Handbook for the review of Degree Apprenticeships in Wales

Draft for Consultation

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Contents

Introduction

1   This handbook explains the QAA review process for the review of Degree Apprenticeships in Wales in 2020-21. The review is concerned with Degree Apprenticeships funded through the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) by the Welsh Government. Funding for Degree Apprenticeships has been made available in three priority areas: Digital, Engineering and Advanced Manufacturing. This funding was made available on a pilot basis from 2018-19. Further details about these Degree Apprenticeships can be found on the HEFCW website.[1]

2   The Degree Apprenticeship review is designed to be a developmental review focused on higher education providers' delivery of the programme including work-based learning. The outcome of this review is intended to inform future policy and priorities, and will complement the Welsh Government's evaluation of the Degree Apprenticeships pilot scheme that will assess the intended benefits and outcomes of these programmes for employers and individuals.

3   The QAA review is aimed at providing information about how Degree Apprenticeships are being developed. While there are three priority areas for funding, the review is concerned with the development of Degree Apprenticeship provision in Wales and is not a subject-based review. As this is a relatively new qualification, the review will use the QAA Characteristics Statement for Higher Education in Apprenticeships as its primary reference point to inform sector practice.[2] It aims to offer providers information about the effectiveness of the arrangements to quality assure and enhance their provision, 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.

4   This review handbook covers the context and aims of the review, the key areas under review, detail of the review process and timelines. The review has been designed as a developmental review with outcomes that will assist various stakeholders in taking forward the provision. For the purposes of this handbook, the term 'review' is used as shorthand for 'developmental review'. The process will result in a review report for each funded provider which will be shared with HEFCW. As these are reviews of the pilot programme, it is not intended to publish provider reports, but to use them as valuable tools to inform internal development of Degree Apprenticeship provision. The published sector-wide report will provide an anonymised summary of the provision and findings of the reviews and make recommendations for the future delivery of the programmes.

5   The reviews will take place during the autumn and spring terms in 2020-21. A timeline for the review programme can be found at Annex A.

Reviews during COVID-19 (coronavirus)

6   At the timing of preparing this handbook, lockdown measures have been imposed by the UK Government and the governments of the devolved nations in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the providers are developing plans for the new academic year, QAA recognises that there is uncertainty over when and how these measures will be eased and whether new restrictions may need to be imposed if there are new spikes in infection. QAA recognises that restrictions may be more localised and vary between nations, and the method that QAA delivers the review will need to be flexible. QAA will work with providers, partners and employers to ensure review teams operate according to the procedures

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[1] www.hefcw.ac.uk/policy_areas/skills_and_employability/apprenticeships.aspx
[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/quality-code/characteristics-statement-apprenticeships.pdf

implemented by them and closely monitor official public health advice.[3] There is the potential for undertaking some, and possibly all, review activity virtually. If this is the case, QAA will work with those involved to ensure the procedures for engagement are clear and that all parties are confident that the review process delivers robust results.

Aims of the review process

7   The Degree Apprenticeship review is a developmental process designed to assist stakeholders in the development of Degree Apprenticeship provision in Wales. In particular, the review aims to:

- inform the development of Degree Apprenticeship provision through a review report of the provider's provision
- share practice with partners and employers, and inform future apprenticeship provision
- promote sharing of sector good practice, learning and areas for development through an overview report
- enhance the value of the student learning experience and the value of apprenticeships for employers
- inform the future development of Degree Apprenticeship provision in Wales.

Scope of the review

8   The review will:

- be undertaken for each lead Degree Apprenticeship provider in Wales in receipt of funding from HEFCW for the priority subject areas
- for each lead provider, include further education colleges where they work as delivery partners and consider the effectiveness of the collaboration and scope for development of pathways
- use programme trails to sample provision and confirm the effectiveness of the provider's approach, and to identify practice that makes a particularly valuable contribution to the character of the qualification; one programme trail will be selected from each Degree Apprenticeship framework, as relevant, for each provider review
- include visits to employers providing apprenticeships; where possible, visits will be made to employers in selected programme trails and these will be used to test how well institutional processes work and how effective they are in practice at a local level and across the institution as a whole
- take account of the student voice and student experience through engagement with students and apprentices
- consider how Welsh language has been considered in the delivery of apprenticeship programmes
- report on the contribution of Degree Apprenticeships to supporting access, equality and equity of opportunity.

Overview of the review process

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[3] For latest information on COVID-19 see Public Health Wales
https://phw.nhs.wales/topics/latest-information-on-novel-coronavirus-covid-19

9   The review method has been designed in accordance with the principles common to other QAA review methods in Wales. It is an evidence-based process carried out through peer review. Students are central to the purpose and process of review and are involved in several ways (paragraphs 31-38). Additionally, owing to the particular characteristics of Degree Apprenticeships, visits will be made to the workplace to meet with employers and apprentices.

10   The key elements of the review process are as follows:

- A Facilitator appointed by the lead provider who will have day-to-day responsibility for the arrangements for the review and ensuring that the evidence is made available to the team.

- A Lead Student Representative (LSR) appointed by the student body who helps to encourage the involvement of students in the review and keep them informed of progress, and acts as the contact between the review team and students.

- The preparation of a self-evaluation document (SED) by the lead provider, in collaboration with partners as appropriate (paragraphs 26-30). It forms the provider's assessment of its own performance and the starting point for the review and the review teams' analysis and preparation for the review.

- The opportunity for a student submission by the student representative body to report on the student experience of those studying Degree Apprenticeship programmes. This is used alongside the SED by the review team and helps to inform the focus of the review from the perspective of the student experience.

- A programme trail for the lead provider's provision in each Degree Apprenticeship framework. These form the basis of engagements with apprentices and employers in the workplace.

- A briefing from QAA for staff from lead providers and colleges, employers and LSRs, to explain the nature and practicalities of the review process.

- A review team of two reviewers supported by a QAA Officer. Reviewers will be recruited on the basis of their knowledge and experience of higher apprenticeships and work-based learning. Reviewers will be recruited from across the nations of the UK to bring a wider perspective to the review as a developmental exercise.

- Review visits with the lead provider, partner colleges, and, owing to the particular characteristics of Degree Apprenticeships, apprentices and employers in the workplace. Review visits may be physical visits, online meetings, teleconferencing or mixture of these depending on practicalities of arranging visits and meetings, and guidance and legislation in place for keeping safe from COVID-19 at the time of the engagement. QAA appreciates that the method for conducting visits, as well as individual meetings, needs to be flexible in order to accommodate the availability of participants and therefore may use a mixture of types of engagement in order for the review to be conducted as efficiently as possible.

- The length and mode of interaction of the review visit will be proportionate to the size and complexity of the provision. It will be determined by the number and size of programmes, the employer profile and numbers of apprentices employed. To inform this selection, lead providers will be asked to submit data on their provision as part of their submission. Dependent on data submitted, the total length of the review will vary from one to two days. Where providers are in the early stages in the development and delivery of their provision, the engagements will be conducted as desk-based reviews.

- A draft report will be sent to the lead provider for comments on factual accuracy. It will contain recommendations for the lead provider about how they may improve the

management of their Degree Apprenticeship provision and identify good practice where aspects of the management of the provision make a particularly positive contribution to the student experience.

- The final report will not be published but it will be shared with HEFCW and the lead provider. There is an expectation that lead providers will share the report with their partners.

- An overview report drawing upon the reports of the individual reviews will be published by HEFCW and used to inform the Welsh Government evaluation.

External reference points

11   The primary reference point to be used in this review is the QAA Characteristics Statement for Higher Education in Apprenticeships.[4] The Characteristics Statement describes the distinctive features of the qualifications in terms of their purpose, general characteristics and generic outcomes. Furthermore, the Characteristics Statement complements and contextualises the information within *The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies* (FHEQ), providing more detail about the distinctive features of these qualifications at particular levels and, as such, should be read in conjunction with these Frameworks.

12   This review in Wales is concerned with Degree Apprenticeships located at Level 6 of the FHEQ, the equivalent of bachelor's degrees.

Welsh medium provision

13   The review will consider how Welsh language has been considered in the delivery of Degree Apprenticeship programmes and how it meets the needs of apprentices and employers where it is appropriate and possible to do so for their specialism.

14   Degree Apprenticeships provide opportunities to use the Welsh language and, in line with the Welsh Language Standards, the Welsh language must be treated no less favourably than the English. The review will consider the arrangements in place for delivery and support of apprentices through the medium of Welsh, and the ability of the lead provider and partners to meet the Welsh language needs of employers and apprentices. The reviews will also consider how Welsh language apprentices can maintain and develop their Welsh language in the workplace.

Overview of the key areas under review

15   The review will focus on the key areas in the design, structure and delivery of Degree Apprenticeships set out in the Characteristics Statement for Higher Education in Apprenticeships.[5] It will consider how the characteristics and distinctive features of Degree Apprenticeships are supported through these five key areas. Considerations for each key area are summarised below for the benefit of providers and reviewers, and include the particular characteristics of delivering Degree Apprenticeships in Wales. These are provided as guidance and are not intended to be a prescriptive or definitive summary of the considerations under review for each key area.

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[4] www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/supporting-resources
[5] Further guidance in relation to the standards and quality of apprenticeships that involve higher education has been published by QAA. The guidance document Quality Assuring Higher Education Apprenticeships - Current Approaches (2nd edition, 2018) can be found at www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code/supporting-resources

Key area one: Design and development of programmes

16   The review team will evaluate whether, and to what extent, programmes are designed to deliver the defining characteristics and distinctive features of a higher education apprenticeship. Considerations for the evaluation of this key area will include:

- how the design of programmes has met the requirements of the relevant Apprenticeship Standard or Apprenticeship Framework and other requirements where necessary, for instance, professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs)
- how the design of programmes has been informed by reference points for the quality assessment of programmes, including the requirements of the Quality Code and Qualifications Frameworks as well as other guidance including Subject Benchmark Statements and the Characteristics Statements
- alignment with reference points specific to providers in Wales such as the Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales and Welsh language requirements
- the design and content of curricula, including the integration of on-the-job and off-the-job learning, subject knowledge and professional/occupational knowledge, skills and behaviours
- the involvement of employers and professional and sector bodies so programmes meet their specific workforce development needs, working arrangements and practices
- how the design of programmes enables apprentices to develop their role and progress in their work, including progression routes and continuing professional development opportunities
- the use of formal agreements or commitment statements between employers, providers and students to ensure the high-quality delivery of the programme and distinctive features of the qualification
- how recruitment and admission arrangements enable the process to be employer driven while satisfying the provider's entry requirements.

Key area two: Modes of delivery

17   Degree Apprenticeships can involve a diverse range of modes of delivery. This will depend on a wide range of factors such as the pedagogic approach, employer and apprentice requirements, the individual apprenticeship, PSRB and fitness to practise requirements. Considerations for the evaluation of this key area will include:

- how the delivery of the programme aligns the off-the-job learning with the day-to-day work activities in order to maximise apprentices' learning opportunities
- how employers are involved in decisions about the mode of delivery and how and where the apprentice will undertake their learning, including formal agreements between employers and the provider and respective responsibilities for standards
- the effectiveness of the arrangements between employers and the providers to plan and coordinate work-integrated learning
- how delivery practices support inclusion and diversity in the workplace
- arrangements for delivery in Welsh language as far as specialism/skills permit
- the arrangements and responsibilities for the assurance of the quality and standards of all aspects of learning, whatever the mode and location of that learning.

Key area three: Learning and teaching

18   A range of diverse and innovative methods of learning and teaching will be delivered in order to support the diverse needs of learners and their individual workplace situations. Considerations for the evaluation of this key area will include:

- how the range of learning and teaching methods for the programme are appropriate to the diversity of learners' needs and individual workplace situations
- where appropriate, the involvement of the employer in designing and/or agreeing details on assessment
- whether there is clear agreement of responsibilities of all parties involved in learning, teaching and enabling student achievement
- whether appropriate time is set aside to enable quality work-based learning
- how arrangements for self-directed learning and reflection are supported through mechanisms such as learning agreements and personal learning and development plans
- how learning contracts or equivalent are used to support the integration of on and off-the-job learning, as well as the delivery of work-based learning and assessment
- students' ability to access Welsh medium provision
- how providers manage, record and monitor learners' progress and achievement across all forms and locations of delivery, including any adjustments to delivery.

Key area four: Supporting student achievement

19   Apprentices will need a range of support mechanisms throughout their journey - from admissions and transition into the workplace and programme to completion of the award. Consideration therefore will need to be given to the support needs of apprentices from both their employers and higher education providers. A particular characteristic of the Degree Apprenticeship is the coaching and mentoring role(s) in the workplace which enables the apprentice to gain insight into workplace, encourages learning and identifies opportunities for professional and career development. Considerations for the evaluation of this key area will include:

- induction arrangements for all aspects of the apprenticeship so that apprentices are appropriately prepared
- how access to student support services is achieved to meet the needs of apprentices, including support through the medium of Welsh where appropriate
- arrangements to support inclusion and diversity in the workplace and ensure no unnecessary barriers to learning or assessment
- support and guidance provided to facilitate opportunities for flexible career progression and further employment
- how providers and employers support staff who teach and enable learning to be appropriately qualified, supported and developed
- support and development processes in place for staff involved in apprentice training, such as mentors and coaches, so they are appropriately experienced to undertake their responsibilities
- how the effectiveness of the support processes is monitored and assessed to ensure apprentices achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.

Key area five: Assessment

20   Assessment strategies will reflect the type of learning and learners, and the nature of each element of the apprenticeship learning programme. A variety of methods of assessment will be required and this may include a variety of formal and informal, and formative and summative techniques. An employer might be involved in the design and/or

in agreeing details on assessment and confirming achievement of professional competence by the apprentice. Considerations for the evaluation of this key area will include:

- arrangements for the assessment of recognition of prior experiential and/or certificated learning to establish relevant entry points and/or exemption
- how the design of the assessment strategy enables the apprentice to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and behaviours required by the relevant degree specification
- arrangements to ensure Welsh language is treated no less favourably than the English language in relation to assessment procedures[6]
- how methods of assessment incorporate opportunities for the apprentice to use their workplace and authentic work experiences to meet the assessment requirements
- how assessment practices support inclusion and diversity in the workplace
- the effectiveness of the arrangements in place to support assessment in the workplace, including development and training for employers involved in the assessment process
- how progress and achievement is regularly recorded and monitored for reporting purposes.

Review outcomes

21   The review team will use programme trails to evaluate the lead provider's delivery of Degree Apprenticeship programmes against the Characteristics Statement for Higher Education in Apprenticeships. The review team will comment on the extent to which the lead provider assures the design and delivery of its Degree Apprenticeships to reflect the characteristics of the award, identifying areas of good practice and recommendations for improvement.

22   As a developmental review, review teams are not making an overall judgement on the standards and/or quality of the provider's provision. However, should the review team find matters of concern which have potential to present serious risk(s) to the provider's management of standards or quality, then the review team will refer the matter to HEFCW who could then decide whether to investigate the matter through the Unsatisfactory Quality Procedure.

23   For this developmental review, **good practice** is defined as a practice which, in the context of the provider, makes a particularly positive or innovative contribution to supporting the characteristics/distinctive features of the Degree Apprenticeship provision. As a result, it is worthy of wider dissemination. The identification of good practice is intended to enable the lead provider to build upon its strengths and enhance delivery of its provision, as well as contributing to the further development of Degree Apprenticeships in Wales.

24   **Recommendations** are considerations for action and will be made where the review team considers that the lead provider needs to change a practice, policy or a process in order to ensure or strengthen the delivery of the characteristics/distinctive features of its Degree Apprenticeship provision. While recommendations will not be graded, the review team will normally indicate the urgency with which the provider should address the matter.

25   The review team's findings will be summarised in an unpublished written report for the lead provider and a published overview report will contain any learning from the review

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[6] The Guidelines on Effective Practice in Examining and Assessing in Welsh within Wales
www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/about-us/guidelines-for-higher-education-providers-on-effective-practice-in-examining-and-assessing-in-welsh-within-wales.pdf

programme as a whole. Specific good practice and recommendations will not be attributed to individual providers.

Features of the review process

Self-evaluation document

26   *Please note, the self-evaluation document (SED) should be no more than 8,000 words and, as an indication, include no more than 40 supporting pieces of evidence.* The SED and evidence base may be much shorter where the provision is under development, small scale and/or has few sites of delivery.

27   The self-evaluation document (SED) is the lead provider's assessment of its Degree Apprenticeship provision. Data supplied with the SED, such as contextual information about the provider, informs the decision about the selection of programme trails and informs the plans and arrangements for the review visit. The SED is the starting point for the reviewers' understanding of how the lead provider manages its provision. It should consist, as far as possible, of a portfolio of existing documents accompanied by an evaluative commentary against the key areas of focus. It should provide an evaluation of the provider's approach   to managing Degree Apprenticeships as a portfolio of provision, and provide specific and contextual examples of its approach (while this will include examples for the proposed programme trails, this should not be to the exclusion of examples from other programmes).

28   The SED should signpost and contextualise the evidence contained in the documents for the reviewers. The principal requirements for an SED are that it is evaluative, not just descriptive, and it provides sufficient documentary evidence to support its claims. It should act as a guide for the reviewers to the relevant sections in the existing evidence. The task of the reviewers is to test and verify the claims made against the evidence cited.

29   Each review will focus on the lead provider's management of its Degree Apprenticeship programmes and the role of further education colleges, training providers and other partners if relevant, and employers. The SED should cover the entirety of the provision at all sites of delivery, including varying modes of attendance and the contributions of different employers. The SED should be submitted to QAA no later than **six weeks** before the review visit.

30   The SED should comprise the following:

- An introductory short statement on the lead provider's provision, its partnership arrangements and responsibilities.

- The context in which the Degree Apprenticeship programmes have been developed, including reasons for developing the particular provision and the involvement of employers and employer-related organisations.
- Data and commentary on recruitment, retention and completion rates, Welsh language medium apprentices, equality, diversity and inclusion, employee status of apprentices, employer profile, numbers of apprentices per employer. The purpose of the data will be to help understand the characteristics of the student body and support needs and to contextualise the programme trails and selection of employer visits.

- The management structures and personnel involved, including the organisational and quality frameworks within which the Degree Apprenticeship provision operates.

- A description of quality assurance and enhancement procedures applicable to Degree Apprenticeships.

- Copies of agreements and contracts such as partnership agreements, agreements between the employer, apprentice and the higher education provider, and learning contracts.

- Information about the programme trail(s) proposed including a rationale for the selection of the programmes (paragraph 53).

- A concise evaluation of all the Degree Apprenticeship provision under each key area, cross-referenced to the documentary evidence and with a particular focus on the programme trails. It should evaluate how far the design and delivery of its programmes of study match the defining characteristics of higher education apprenticeships. It may be helpful to structure the evaluation according to the Degree Apprenticeship frameworks and then specifically reference the programme trail. Where the provider has a programme trail for each apprenticeship framework, please reference both programme trails.

- Definitive programme documents for the proposed programme trails such as the validation report, programme specifications, module descriptors/guides and the programme handbook.

- While it will be helpful to draw on material from the proposed programme trails for the evaluation of the provision, the evidence base should aim to be balanced in terms of the provider's provision as a whole.

Student involvement

31   In the same way that students are central to QAA's review processes, for this developmental review, student input takes the form of a student submission and a Lead Student Representative. In addition, there will be opportunities for students as apprentices to respond to a questionnaire and to meet reviewers both at their institution and in their workplace. QAA will send the questionnaire to lead providers to distribute to students three weeks before the update of the self-evaluation document and student submission. QAA will ask for these to be returned directly to QAA by the submission date for the self-evaluation document.

The student submission

32   The students' representative body - normally the Students' Union (or equivalent) of the lead provider - has the opportunity to make a submission to the review team in advance of the review visit. This should be done in consultation with students on Degree Apprenticeship programmes and include students at partner institutions as relevant. While the student submission is usually a written document, other formats are welcome and further guidance is available from QAA.[7] The student submission is a valuable document for the review team as it provides insight into the nature of the student experience and the effectiveness of how the lead provider and its partners manage the quality of the student experience.

33   The student submission, if provided, should be submitted at the same time as the provider's self-evaluation document, where possible. The date for the submission will be

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[7] *Guidance on alternative student submissions in QAA reviews* available at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/guidance-on-alternative-student-submissions-in-qaa-reviews.pdf

confirmed as part of the review schedule with both the Facilitator and Lead Student Representative. For further details and guidance about the student submission, see Annex C.

Lead Student Representative

34   The lead provider and its Students' Union may agree to appoint a **Lead Student Representative** (LSR). The role of the LSR is to encourage the involvement of students in the review and keep them informed of progress. The LSR may be involved in the preparation of the student submission. The LSR works closely with the Facilitator to ensure smooth communication between the student body and the provider. The LSR may be able to work closely with apprentices in the workplace. Where no student representative body exists, the provider should seek a volunteer from the broader student body.

35   Where possible, the LSR should be appointed by the students themselves, with support from a student representative body or equivalent within the provider. QAA asks the Facilitator to work with student representatives to decide who should take on the role. The LSR may be a member of the student representative body but should not hold a staff position.

36   The provider should offer as much operational and logistical support to the LSR as is feasible. In particular, providers should share relevant information or data so that the student submission is well-informed and evidence-based.

37   QAA envisages that normally the LSR will:

- receive copies of key correspondence from QAA
- disseminate information about the review to the student body and give feedback on the review and its progress to the student body
- organise or oversee the student submission
- liaise internally with the Facilitator to ensure smooth communications between the student body and the lead provider during the process
- help the review team to select students to meet
- attend the reviewers' meetings with students during the review
- attend the final meeting at the lead provider
- facilitate comments from the student body on the draft report.

38   QAA appreciates that not all lead providers, colleges, students' unions and student representatives may feel it appropriate or sustainable to provide the level of engagement envisaged for the LSR. Consequently, QAA will be flexible about the amount of time that the LSR can provide and can consider other arrangements for ensuring appropriate student involvement.

Engagement with apprentices

39   Reviewers will meet with students as apprentices in the workplace in order to understand their experience in the workplace as their primary source of learning. As reviewers are only able to visit a sample of workplaces, apprentices will be invited to complete a survey which will help to inform the reviewers' preparation for the review engagements.

The review team

Reviewers

40   QAA will appoint a team of two **reviewers** with expertise relevant to Degree Apprenticeships to undertake the review of each lead provider. The review team will be supported by a **QAA Officer**. The main responsibilities of the reviewers are to read, analyse and verify the information submitted by the lead provider and student body, and to gather whatever further evidence they consider necessary through engagements with the lead provider, partners, employers and apprentices and use this evidence and engagement to conclude the review outcomes.

41   Reviewers are generally appointed by QAA from nominations made by institutions that provide higher education programmes. Before undertaking reviews, QAA provides all reviewers and QAA Officers with training, which includes both the method and the particular context of the review. Lead providers will be advised of the membership of the review team approximately no less than nine weeks before the review and will be asked to confirm whether there are any conflicts of interest with proposed team members before the team is confirmed.

42   The review team will conduct their business as a team for their engagements through the lead provider. However, engagements with employers and apprentices in their place of work-based learning may be conducted on an individual basis in order to allow the reviewers to sample a larger number of workplace settings.

The QAA Officer

43   QAA appoints an Officer to coordinate and manage each review. The Officer is a named member of QAA staff. The Officer will normally support the full review from the preparatory meeting to finalising the review report. The Officer is responsible for establishing close and constructive working relationship with providers.

44   The QAA Officer will be present with the review team throughout the review engagements but will not direct the team's deliberations or influence its conclusions and findings. The QAA Officer's overarching role is to ensure that the review process is conducted according to the method handbook and that the conclusions of the review team are well-evidenced and robust.

45   The specific duties of the QAA Officer are to:

* liaise with the lead provider on the planning for the review
* facilitate communication between the Facilitator, Lead Student Representative and the review team
* manage logistics
* chair review team meetings
* edit the review report and coordinate its production.

Facilitator

46   Providers are invited to nominate a member of staff to facilitate the review by liaising closely with the QAA Officer to ensure the organisation and smooth running of the review process. The Facilitator works closely and supportively with the LSR to ensure the student body is informed of and understands the progress of the review. The Facilitator also works closely with employers to ensure they understand the purpose of and arrangements for the visits to the workplace. The Facilitator will have day-to-day responsibility for the arrangements for the review and for ensuring that the evidence is made available to the team. The Facilitator may lead on the preparation of the SED.

47   The Facilitator is permitted to observe any of the meetings between the team and the provider and the team and employers, apart from those with students/apprentices.

Where the Facilitator is observing, they should not participate in discussion unless invited to do so by the review team.

48   During review engagements, the Facilitator is expected to:

- provide the review team with advice and guidance on the provider's structures, policies, priorities and procedures, and links with employers
- meet the QAA Officer and the LSR, and possibly members of the review team, outside the formal meetings to provide or seek further clarification about particular questions or issues
- help to direct reviewers to information or locate the information they are seeking to help make the process as time-efficient as possible.

49   The Facilitator helps to provide a constructive interaction between all participants in the review process. This promotes effective working relationships by directing reviewers to information or sourcing it as efficiently as possible to ensure clarity and efficiency in the review process. Where appropriate, and in agreement with the LSR, the Facilitator might also provide guidance and support to student representatives when preparing the student submission and for meetings with the review team.

Provider briefing

50   The purpose of the provider briefing is to describe the review in more detail, to allow lead providers and partners to ask any questions about the method, and to give further advice and guidance on preparations for the review, preparing a self-evaluation, and on helping students to prepare a written submission. The briefing also offers an opportunity for lead providers and partners to talk to each other about their preparations for the review. The provider briefing will take place by a webinar.

Programme trails

51   A programme trail is a Degree Apprenticeship programme selected from the provider's provision for each Degree Apprenticeship framework. It will be used to trail how the provider's processes and practices operate at a local level. Depending on the scope of the provider's provision developed in relation to Degree Apprenticeship frameworks, there may be one or two programme trails for each provider review.

52   Programme trails will be used to evaluate how effective provider's processes are in the development and delivery of the characteristics of higher education apprenticeships for their Degree Apprenticeship provision. Programme trails enable the review team to evaluate the effectiveness of the provider's management of their provision in this respect for both programme level and the provider's Degree Apprenticeship provision. Programme trails contribute to the overview of the development of programmes for both Degree Apprenticeship frameworks as well as Degree Apprenticeship provision as a whole.

53   As part of their submission, the lead provider should propose one programme to be used as a trail per Degree Apprenticeship framework. In order for the review team to decide whether the proposed programme trail(s) will provide sufficient opportunity to evaluate the key areas under review, the SED should provide the following information:

- the representativeness of the proposed programme trail in terms of providers' overall provision within the Degree Apprenticeship framework, types of arrangement and types of employers
- whether there are sufficient opportunities for employer visits to enable a representative sample of employers and apprentices to be engaged

- whether there are opportunities to sample employers/apprentices at different stages in the development of the provider's provision
- whether there are opportunities to meet apprentices who are both, new and existing employees, and at different levels of study.

The lead provider should use the data return to support its proposals and provide sufficient context for the selection of alternative trails should the review team decide this was necessary.

54   On the basis of their analysis and the review team meeting, the team will decide whether the proposed trails will provide sufficient opportunity to evaluate the key areas under review. This decision will be confirmed at four weeks before the review visit. In the circumstances that the review team decides that an alternative programme trail(s) would be better suited to provide the information needed for the key areas under review, this will be communicated to the lead provider at this point.

55   Once the programme trails are confirmed, the QAA Officer will discuss with the lead provider factors in the selection of employers to be visited, such as accessibility of sites and the availability of staff and apprentices, and the scheduling and arrangements for site visits/meetings.

56   As part of the evidence base accompanying the SED, the provider is asked to provide definitive programme documents for the proposed programme trail(s), such as the validation report, programme specifications, module descriptors/guides and the programme handbook.

Activities during the review

57   The pattern of the review will be sufficiently flexible to respond to the nature of the programmes under review. Although most activities will be common to all reviews, the timetable of events will reflect the particular arrangements of each lead provider and its partners and employers. In some cases, it may be necessary for the review team to separate to conduct different activities.

58   All review visits will include:

- an initial meeting between the reviewers and staff responsible for the management of Degree Apprenticeship programmes and their quality assurance
- a meeting with teaching and support staff for Degree Apprentices programmes
- a meeting with a representative group of current students at the provider
- a meeting with staff at partner colleges to explore their involvement in the development and delivery of Degree Apprenticeships
- visits to the workplace to meet individual employers and their apprentices (see paragraphs 61-65)
- a final team meeting with the lead provider.

Employer involvement

59   The role of employers in these awards is important and employers play a significant part in the review process. Employers will be invited to contribute to the review through a questionnaire and by hosting a visit from the review team. Reviewers will wish to learn about the benefits and challenges of work-based and work-related learning and will conduct visits to a number of workplaces within the programme trail(s). The number and nature of the visits will be determined by the characteristics of the programme.

Employer survey

60   In order to ensure wider employer input into the review, QAA will send a questionnaire for lead providers to distribute to employers three weeks before the update of the self-evaluation document. QAA will ask for these to be returned directly to QAA by the submission date for the self-evaluation document.

Employer visits

61   Reviewers will visit a sample of employers to meet staff who are directly involved in the apprenticeship programme and meet apprentices separately to find out about their experience. The reviewers will make every effort to minimise the disruption to apprentices and employers.

62   Employers visits will be selected on the basis of the programme trail(s). The reviewers will aim to visit a representative sample of employers, both in terms of the type and size of company, and the relative distribution of apprentices across employers. Accessibility of sites and types of employers will determine whether visits can be conducted in person or virtually. For instance, where companies are predominantly small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the review team may opt to conduct a mixture of physical and virtual visits. The number and characteristics of employers will be a key factor in determining the overall length of the review.

63   Where the review team need to conduct visits to a number of SMEs, reviewers may conduct visits individually in order to maximise the coverage of the review.

64   Employer visits will involve a meeting with staff supporting apprentices in the workplace (for instance, mentors, trainers and line managers) and managing the apprenticeship scheme, and a meeting with the apprentice(s). The review team can be flexible in terms of timings and appreciate that not all staff may be available at the same time, and therefore may need to set up alternative arrangements/additional meetings. Meetings may be held individually or as a group.

65   Employers attending meetings are likely to be asked questions about their involvement in the following areas of Degree Apprenticeship provision:

- their involvement in the design and development of programmes
- their involvement in the delivery of the programme and the integration of learning and work
- their involvement in learning and teaching
- how apprentices are supported in the workplace and the support offered by the lead provider
- opportunities for assessment and their involvement in the assessment process
- opportunities for Welsh language provision
- what arrangements work particularly well and areas that would benefit from further development.

The schedule for reviews

66   Reviews will take place in the autumn and spring terms of 2020-21. QAA will consult the lead provider to ensure appropriate timing for the review. A timeline outlining the key events for the review programme as a whole is provided in Annex A.

67   A timeline for the individual reviews is provided in Annex B and this sets out the programme of activities undertaken by the lead provider and QAA. The process starts with

the distribution of questionnaires to employers and students by the lead provider nine weeks before the review visit. After the submission of the self-evaluation document, supporting evidence and student submission (if prepared), the period prior to the visit takes six weeks. The period for the preparation of the report will take four weeks from the last day of the visit.

68   The deadlines in this timeline will be adjusted to accommodate the Christmas, New Year and Easter periods, and any UK public holidays/QAA closure days.

The review report

69   The process will result in a review report for each lead provider which will be shared with HEFCW. As this is a developmental review, the report is not published.

70   The review report will:

- provide a background to the review, including a summary of the provision, programme trail(s) and employer visits
- record features identified by reviewers as representing good practice and make recommendations as appropriate, including a timescale reflecting the urgency of the actions required
- detail the team's findings for the five key areas and the contribution of these areas to the characteristics and distinctive features of the Degree Apprenticeship for the provider's programmes.

71   Two weeks after the review engagement, QAA will share the draft report with the lead provider and the LSR, inviting comments on factual accuracy. The provider will have one week to respond. QAA will then finalise the report and send it back to the provider. At this point, QAA will also send the report to HEFCW.

QAA Welsh Language Scheme

72   In planning, conducting and reporting on reviews in Wales, QAA is committed to treating the Welsh and English languages as equal, and considers the requirements and expectations of Welsh language standards. The lead provider can request that the whole review or specific parts of the review - for example, meetings - are conducted bilingually. Similarly, visits to employers can be conducted in part or in whole bilingually. For further information, see Annex D.

Evaluation

73   QAA will encourage lead providers, LSRs, employers, reviewers and QAA Officers to contribute to the evaluation of the review process by inviting comment on the reviews in which they have participated.

Annex A: Review programme timeline

Month	Activity
August 2020	Consultation period
September	Consultation closes on Monday 14 September
October	Finalised handbook published w/c 5 October QAA holds a provider briefing by webinar Lead providers receive scheduling details and notice of review teams Preparation of self-evaluation documents and student submission starts
November	Review teams and scheduling details finalised Lead providers asked to distribute questionnaires to employers and students across their provision
December	Upload of first submissions and supporting evidence from mid-December through to February Analysis of submissions and supporting evidence commences
January 2021	Upload of submissions and supporting evidence continues
February	Review visits scheduled in February and March
March	Review visits and reporting on outcomes
April	Reporting on outcomes continues
May	QAA prepares overview report
4 June 2021	Overview report finalised and submitted to HEFCW

Annex B: Provider review timeline

Working week	Provider	QAA
9 weeks before the visit	Provider distributes questionnaires to employers and students	
6 weeks before the visit	Provider uploads provider and student submission and supporting evidence Deadline for submission of questionnaires	Reviewers undertake desk-based analysis
4 weeks before the visit	Provider informed of outcomes of virtual team meeting including: - confirmation of the programme trail(s) - confirmation of the employers to be visited as part of the programme trail(s) - a draft schedule - any additional evidence requests	Virtual team meeting where the Review team discusses their analysis and confirm: - programme trail(s) - employers to be visited as part of the programme trail(s) - the schedule for the review including - any additional evidence requests
1 week before the visit	Provider uploads additional evidence Confirms the programme for the visit and people attending meetings	Review team analyses additional evidence
Review visit	Provider facilitates the visit	Review team spends up to a total of two days for engagements with the provider, students and employers
1 week after the visit		Moderation of findings
2 weeks after the visit	Provider considers report for factual accuracy and liaises with partners/employers as required	Draft report sent to lead provider
3 weeks after the visit	Provider submits factual corrections	
4 weeks after the visit		Report finalised and sent to provider and HEFCW

Annex C: The student submission

The student submission provides a means by which students, through their representative body, can inform the review team ahead of the review visit of matters they consider relevant to the purpose of review. It is an opportunity to provide the review team with an impression of what it is like to be a student and apprentice on a programme from both their academic and workplace perspectives. QAA encourages the student representative bodies to use this opportunity to inform review teams of their views and evidence, and to work closely with the lead provider.

The student submission should contain a response from students to the lead provider's self-evaluation. This should be brief but can be narrative text or bullet points. If the representative body and lead provider wish to present a joint self-evaluation, this is acceptable so long as the document demonstrates that it is a genuine reflection of student/apprentice views and makes clear the process by which they were involved.

Format, length and content

The submission should be no more than 4,000 words and should provide an explanation of the sources of evidence that informed its comments and conclusions. Alternative formats to a written submission or as material to supplement the main submission are both possible. QAA has a separate guidance document to help if this approach is preferred.[8]

The submission must include a statement of how it has been compiled, its authorship and the extent to which its contents have been shared with, and endorsed by, students on Degree Apprentice programmes as a whole. If, for example, there are limitations with the submission in terms of gathering the perspectives of particular groups of students and apprentices, then this should be made clear.

The review team will welcome a submission that endeavours to represent the views of as wide a student constituency within Degree Apprenticeship programmes as possible. Students are encouraged to make use of existing information in the form of internal student surveys and committee papers. In QAA's experience, a critical analysis of existing data will be more useful to the review team than a collection of new data. If questionnaires are used specifically for this submission, we recommend that they are targeted at areas where there are gaps in existing knowledge.

When gathering evidence for and structuring the submission, it would be helpful if students take account of the effectiveness:

- how the design of the programmes enables students to develop their roles and careers
- experience of the admission and recruitment process, including the recognition of prior learning
- how well the design and delivery of the programmes integrates on-the-job and off-the-job learning
- how the different learning and teaching methods contribute to the learners' needs and workplace situations
- the quality and accessibility for supporting students throughout their apprenticeship
- students' experience of being assessed, including the use of workplace and authentic work experience.

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[8] *Guidance on alternative student submissions in QAA reviews* available at:
www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/guidance/guidance-on-alternative-student-submissions-in-qaa-reviews.pdf

The submission should not:

- name, or discuss the competence of, individual members of staff and employers
- discuss personal grievances
- include comments from individual students who may not be well placed to represent a wider group.

Submission delivery date

The submission should be sent to QAA six weeks before the review visit, at the same time as the lead provider's self-evaluation document. Details of how to submit the submission electronically will be communicated to the LSR. If the submission is confidential, then the LSR should contact QAA to make separate arrangements for its submission.

Confidentiality

QAA expects the student body to share its submission with the lead provider, and the lead provider to share its self-evaluation with the student body. This openness is desirable because it enables the review team to discuss both documents freely with the lead provider and students during the review, to check the accuracy of their content, and it encourages an open and transparent approach to the review. The student body may, if it wishes, request that its submission be kept confidential to QAA and the team rather than being shared with the lead provider. QAA will respect this wish, but students are asked to be aware that the team's use of a confidential submission will inevitably be restricted by the fact that its contents are unknown to the lead provider's staff.

If the contents of the submission are not to be shared with the lead provider, this must be stated clearly on the front of the document.

Annex D: Welsh language

QAA is committed to treating the Welsh and English languages equally in our work in Wales. All documentation relating to the Degree Apprenticeship Review is produced in both languages, as are all review reports.

For reviews of providers in Wales, we seek to recruit bilingual reviewers and review managers. Our advertising and recruitment process actively supports this objective.

In any review 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 review planning meetings, the QAA Officer identifies the language preferences expressed by the provider and individual participants for the conduct of the review, determining what elements of the review process are to be conducted in Welsh, and making arrangements for translation where all participants are not bilingual.

Providers and students may submit their documentation in either language at their discretion.

Following agreement about which elements of the review 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 review managers to facilitate the smooth operation of the review process in providers where Welsh is extensively used.