

Summary of questions and discussion from the Degree Apprenticeships Review Provider Briefing (2 November 2020)

The following provides a summary of questions and discussion at the QAA Degree Apprenticeships Review provider briefing held on 2 November 2020. A [full recording of the session](#) is available on the QAA website.

Questions

1 Will QAA send out the questionnaires [to employers and apprentices]? If so, will the institutions/students' unions have sight of the responses? (16.40)

QAA will send the questionnaires to the lead provider. The lead provider will be required to distribute these to apprentices and employers (this method is the simplest way in terms of GDPR requirements). The results will not be shared with students' unions or providers as such, however they will form part of the evidence base for review teams. They are a starting point for areas that could be explored by the review team. The questionnaires will be appropriately referenced in the same way a draft report is produced. If review teams have a question they will be open about where this has arisen from.

2 What will the provider's submission [Reflective Analysis] look like in practice? Is there a template/exemplar? (18.09)

It is important to think about the principles in terms of process. This is a developmental review therefore the review teams will be examining how provision has developed and its potential going forwards. To do this, we are focusing on outcomes in terms of the characteristics - the [Characteristics Statement](#) has helpful distinctive features. These are the outcomes and there are areas for consideration that would support these outcomes. These are some of the areas that the review teams will be interested in.

We are expecting that the institutional context is provided in the Reflective Analysis (RA). For example, how Degree Apprenticeships provision fits within your strategy and the context of the characteristics in terms of your students and subject provision. It is also a reflective document because we're looking at the development of these programmes. The document needs to be a reflective as a whole and needs an overview of how these programmes have been developed and delivered. The document should be trying to give a balance of evidence across provision not just in programme trails. This should provide a comprehensive (but not exhaustive) view. The RA is a guide for reviewers. When the reviewers come to programme trails they will be confirming the development of programmes in practice. There isn't an exemplar or template available for the RA.

3 Is there any cooperation/overlap with the English system? For example, where employers have provision in both the English and Welsh Degree Apprenticeship Systems, will they be asked about their experience of this? (36.38)

There is no overlap with England. This review is specifically focused on the HEFCW funded pilot areas: digital, engineering and advanced manufacturing. Employers in England may

have helpful experience. We will focus on the Wales component - it might be helpful for employers to compare what works well or areas to strengthen. The questionnaires will need some background information for employers to provide some context. This will set out what we are trying to achieve and some of the higher-level questions, for example: how does this relate to other areas of activity and other apprenticeships they may be involved in?

4 If employers cross over HEIs/FECs, will the visits be combined? There is the potential for large employers to be engaged in several reviews. (38.30)

We will try to avoid this in terms of sampling. We wouldn't want to visit them twice in the same way that we wouldn't normally speak to some people twice in a review, therefore this principle would also apply.

5 Do you need HEI's to provide the context to go with the questionnaires or is this something that QAA will prepare? (39.36)

QAA will provide some generic context to go with the questionnaire. The provider can add some context from their perspective and their approach if they would like to. It is likely that employers would also welcome contact from the lead provider.

6 Does the existing reviewer pool have experience of reviewing apprenticeship/work-based learning provision? (44.52)

Yes, current indications show that we have a number of people (in the Wales reviewer pool) who have experience and knowledge of Degree Apprenticeships. We have other pools of reviewers if required, but we are committed to having a least one member of each review team who has experience of HE in Wales.

Breakout discussions - themes and comments

1 Clarity on the overall expectation of the Welsh Government

Comment: What are the overall expectations of the Welsh Government in terms of the outcomes of this review? This needs to be made clearer for providers. As the review process plays out, it is important that there is as much clarity as possible on the expectation of institutions. There is also a need for an attempt to have some consistency, whilst being mindful of diverse approaches.

Comment: A more structured approach would be helpful for institutions providing information and this would also benefit the reviewers. How can we establish a structured way of providing the information whilst giving institutions some flexibility? This might help to focus discussions, particularly in context of 'Zoom fatigue'.

QAA response: Each institution will approach this differently. Clarity of expectations is important in terms of the output. Perhaps some more information on the structure of the final report will help feedback in terms of what we are looking for in the final provider reports as well. Some areas we may comment on but not draw conclusions, for example, equality and diversity. These are areas where we can only provide facts. There are challenges in areas we are expected to report against, however there are areas we'll need to comment on factually.

Comment: If there is limited guidance on what is to be included in the review document, there is the potential for this to become a long and protracted event. However, it will be different for each institution. A comparison between organisations and how each are

performing in the delivery of apprenticeships can be a real challenge. It is hard for reviewers to draw analogies - but it won't be a complete picture as the institution will include what is going well with some things to focus on. Not asking people to highlight every aspect.

QAA response: We want to make it the best possible learning experience for providers, as well as appreciating that providers will be at different stages working with different types of employers. Part of this will be down to the training of reviewers so they are aware of challenges.

2 Scale of Degree Apprenticeships operation at different organisations

Comment: Some institutions have developing staff infrastructure to support the development of Degree Apprenticeships, whereas others are combining this with current quality assurance processes. There is the expectation that normal quality assurance processes, if applied to Degree Apprenticeships, will form part of the narrative.

3 Representing/gaining the collective apprentice voice

Comment: There is a concern about gaining a collective apprentice voice, particularly given the experience of collecting this voice during the Review of Foundation Degrees in Wales. There is a concern that it will be difficult to get a separate apprentice voice submission.

QAA response: An apprentice submission would be the ideal, however there are other ways of capturing evidence. The apprentice voice needs to be captured in some way.

4 Survey fatigue

Comment: There is a concern that there is a lot of survey fatigue in the sector. Providers will contact apprentices for their submission, and then they will also be sent a questionnaire. Could these be dovetailed? Could providers see the results instead of contacting apprentices twice?

Comment: There is another review coordinated by WaveHill, therefore employers will have been contacted about this review. There needs to be clarification of purpose to employers and apprentices. Need to be clear about why they are being contacted by someone else about their processes.

5 Larger employers working across multiple HEIs

Comment: Conscious that some of the larger employers work across several HEIs including English institutions. Some of the FECs also work across several HEIs. Can QAA map which providers work with each employer? There is a concern that employers will be bombarded by institutions sending them questionnaires. Some overlap could be eliminated if the first stage mapped partnerships, similar to a map of collaborative provision in the QER.

QAA response: Noted that there isn't a lot of information held centrally on Degree Apprenticeships activity and that an initial survey of collaborative partners (colleges and employers) by QAA may be a useful exercise.

6 Degree Apprenticeships Review as CPD

Comment: Encouraged to think about the review as CPD and learn from our collective experience. Knowing that QAA is looking at this on provider basis means there is the opportunity to learn from each other.

QAA response: If we are still operating online, there will be the opportunity to share learning quite easily.

7 Awareness of volume and stage of Degree Apprenticeships development for each provider

Comment: Due to the commissioning process, some institutions were able to begin their provision sooner than others. How can this be captured in the same format and submission? There is a variance in volume and stage of provision for each provider.

This document is available in English and Welsh.

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