corporate structure and UK Provider Reference Number.

The process then proceeds as shown in the chart on page 4. Your key responsibilities within this process are as follows.

Four weeks before the ACDAP meeting at which you expect your application to be considered, you should send us your application fee and upload the following to your allocated SharePoint site:

- your critical self-analysis (CSA)
- evidence on which you have based your application
- relevant completed templates ([contact QAA](#)).

You will need to arrange for relevant staff members to meet the QAA Officer and scrutiny team at the appointed times, and to supply additional information as requested.

QAA fees

Initial application fees

We charge an application fee of £2,600, which should be paid by cheque at the time of application. If you need us to raise an invoice first, or if you wish to make the payment via BACS, please [contact us](#) to arrange this in advance.

Where ACDAP determines that a fact-finding visit is necessary, prior to the detailed scrutiny, a fee of £5,150 will be charged in advance of the visit.

² For ACDAP meeting dates, see: www.qaa.ac.uk/en/about-us/how-we-re-run/committees/advisory-committee-on-degree-awarding-powers

Detailed scrutiny fees

Once your application has reached the detailed scrutiny stage, fees are payable as follows.

Powers sought	Fee structure
FDAP	£93,000
TDAP	£93,000
T&RDAP	£100,000
RDAP	£62,000

These fees cover the costs of a typical scrutiny incurred up to, and including, the scrutiny team's final report to ACDAP. Where the number of visits by members of the scrutiny team exceeds that of a typical scrutiny, additional fees will be payable at a rate of £780 per individual observation and will be notified to you in good time.

Additional fees

If a visit from an ACDAP sub-panel or another form of follow-up visit is required, a further charge of £2,060 will be made. Should any substantial additional expenditure be incurred as part of a detailed scrutiny, a further charge may be made to cover costs. Any such additional charges will be set individually per institution and notified to you in good time. All additional fees are payable before the end of the process.

Initial assessment by ACDAP

Your application will be considered by ACDAP, which will decide, on the basis of what you have submitted, whether it should proceed to the detailed scrutiny stage.

If ACDAP decides that you have not made a sufficiently strong case to proceed, we shall write to you to explain why.

If ACDAP makes a decision to proceed, we shall write to you to confirm this. The next stage is that we establish a scrutiny team to consider your application and supporting evidence (see next section).

Detailed scrutiny stage

If your application does proceed, ACDAP will ask that a team be appointed to conduct a detailed scrutiny of your application. The team will include senior members of the academic community. We will let you know who they are, asking you to inform us of any conflicts of interest.

We will also identify a QAA Officer to manage and coordinate the detailed scrutiny and act as the primary point of contact to ensure you are clear about what to expect, and what is expected of you. You will also be invited to nominate a facilitator who will coordinate the assessment from the provider's end. Further information about the roles and responsibilities of the QAA Officer and provider facilitator is given in [Annex 2](#).

The scrutiny team and its role

Scrutiny team members have first-hand experience of existing universities or other degree-awarding bodies. They typically also have experience of QAA review work and will normally be required to take part in training before they conduct a DAP assessment. We always ensure that the team has sufficient seniority, knowledge and experience to conduct the detailed scrutiny to the highest professional standard. Where possible, subject to experience, and in the interests of continuity, we aim to include individuals who have previously been part of a QAA review team at your organisation. Teams always include a student reviewer as a full member of the scrutiny team.

Normally, there are:

- four team members for FDAP
- four team members for TDAP (and T&RDAP)
- three team members for RDAP.

Scrutiny team members will read the CSA and the evidence you supply, and familiarise themselves with your organisation. They will consider the detail of your application against the relevant criteria contained within the Handbook. This involves:

- examining documentary evidence
- conducting onsite observations of meetings and events
- meeting students, staff, governors and other stakeholders
- visiting employers where appropriate for FDAP (and TDAP where there is a significant element of work-based learning).

As the scrutiny progresses, they will hold confidential team discussions about their findings. For more on their role see [Annex 2](#).

Aims and duration of the detailed scrutiny

The detailed scrutiny stage is intended to establish:

- whether an applicant meets the criteria for the powers it seeks
- whether an applicant has the ability and sustained capacity to assume the powers it seeks
- that there can be public confidence in any powers granted.

In considering these matters, the scrutiny team will be actively seeking manifestations of a well-founded, cohesive and self-critical academic community as defined in the relevant

Guidance. To that end, you can expect the team to focus on the internal procedures you have established for setting and maintaining appropriate standards, and for assuring and enhancing the quality of your degree programmes. They will also be interested in the relationship between corporate and academic decision-making. The team will wish to know about the qualifications and experience of your staff, and how well they support student development and achievement.

We shall be seeking evidence that your organisation has the capacity, self-criticality and organisational maturity to be granted and consistently exercise the powers you seek. We will need to be satisfied that you understand and 'own' the significant responsibilities and obligations that would be invested in you in the event of degree awarding powers being granted, including your contribution to the collective security of the UK degree brand in a global environment. Evidence of your planning for the assumption of these responsibilities will therefore need to be provided.

The detailed scrutiny is not a developmental activity. The onus is on you to demonstrate that you have reached a sufficient level of institutional maturity to warrant the grant of degree awarding powers and that there can be public confidence, both present and future, in the systems and supporting infrastructure you have in place to assure the quality and standards of degrees to be awarded in your name.

The detailed scrutiny is both intensive and extensive. As it is not mechanistic, its nature and length are likely to vary, depending on factors such as your higher education track record, the robustness of your CSA and supporting evidence, and the powers sought. The process is expected to extend over a full academic year (excluding time spent to produce the report). Taking account of the formal procedures that follow, the process is unlikely to be concluded in less than two years and may take longer depending on the scrutiny findings.

Preliminary visit by the QAA Officer

The QAA Officer will contact you at an early opportunity to arrange a preliminary meeting. This would normally take place within eight weeks of ACDAP's decision to proceed and provides an opportunity for the QAA Officer to establish contact with relevant and key personnel, to discuss the scrutiny process in more detail, including operational considerations, and to answer any questions.

Typically, the preliminary meeting will enable you to find out more about the detailed scrutiny process, including:

- its anticipated duration
- the evidence you will need to provide
- meetings and events likely to be of interest
- arrangements for site visits in relation to work-based learning
- your policy on the safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults (if individuals within these categories are likely to be present at locations visited by the scrutiny team) and any implications
- your organisation's point of contact for the scrutiny
- how you can provide feedback later.

Planning the visits to your organisation

The scrutiny team will hold a meeting to plan its visit, after which the QAA Officer will send you a schedule of proposed meetings and engagements (to be updated as the scrutiny progresses), enabling you to plan the scrutiny team's visit(s). He/she will discuss any particular requirements or practicalities with the nominated facilitator. Should there be any

changes to the timing or date of any engagements to which you have initially agreed, you should let the QAA Officer know as soon as possible.

The planning meeting

Prior to the detailed scrutiny, team members are expected to read the critical self-analysis (CSA) and evidence provided by the applicant. The QAA Officer and the scrutiny team will hold a planning meeting when the team will:

- review and consider the application and supporting information provided
- share members' understanding of the organisational context
- consider members' responses to the documentation provided
- decide how best to secure the extra evidence needed
- agree a schedule of engagements, including visits to sites of work-based learning, where appropriate, to be updated as the detailed scrutiny progresses
- agree a programme of meetings for the initial team visit over one or two days
- agree the indicative agenda to be followed at meetings held during the initial visit
- agree who will lead on particular aspects of the scrutiny and on the corresponding sections of the final report to ACDAP
- consider measures that might need to be taken in respect of safeguarding children and vulnerable adults in the case of site visits (for example, Disclosure and Barring Service checks).

Members will be briefed about recent developments in relation to degree awarding powers; the provider context; and relevant reference material, templates and communication mechanisms that have been developed to enable them to carry out their roles with consistency and confidence.

Visits to your organisation by the scrutiny team

Detailed scrutiny typically involves a series of visits to your organisation, and other learning environments that you use, such as work-based settings. These may be undertaken by the scrutiny team as a whole or by individual members of it. All visits have a clear and identified purpose as advised by the QAA Officer. Visits are usually planned and agreed with you well in advance.

Team members follow a schedule of planned engagements as agreed with you. These may involve the team visiting as a whole or team members visiting individually. Anything that is likely to be useful for the final report will be recorded in writing. Team members' reports on particular engagements will be shared with other members of the team (and, if relevant, with ACDAP and the QAA Board) but are otherwise kept confidential.

In the interests of maintaining an effective and constructive dialogue, the QAA Officer will liaise, on a regular basis, with the facilitator to discuss progress and identify any matters where further evidence is required. Typically, such meetings or contact would follow the scrutiny team's progress review meetings/discussions.

The QAA Officer takes notes of meetings and the planning of scrutiny activities, and the preparation of the team's final report.

The first team visit (one to two days) provides an opportunity for the team to meet a representative cross-section of your organisation to place the application in context. To help them evaluate your CSA and supporting evidence, team members are likely to want to meet, and hold structured discussions with, all or some of the following:

- your head or principal
- governing body members
- members of the senior management team
- academic leaders
- teaching staff and research supervisors
- administrative staff
- students and alumni
- external examiners
- representatives from your degree-awarding body/bodies (past and present)
- employers and other external stakeholders.

Where there is a need to visit sites of work-based learning it is your responsibility to brief the employers/providers on what to expect.

The scrutiny team is also likely to request to observe meetings and other activities that they have identified as significant, including:

- governing body meetings
- internal committee meetings
- validation/review events
- examination boards
- any other activities pertinent to the application.

Before a scrutiny team member attends a formal committee meeting or similar, you may wish to provide them with a short preparatory briefing. Team members will not participate in meetings that they observe, but they will take notes.

The team is also likely to ask to see minutes, agendas and papers relating to internal meetings, and any other activities having a bearing on the application, including those of:

- the governing body and its subcommittees
- assessment boards
- validation/review panels.

Scrutiny team members may request additional documentation from you during this and any subsequent visits. Any such documentation should be uploaded to the QAA SharePoint folder that has been allocated to you.

Team members do not provide feedback to you, and you are asked to ensure that all parties involved are aware of this.

The scrutiny team may request additional meetings as the process evolves, and, in some cases, further visits may be necessary. These will be arranged between the QAA Officer and the provider facilitator.

The scrutiny team convenes at key stages in the scrutiny process (for example, after one term or semester), to review progress, establish where gaps in their knowledge remain, and agree next steps. Progress reports of these meetings are submitted to ACDAP.

At the end of the detailed scrutiny, the scrutiny team may wish to arrange a final visit for clarification purposes.

Reports on meetings and engagements during the scrutiny visits

After each organisational engagement, team members are required to complete a report

detailing their findings about the extent to which the relevant criteria are met. The report is compiled using a template and is uploaded electronically to the dedicated SharePoint site within five working days of a visit. Comments made by individuals in discussion sessions are not attributed. These reports identify any outstanding issues, inform the planning of further engagements and form a key resource in the preparation of the team's final report. They are confidential between the scrutiny team and QAA, and are not made available to any other party.

The outcomes of any informal meetings and conversations with the applicant's stakeholders must be formally recorded if the information is subsequently to be used as evidence. Team members should exercise discretion and judgement in deciding whether to use information gathered on an informal basis.

Scrutiny teams must balance the value of workplace evidence against the time available and the need to minimise inconvenience to employers.

Other evidence

There may be others, including teaching staff, students or other interested parties, who wish to bring information about you and your provision to our attention. Any comments received will be considered as long as the information is relevant and submitted before the scrutiny has ended. Information should be submitted in writing by filling in our [enquiries form](#) or by post using the QAA address given in [Annex 1](#). Relevant information will be forwarded to the scrutiny team for consideration. You should be ready to provide further details on request.

To ensure teaching staff and students are aware of this aspect of the process, and the benefits of raising any issues in advance, we will send you a standard email which you should circulate to staff and students once the detailed scrutiny stage has been approved.

Concerns scheme in Wales

Through our Concerns Scheme we investigate any concerns about serious systemic or procedural problems in relation to academic standards and quality at any UK higher education provider. These may be submitted by students, staff or any other interested party. Any such investigation relating to your organisation will be taken into account during the detailed scrutiny. Should you be successful in obtaining the powers you seek, any future concerns raised about your institution will also be subject to the Concerns investigation process (Wales).³

³ www.qaa.ac.uk/en/reviewing-higher-education/how-to-make-a-complaint

Report and recommendations

The detailed scrutiny culminates in a formal **report** to ACDAP, in which the scrutiny team:

- provides clear, evidence-based expert analysis on how your organisation satisfies, or falls short of, the criteria
- explains any critical issues
- indicates areas where further development may be required to secure a successful outcome of your application.

We will send you the draft report at least eight weeks before the ACDAP meeting at which it is to be considered. This gives you the opportunity to inform us of any factual inaccuracies. You will later receive a copy of the finalised report and be invited to submit further written comments for consideration alongside it, should you so wish.

The report, ACDAP's subsequent discussion of it, and your comments (if any), will form the basis of ACDAP's **recommendation** on the nature of the confidential advice to be given to the Welsh Government, which will be presented to the next QAA Board meeting. We will notify you if ACDAP is **not** in a position to make a recommendation (see section below on insufficient evidence).

On the basis of ACDAP's recommendations and the finalised report, the QAA Board will determine the nature of its **confidential advice** to the Welsh Government, which is the final stage of our involvement in the process. We will write to let you know when this has happened. The Welsh Government will use our advice to inform its own subsequent advice to the Privy Council.

Matters requiring clarification

If, on the basis of the report, ACDAP identifies matters for further consideration or clarification, it may ask the scrutiny team (or a subset of it) to undertake further activity to address these issues, or may convene a sub-panel of its members (supplemented, if appropriate, by additional external expertise) to undertake a short and focused visit to your organisation. Most of these visits will be a one-day duration and will normally involve meetings with governors, senior managers, teaching and other staff, students and relevant external interest groups. The visit will result in a further, brief report to ACDAP, to inform its recommendation.

Insufficient evidence that criteria are met

Where ACDAP considers there is insufficient evidence that you satisfy the criteria in the relevant Guidance, it may recommend that your application be rejected.

Alternatively, ACDAP may recommend that your application be placed **in abeyance**, giving you time to take such developmental action as will enable the scrutiny to be resumed at a later date. If this is the case, you will be informed.

ACDAP will determine the period of abeyance, which is no longer than one year, and will inform you of those areas that need to be addressed.

If your application is placed in abeyance but further evidence is not presented by the end of the agreed period, your application will be considered to have lapsed. ACDAP will notify the QAA Board that you have not satisfied the criteria for the powers you seek.

The Privy Council's decision

Having received advice from the Welsh Government, the Privy Council makes the final decision on the outcome of your application. If you are **successful** in obtaining the degree awarding powers that you have sought, the **Privy Council** will formally notify you of this. You should advise us straight away so that we can brief you on requirements pertaining to your new status as a degree awarding body (see next section).

If you are **unsuccessful**, the **Privy Council** will notify you of this.

We will publish the scrutiny team's final report on our website once the minister has notified us of either outcome.

Evaluation and follow-up

You will be invited to provide written feedback at two stages: at an interim point and at the end of the process.

We will send you a feedback form at an interim stage prior to a scheduled scrutiny progress meeting with the QAA Officer.

Please return it within two weeks of receipt. Any issues arising can then be discussed at the scheduled progress meeting.

At the end of the process, when we have considered your application and informed you that we have submitted our advice to the minister, you, the QAA Officer and the scrutiny team will be asked to evaluate the process. The outcomes will be used internally to review and improve the scrutiny process.

Written representations to the QAA Board

If ACDAP recommends that your application should be rejected, we will inform you of this and the reasons for it before the Board considers ACDAP's recommendation. This gives you the opportunity to make written representations directly to the Board. The procedure for this is explained on our website.

Annex 1: Contacts, guidance and further information

For pre-application enquiries and general information, please contact the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA): www.qaa.ac.uk/contact-us

For applications and further enquiries, please email the Welsh Government:
HEPolicy@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Welsh Government Guidance and Criteria

Applications for the Grant of Degree Awarding Powers: Guidance and Criteria for Applicants in Wales (2017), available at: <https://gov.wales/degree-awarding-powers-guidance-and-criteria-applicants>

Contacts

Welsh Government

You should send one electronic copy of your application (critical self-analysis and supporting evidence - see page 5) to your contact at:

The Higher Education Division
Skills, Higher Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate
Welsh Government
Cathays Park
Cardiff
CF10 3NQ

Email: HEPolicy@wales.gsi.gov.uk

Web: <https://gov.wales>

Privy Council

The Privy Council Office
Room G/04
1 Horse Guards Road
London
SW1A 2HQ

Telephone: 020 7271 3292

Email: enquiries@pco.gov.uk

QAA

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education
Southgate House
Southgate Street
Gloucester
GL1 1UB

Telephone: 01452 557000

Email: please complete our [enquiries form](#).

Further information

For further information, templates and publications relating to degree awarding powers, please contact QAA.

Annex 2: Roles and protocols

The role of the QAA Officer

The QAA Officer will:

- pay a preliminary visit to the applicant to ensure they know what to expect
- brief the scrutiny team about requirements, protocols, obligations and responsibilities
- agree the schedule of engagements with the applicant
- coordinate the work of the scrutiny team
- discuss with the applicant any requests for additional information made by the scrutiny team
- make notes of meetings that the team conduct with the provider, its students and stakeholders
- keep the provider advised on progress with the scrutiny
- provide progress reports to ACDAP
- oversee the production of the scrutiny team's final report to ACDAP.

The Welsh language may be used for communication. For further details please see [Annex 3](#).

Provider Facilitator

The provider is invited to appoint a facilitator to support the scrutiny process. The role of the facilitator is intended to improve the flow of information between the team and the provider.

It is envisaged that the facilitator will be a member of the provider's staff.

The role of the facilitator is to:

- act as the primary contact for the QAA Officer during preparations for the DAP scrutiny, including any onsite visits
- act as the team's primary contact during any onsite visits
- provide advice and guidance to the team on the provider submission and any supporting documentation
- provide advice and guidance to the team on the provider's structures, policies, priorities and procedures
- keep an updated list of evidence to be presented to the team throughout the scrutiny, to be confirmed by the QAA Officer
- ensure that the provider has a good understanding of the matters raised by the team, thus contributing to the effectiveness of the scrutiny
- meet the team at the team's request during onsite visits, in order to provide further guidance on sources of information and clarification of matters relating to the scrutiny.

The facilitator will not be present for the team's private meetings. However, the facilitator will have the opportunity for regular meetings so that both the team and the provider can seek further clarification outside of the formal meetings. This is intended to improve communication between the provider and the team during the onsite visits and enable providers to gain a better understanding of the areas being investigated.

The facilitator is permitted to observe any of the other meetings that the team has apart from those with students. Where the facilitator is observing, they should not participate in discussion unless invited to do so by the team.

Scrutiny team protocols

All communications (written or oral) connected with a scrutiny are treated as confidential to the team and QAA. Written communications are made through QAA's SharePoint site.

Protocols

Scrutiny team members are expected to:

- be professional at all times during visits and meetings
- respect organisational sensitivities and practices
- base the views they form on clear and demonstrable evidence
- strictly observe the confidentiality of the scrutiny process.

Team members may not:

- engage in informal discussions that might compromise the validity and independence of subsequent judgements
- participate in formal meetings that they observe (though they may take notes)
- accept gifts or invitations to formal events (such as dinners or award ceremonies)
- engage in consultancy with a provider while engaged in scrutinising their application, nor for up to one year after termination of that contract.

Annex 3: Welsh Language

QAA is committed to treating the Welsh and English languages equally in our work in Wales. All documentation relating to the investigation scheme is produced in both languages, as are all published investigation reports.

For reviews and investigations of providers in Wales, we seek to recruit bilingual reviewers and QAA Officers to act as the Investigation Lead. Our advertising and recruitment process actively supports this objective. In any review or investigation of higher education providers in Wales, we acknowledge the right of any person to use the medium of Welsh and the right of any bilingual reviewer to speak in Welsh. We will normally seek to agree the use of the translation facilities existing within a provider and will provide our own interpretation or translation facilities where that is not possible.

We ensure that in the initial planning stages of our reviews, the QAA Officer identifies the language preferences expressed by the provider and individual participants for the conduct of DAP scrutiny, determining what elements of the process are to be conducted in Welsh, and making arrangements for translation (from Welsh to English) where appropriate.

Providers may submit their documentation in either, or both, languages at their discretion.

Following agreement about which elements of the investigation will be conducted bilingually, we will make arrangements for, and meet the costs of, providing simultaneous translation of those review proceedings that we have agreed to conduct bilingually.

We acknowledge that the extent to which Welsh and English are routinely used varies between providers and workplaces. We respect these differences and seek to appoint bilingual scrutiny teams where appropriate, to facilitate the smooth operation of the review process in providers where Welsh is extensively used.

Annex 4: Data protection

QAA complies with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) (EU) 2016/679, the *Data Protection Act 2018*, and any other applicable data protection legislation in relation to personal data. QAA only processes personal data for the purposes of conducting its review activities and, in this case, ensuring data shall only be accessible to those who require access to carry the requirements of the Unsatisfactory Quality and Standards Investigations Process.

QAA is committed to ensuring and maintaining the security and confidentiality of personal and/or special category data, and all members of staff are responsible for handling data in accordance with QAA's Data Protection Policy so that personal and special category information is processed compliantly. All QAA staff and reviewers undergo GDPR training on an annual basis. How QAA gathers and processes personal information, the individual's rights and QAA's obligations are set out in QAA's [Privacy Notice](#). There is a Data Protection Incident Reporting Policy and procedure for reporting, assessing and managing incidents.

QAA stores personal data and non-personal data securely and ensures the data is only accessible to those who require access to it to carry out the DAP scrutiny process. No data or information extracted from it will be passed to any party unless agreed in writing by both parties. All data or all copies or extracts made from it will either be returned by QAA or destroyed in line with QAA's records retention policy.

QAA is ISO27001 certified for information security management.

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