International Programme Accreditation for ACE Impact

Method Handbook for Higher Education Institutions Outside the UK

February 2023
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About the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA)

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is the UK’s quality body for higher education. We were founded in 1997 and are an independent body and a registered charity which is funded through multiple channels of work.

The purpose of QAA is to safeguard academic standards and ensure the quality and global reputation of UK higher education. We do this by working with higher education providers, regulatory bodies and student bodies with the shared objective of supporting students to succeed. We offer expert, independent and trusted advice, and address challenges, in a system where there is shared responsibility for the standards and quality of UK higher education.

QAA has a role in the enhancement and regulation of UK higher education and works across all four nations of the UK. In addition, through QAA Membership we deliver services, expertise and guidance on key issues that are important to our member universities and colleges and their students.

Internationally, through building strong partnerships, we both enhance and promote the reputation of UK higher education and provide services to higher education institutions, agencies and governments globally, in full alignment with European Standards and Guidelines.

International recognition of QAA

We are a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA) - the umbrella organisation for quality assurance agencies in the European Higher Education Area. Full membership of ENQA shows that an agency complies with the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area.

Compliance with these standards is checked every five years through an independent review. Our last ENQA review took place in February 2018. The review report is published on the ENQA website: External review of QAA (2018) - ENQA.
About The Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence (ACE) Project

The Africa Higher Education Centers of Excellence (ACE) Project is the first World Bank initiative aimed at capacity building of higher education institutions in West Africa. It is delivered by the World Bank in collaboration with governments of participating countries and supports higher education institutions specialising in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), environment, agriculture, applied social science/education and health.

The first phase of the ACE Project (ACE1) began in 2014. In May 2018, the governments of Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Senegal, Niger, Djibouti, Guinea, Togo and The Gambia, with support from the World Bank and the French Development Agency, launched the next phase of ACE - ACE Impact. Modelled after ACE1, ACE Impact is designed to further address the regional development challenges in West and Central Africa through a focused programme of postgraduate education and applied research.

For ACE Impact, the participating governments, selected universities and funders have defined the allocation of funds based on the funding needs of each ACE and the host country's priorities. Each ACE's funds are distributed according to a set of disbursement-linked indicators (DLIs) and disbursement-linked results (DLRs) - pre-defined indicators that, once achieved by the ACE host institution, qualify for the disbursement of a pre-determined amount.

DLI 4 includes several different elements focused on Quality of Education and Research through Regionalisation. These elements are designed to support activities that focus on global good practices for higher education, and to provide institutions with the flexibility to pursue activities focused on Quality of Education and Research based upon need and priority. Within DLI 4, there is an expectation that ACE Impact host institutions will pursue international programme accreditation by the end of the ACE programme in 2024.
About International Programme Accreditation for ACE Impact

International Programme Accreditation for ACE Impact (IPA for ACE Impact) has been specially developed by the UK’s Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) to provide institutions taking part in ACE Impact with an independent peer review which may lead to international programme accreditation by QAA. The review includes the systematic monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching, and the processes that support them, to make sure that the standards of academic awards meet the required level and the quality of the student learning experience is being safeguarded and continually improved.

IPA for ACE Impact assesses the standards and quality of individual programmes of study against the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG Part 1: Internal Quality Assurance). QAA will also take into account the local context; national and regional regulatory requirements; and standards including the ESG. For an additional cost, QAA can tailor the review to include additional aspects that meet your specific requirements.

IPA for ACE Impact benefits higher education institutions by enabling you to analyse and improve the quality assurance systems that safeguard your programme, which supports development of your curriculum and helps student achievement. You do this through:

- Analysing and evaluating your own processes
- Taking part in an external review by an experienced team of QAA’s peer reviewers
- Follow-up action planning
- Mid-cycle review

A successful International Programme Accreditation for ACE Impact means that you are eligible to display this QAA International Programme Accreditation badge which will demonstrate that your approach to programme design, development and monitoring are not only effective, but also comparable with international best practice. The International Programme Accreditation badge can be displayed on programme and marketing material for the period of the accreditation.
An overview of the process

International Programme Accreditation for ACE Impact takes place in five stages.

**Stage 1: Application**

An international higher education institution seeking to undertake an IPA for ACE Impact, completes an application form and provides evidence demonstrating that their programme meets the eligibility criteria. This is scrutinised by a Screening Panel to determine whether the programme could proceed to the gap analysis stage.

**Stage 2: Gap analysis**

The gap analysis stage is designed exclusively for International Programme Accreditation under the Africa Higher Education Centres of Excellence for Development Impact Project (ACE Impact). The education provider carries out its own gap analysis of its systems and processes against the 10 ESG standards for Internal Quality Assurance. It is asked to provide a set of evidence to support its analysis. A QAA review team analyses the documentation and comments on the gap analysis through a desk-based analysis and a virtual visit to the institution to identify to what extent the institution can conduct self-evaluation and identify its gaps to meet the 10 standards in Part 1 of the ESG. and, thus, if it is suitable to proceed to a full review.

**Stage 3: Review**

The review is an opportunity for the programme to demonstrate how it meets QAA programme accreditation standards (the 10 Standards set out in Part 1 of the ESG) through a self-evaluation document (SED), supported by relevant evidence. The review team of three - comprising one UK peer reviewer, one international peer reviewer and one student reviewer (at least one peer reviewer in the team is a subject specialist) - initially analyses the SED and evidence, and prepares an analysis which will be considered prior to the review visit. The review team then visits your institution to meet programme staff, students and other stakeholders. The review team considers the evidence to confirm whether or not the programme meets all QAA programme accreditation standards. The review team draft a report setting out their findings on whether or not each of the standards is met along with recommendations and aspects of good practice.

**Stage 4: Accreditation**

The review panel presents the review report and the recommendation regarding programme accreditation to the QAA Accreditation Panel. The Accreditation Panel considers the report and recommendation, and determines whether the programme should be awarded QAA International Programme Accreditation. Where accreditation is awarded, QAA shares the International Programme Accreditation badge with the institution for use in relation to the programme. The accreditation period is five years and is subject to a satisfactory mid-cycle review which must be completed for the full five years’ accreditation to be granted. QAA publishes the review report on the QAA website together with a link to the programme action plan which is published on the institution’s website. The programme action plan is developed by the institution in response to the conclusions of the review report.

**Stage 5: Mid-cycle review**

Accreditation: The review panel presents the review report and the recommendation regarding programme accreditation to the QAA Accreditation Panel. The Accreditation Panel considers the report and recommendation, and determines whether the programme should be awarded QAA International Programme Accreditation. Where accreditation is awarded, QAA shares the International Programme Accreditation badge with the institution for use in relation to the programme. The accreditation period is five years and is subject to a satisfactory mid-cycle review which must be completed for the full five years’ accreditation to be granted. QAA publishes the review report on the QAA website together with a link to the programme action plan which is published on the institution’s website. The programme action plan is developed by the institution in response to the conclusions of the review report.
**Mid-Cycle Review:** This takes place two to three years after a successful programme review. It is usually a desk-based study and the institution's programme team is asked to provide evidence that any recommendations and other findings from the IPA for ACE Impact review are being addressed. The programme team is also asked to outline any changes in the programme that might impact on the extent to which the standards are being met.

Towards the end of the five-year programme accreditation period, the institution is invited to seek reaccreditation of the programme; or the institution approaches QAA with a request to do so. Where the institution chooses to seek a further five-year accreditation, the process for the renewal commences at the Review Stage.
Stage 1: Application

Eligibility criteria

To be eligible for IPA for ACE Impact, you will need to demonstrate to QAA, through the evidence provided, that the following criteria are met:

1. The IPA for ACE Impact process will be conducted in English and the institution will take full responsibility for any translations from and into English which are deemed necessary for the process.
2. The institution is registered, or otherwise appropriately recognised, as a higher education institution by the national quality assurance authority or other relevant agency or ministry of the country or countries in which it is located.
3. The national quality assurance authority or other relevant agency or ministry is aware of the institution’s intention to request an IPA for ACE Impact from QAA.
4. The institution is financially viable and sustainable.
5. The institution has the legal right to use the infrastructure, main facilities and resources of the premises.
6. The programme has recruited a minimum of three cohorts of students, at least one of which has graduated at the time of application.
7. The programme has been through a rigorous internal accreditation process, and external accreditation process as required by local quality assurance authority.
8. There is an agreement to validate the degree awards by an appropriate awarding body.
9. The programme has successfully completed internal quality assurance processes and, where relevant, external quality assurance processes.
10. There is evidence of Programme Intended Learning Outcomes and how they are to be achieved.
11. There is evidence that the programme design is informed by external references, external expertise and current professional practice.
12. There is evidence of appropriate programme facilities and learning resources being in place.
13. The programme identifies potential employment destinations and/or opportunities for further study.

Eligibility will also depend on the outcome of a risk assessment by QAA. For example, QAA will assess the safety and stability of the environment in which the institution is operating. QAA reserves the right to revise this assessment in the face of significant events.

IPA for ACE Impact does not, nor does it seek to, replace national requirements and does not authorise an institution to offer programmes outside their national regulatory systems or
within the UK national higher education context. IPA for ACE Impact does not confer degree awarding powers and it does not itself confer any legal or funding benefits on a successful programme.

Further details about the supporting documentation required at application stage can be found in Appendix 1.

Ask QAA about our development and capacity building programmes to support institutions in preparing for IPA for ACE Impact.
The application process

The key stages in application are:

1. Institution sends QAA an application form and relevant evidence (Appendix 1)
2. QAA acknowledges receipt
3. QAA screens application
4. QAA writes to institution to explain the decision and how it has been made

- Eligibility criteria not met
  - Institution considers next step in its development
- Eligibility criteria met
  - Institution can choose to progress to gap analysis

The decision of QAA as to whether the programme meets the eligibility criteria is final. If your application is unsuccessful and after a period of further development you feel the programme would meet the criteria, we would welcome a new application.
Stage 2 - Gap analysis

The gap analysis is the opportunity for your programme to undertake a self-assessment of its processes to identify to what extent your programme can provide evidence that it is currently meeting the 10 standards in Part 1 of the ESG, and where it might need to carry out further development or capacity building to meet those standards. It is also the opportunity for you to learn more about IPA for ACE Impact and requirements for a review. It enables QAA to determine whether your programme is at a suitable point to proceed to Stage 3: Review. The gap analysis stage should take place within six months following the completion of Stage 1: Application.

The gap analysis process

The key stages in the gap analysis are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before gap analysis visit</th>
<th>During gap analysis visit</th>
<th>After gap analysis visit</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Virtual preparatory meeting</td>
<td>• Meetings with range of staff, students, employers and alumni, as relevant</td>
<td>• Draft QAA comments on the institution’s gap analysis sent to institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Liaison between QAA Officer and your institution to confirm the review visit agenda and who the QAA team will meet</td>
<td>• Observation of facilities and learning resources if a review visit is required</td>
<td>• Factual amendments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Prepare and submit your gap analysis document using a provided template</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Final QAA comments and outcome sent to institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Desk-based analysis</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The process takes place over approximately three months. An indicative timeline for the gap analysis stage can be found in Appendix 2. QAA will provide you with the timeline for the gap analysis, including due dates for carrying out its responsibilities. QAA will also provide you with full briefing material to support your preparation for the gap analysis.

Before the gap analysis visit

The gap analysis team

QAA appoints a gap analysis team of two, including one QAA Officer and one assessor to carry out the gap analysis.

The QAA Officer will coordinate the gap analysis process and act as the primary point of contact with your institution. QAA will tell you who the QAA Officer is and you will be welcome to get in contact to ask questions. The QAA Officer is responsible for the logistics of the gap analysis stage including liaising with your institution, confirming the schedule for the gap analysis visit, keeping a record of all discussions, preparing and editing the report,
as well as acting as an assessor. Further details about the role of the QAA Officer can be found in Appendix 3.

QAA will provide names of the proposed gap analysis team for your confirmation in advance of the review. You will be informed which institutions or organisations the members of the gap analysis team work for and whether they have declared any other interests (such as membership of a governing body of another provider). QAA will ask you to indicate any actual or potential conflicts of interest that the gap analysis team might have with your institution/programme and may adjust team membership in light of that information.

The facilitator

Your institution must nominate a facilitator from your programme team to work with the QAA Officer. The facilitator helps to organise and ensure the smooth running of the gap analysis stage and improve the flow of information between the gap analysis team and the programme team. The development of an effective working relationship between QAA and the programme team through the facilitator should help to avoid misunderstandings (for example, the programme team misunderstanding what QAA requires, or QAA misunderstanding the nature and scope of your institution's provision). Further details about the role of the facilitator can be found in Appendix 3.

Supporting documentation

As part of the preparation for this stage, your programme team will be asked to carry out its own gap analysis of its systems and processes against the 10 standards for internal quality assurance set out in Part 1 of the ESG - this can include specific reference to local, regional and national requirements - and compile and provide a set of evidence to support this analysis. Further details about the submission requirements can be found in Appendix 4.

A template will be provided for your programme team to record your gap analysis. The gap analysis template that you complete is likely to be the first piece of evidence the gap analysis team will encounter in the process. It will continue to be used throughout the process, both as a source of information and as a way of navigating the supporting documentation.

Your completed gap analysis template must be accompanied by supporting documentation as evidence. Your programme team may also be asked for additional information following the QAA team's desk-based analysis of your submission. Further details about technical requirements for your submission and supporting documentation can be found in Appendix 5.

QAA may also compile information about your institution/programme from publicly-available sources. This will vary depending on your institution/programme and may include the most recent reports relating to your institution/programme from other national and international agencies and organisations, and other organisations with which your institution/programme works in partnerships, and information that is freely available on your website.

Virtual preparatory meeting

Prior to the gap analysis visit, the QAA Officer will arrange a virtual preparatory meeting with your programme team. The QAA Officer will deliver a briefing on the gap analysis process which is followed by the opportunity for you to ask questions. The QAA Officer will discuss the agenda for the gap analysis visit and will advise your institution who it would like to meet and when the meetings should take place. The QAA Officer will also explain and agree logistics such as arrangements for the uploading of evidence, the meeting schedule, the platform to be used, and the evidence of the facilities that will be necessary for this stage.
During the gap analysis visit

The gap analysis visit will normally be virtual and last two days. The visit will reflect the scale and complexity of the programme under review. A sample gap analysis visit schedule is provided at Appendix 6.

The gap analysis team will hold meetings with a range of your staff, students and other stakeholders according to a schedule agreed with the facilitator in advance. The facilitator will be responsible for arranging the necessary meetings, ensuring they start on time, and that the agreed participants attend. The gap analysis team will adhere strictly to the schedule, starting and finishing meetings on time. The schedule will also allow time for the gap analysis team to have private team meetings and meals where they can discuss and explore the review themes; the times of these private meetings must also be strictly observed. A protocol for the conduct of meetings is provided in Appendix 7. You should make sure that everyone attending a meeting with the gap analysis team are made aware of the protocol.

After the gap analysis visit

Following the desk-based analysis and the visit, QAA will make comments on your submitted gap analysis document. QAA will also send you a letter to your institution stating whether your programme is considered ready to progress to the next stage straight away, whether we consider that further development or capacity building is required before your programme is ready to progress, or whether it is unlikely that your programme will be ready for review within the lifetime of the ACE Impact project.

If the outcome of the gap analysis is that we consider further development or capacity building is needed, the report will explain what action we consider is required and how long it is likely to take. In this way, the report will provide your programme with a road map towards the next stage.

If the outcome of the gap analysis visit is that we consider it is unlikely that your programme will be ready for review within the lifetime of the ACE Impact project, the report will explain why.

The QAA comments will not be published on the QAA website. In all cases QAA’s decision as to whether your programme is suitable to progress to the review stage is final.

It is QAA’s understanding that once the gap analysis stage is completed, the institution shall be eligible for a financial disbursement under DLR 4.1.

A positive outcome from the gap analysis does not guarantee a successful outcome for Stage 3: Review.
Stage 3: Review

The review stage is the opportunity for you to demonstrate how the programme meets the programme accreditation standards. The review should take place within six months following the completion of Stage 2: Gap Analysis.

QAA will provide you with the timeline for the review, including due dates for carrying out its responsibilities. QAA will also provide you with full briefing material to support your preparation for the review.

The review team conducts the review through analysis of the evidence submitted and a review visit to the institution, as detailed in later sections of this handbook.

Programme Accreditation Standards

QAA International Programme Accreditation for ACE Impact uses the standards for internal quality assurance set out in Part 1 of the ESG as its review criteria. During the review, the QAA team considers how and whether the programme meets each of the standards. In relation to each standard, the review team analyses evidence, including policies, procedures and systems and decides whether these enable the programme to demonstrate that it meets the relevant standard in each case.

The 10 European standards for internal quality assurance

1.1 Policy for quality assurance
1.2 Design and approval of programmes
1.3 Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment
1.4 Student admission, progression, recognition and certification
1.5 Teaching staff
1.6 Learning resources and student support
1.7 Information management
1.8 Public information
1.9 Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes
1.10 Cyclical external quality assurance


For more information and examples of practice to meet the ESG Standards, see Appendix 8.
The review process

The key stages in the review are:

Before review visit
- Review team appointed
- Virtual preparatory meeting
- Institution submission
- Desk-based analysis
- Preparation for visit

During review visit
- Meetings with range of staff, students, employers, alumni as relevant
- Observation of facilities and learning resources

After review visit
- Draft report to QAA moderation
- Draft report to Accreditation Panel

The review process takes place over approximately five months. An indicative timeline for the review stage can be found in Appendix 2.

Before the review visit

The review team
QAA normally appoints a team of three reviewers to conduct the review and a QAA Officer to manage it. Each QAA review team consists of one UK peer reviewer, one international peer reviewer (from outside the UK), and a student reviewer. QAA peer reviewers have current or recent senior-level expertise and experience in the management and quality assurance of higher education provision in the UK and internationally. At least one peer reviewer in the team is a subject specialist. Depending on the breadth of specialism within the programme and any separate pathways within it, QAA may appoint a larger team; this will be discussed with you before you commit to undertake Stage 3: Review.

Review team members are selected based on their experience in higher education and their subject expertise, and are expected to draw on this in their evaluations and conclusions about the management of quality and academic standards. All reviewers are fully trained by QAA.

QAA believes that students play a critical role in the quality assurance of higher education. Because of this, student reviewers are full and equal members of review teams. They provide a valuable insight from the perspective of being, or having recently been, recipients of higher education. Where possible, the student reviewer will come from the same, or an allied subject area as the programme being reviewed.

QAA will provide names of the proposed QAA review team for confirmation by you in advance of the review. You will be informed which institutions or organisations the members of the review team work for or, in the case of student reviewers, the institution(s) at which they have studied, and whether they have declared any other interests (such as membership of a governing body of another institution). QAA will ask you to indicate any actual or potential conflicts of interest that reviewers might have with the programme/institution and may adjust team membership in light of that information.

QAA Officer
QAA will appoint a QAA Officer to coordinate the review process, support the review team, and act as the primary point of contact with your institution. QAA will tell you who the QAA Officer is and you will be welcome to get in contact to ask questions. The QAA Officer can provide advice about the review process but cannot act as a consultant for your preparation.
for the review, nor comment on whether the processes in place for quality assurance are appropriate or fit-for-purpose; that is the job of the review team.

The QAA Officer is responsible for the logistics of the review including liaising with the institution, confirming the review visit schedule, keeping a record of all discussions, and editing the review report.

The QAA Officer also advises and guides the review team in its deliberations to ensure that decisions and the overall conclusion are securely based on evidence available and that each review is conducted in a consistent manner.

**The facilitator**

You must nominate a facilitator from the institution/programme team to work with the QAA Officer. The facilitator helps to organise and ensure the smooth running of the review process and improve the flow of information between the review team and the programme team. The development of an effective working relationship between QAA and the programme team through the facilitator should help to avoid misunderstandings (for example, the programme team misunderstanding what QAA requires, or QAA misunderstanding the nature and scope of the programme). Further details about the role of the facilitator are in Appendix 3.

**Lead student representative (LSR)**

Students from the programme may also contribute to the review process by, for example, providing a written document describing what it is like to be a student on the programme. This might take the form of a written document or could be done by analysing the outcomes of a questionnaire in relation to their learning experience and their experience of quality assurance on the programme and at the institution. Students are expected to participate in meetings during the review visit and assist the programme team in drawing up and implementing the action plan following the review.

There is the option for a student to undertake the role of lead student representative (LSR). This voluntary role is designed to allow students on the programme to play a central part in the organisation of the review. The LSR helps ensure smooth communication between the student body, the programme team and QAA, and will normally oversee the production of a student submission. If possible, QAA would like to work with the LSR to select the students that the review team will meet.

If you decide to appoint an LSR, it is recommended that the volunteer(s) be appointed by the students themselves, with support from a student representative body or equivalent. The LSR must be a member of the student representative body. The role of LSR may be operated on a shared-role arrangement providing it is clear who is the main LSR point of contact.

You are expected to provide as much operational and logistical support to the LSR as is feasible and, in particular, to ensure that any relevant information or data is shared with the LSR to ensure that the student submission is well-informed, representative of students’ views, and evidence-based. Students would be expected to share their evidence and information with you on a similar basis.

Further information on the role of the LSR and student involvement in the review can be found in Appendix 3 and Appendix 9.

**Documentation for the review**

The evidence-base for IPA for ACE Impact is a combination of information collected and
submitted by the programme team, including the self-evaluation document (see Appendix 10), together with its supporting evidence and information provided by students - for instance, a student submission (see Appendix 9).

QAA may also compile information about the programme from publicly-available sources. This will vary depending on the programme under review and may include the most recent reports relating to the programme from other national and international agencies and organisations, and other organisations with which the programme works in partnership, and information that is freely available on the institution/programme website.

**Self-evaluation document (SED)**

The institution is required to prepare a self-evaluation document (SED) supported by documentary evidence for the review. Guidance on how to structure the SED is provided in Appendix 10. QAA will provide further guidance on compiling the SED when briefing about the review process at the virtual preparatory meeting with your programme team. The SED is intended to be reflective, evaluative and focused on the areas of review; the evidence should be carefully chosen to support these. High-quality, relevant evidence enables the review team to verify the programme's approaches and gather relevant and appropriate evidence of its own quickly and effectively.

**Supporting documentation**

The SED must be accompanied by supporting documentation as evidence. You may also be asked for additional information by the review team following the QAA team's desk-based analysis of your submission. The review team has three main opportunities to ask for additional evidence from the programme team: before the first review team meeting; between the first review team meeting and the review visit; and at the review visit itself. The review team will only ask you for additional information that assists them in forming robust opinions on how the programme meets the IPA for ACE Impact standards. Requests will be specific and proportionate.

**Virtual preparatory meeting**

Prior to your submission, the QAA Officer will arrange a virtual preparatory meeting with the programme team. The QAA Officer will deliver a briefing on the review process which is followed by the opportunity for you to discuss the key features of the review method and ask questions. The QAA Officer will discuss the review timeline including that of the submission and visit dates and further details of how to prepare institution and student submissions.

**Pre-visit analysis**

The pre-visit analysis begins with the reviewers undertaking a desk-based analysis of the SED and the supporting evidence. Should the review team identify any gaps in the information, or require further evidence about specific issues, a request for further information is made through the QAA Officer.

The review team holds a first review team meeting. Its purpose is to allow the team to:

- discuss its analysis of the documentary evidence
- decide on issues for further exploration at the review visit
- decide whether it requires any further documentary evidence
- confirm the requirements for the review visit.

The QAA Officer then confirms the arrangements for the review with you, including who the review team wishes to meet.
During the review visit

The review visit will normally last two days and may be delivered online. A sample review schedule is provided at Appendix 6. Guiding principles to determine whether a review or particular elements of a review should be undertaken onsite are provided at Appendix 11.

The review team will hold meetings according to a schedule agreed in advance with the facilitator. The facilitator will be responsible for arranging the necessary meetings, ensuring they start on time, and that the agreed participants attend. The review team will adhere strictly to the schedule, starting and finishing meetings on time. The schedule will also allow time for the review team to have private team meetings where they can discuss and explore the review themes; the times of these private meetings must also be strictly observed. A protocol for review meetings is provided at Appendix 7.

At the beginning of the review visit, the review team will hold a meeting with the Dean of Faculty or Head of Department which should highlight the institution's overall strategy for higher education and how the programme under review fits in alongside the other programmes offered by the institution, provides progression opportunities for students and addresses local skills needs. The head of your institution is welcome to attend the meeting with the review team, but this is not obligatory. Thereafter, the activity carried out at the review may include contact with academic and support staff (including staff from partner organisations where applicable), current students and recent graduates, and employers with which the institution has partnerships, in relation to the programme. The review team will ensure that its schedule includes meetings with students. This enables them to gain first-hand information on their experience as learners and on their engagement with the programme's quality assurance and enhancement processes, and involvement in the programme design, development and monitoring.

Where the programme has significant formal arrangements for working with partners who provide learning opportunities or student support, the review team may ask to meet staff and students from one or more of those partners by video conference or teleconference. These meetings will take place within the period of the review unless there is good reason why this cannot happen (for instance, because the review coincides with another organisation's vacation period).

The review visit will include a final meeting between the review team and the lead for the programme, the facilitator and the LSR (if there is one). This will be an opportunity for the review team to summarise the major lines of enquiry and issues that it has pursued (and may still be pursuing). The programme team also has a final opportunity to offer clarification and/or present evidence that will help the review team secure its findings. It will not be a feedback meeting about the findings of the review.

The facilitator and LSR (if there is one) will not be present with the review team for its private meetings. The review team is not expected to have regular contact with them, other than at the beginning and/or end of the day, or when they are invited to clarify evidence or provide information. However, the facilitator and LSR (if there is one) can suggest additional short meetings if they want to alert the review team to information which they consider the team might find useful.

On the final day of the review visit, the review team considers its findings in private in order to:

- agree the decisions for each of the IPA for ACE Impact standards
- agree any features of good practice that it wishes to highlight
- agree any recommendations for action by the programme team
• decide on its overall conclusion for the review and any conditions
• agree on its recommendation to the Accreditation Panel regarding the outcome of the review and any conditions.

After the review visit

The review team considers the institution's processes against the ESG Standards and considers how these are applied within the context of the programme. The review team also considers other relevant reference points - for example, those set out by any other body that validates the programme's award/qualification and with whom the institution collaborates in relation to the programme. The review team then decides if the programme meets each of the 10 ESG standards and, on that basis, comes to its overall conclusion. Further details of how the findings are determined by the review team can be found in Appendix 12.

Following the review visit, the review team will finalise its key findings from the review and work with the QAA Officer to produce the review report.

Once the team has drafted its report, it will be reviewed by an independent panel of QAA Officers who were not involved in the review of the programme. The purpose of this QAA internal moderation process is to check whether the review has been conducted in line with the published method and whether the review findings are clearly articulated, evidence-based and consistent. The draft report will then be presented to the QAA Accreditation Panel to consider whether the programme offered at your institution should be awarded QAA International Programme Accreditation.
Stage 4: Accreditation

At the Accreditation Stage, the review team will present the draft review report and its recommendation regarding programme accreditation to the QAA Accreditation Panel. The Accreditation Panel will consider the report and reach a decision as to whether or not the programme can be formally accredited by QAA. The Accreditation Panel meets every three months and meetings are scheduled at least 12 months in advance. All completed IPA for ACE Impact reports are presented to the next scheduled Accreditation Panel meeting following completion of the QAA internal moderation process.

Approximately two weeks after the Accreditation Panel meeting, your programme team will receive the draft report. The report may contain recommendations and features of good practice, followed by the analysis and evidence that supports the findings. This analysis will be separated into 10 sections representing the 10 ESG Standards. The findings will be summarised in a short executive summary at the beginning of the report.

You have the opportunity to respond within two weeks of receipt of the draft report, informing QAA of any factual errors or any misinterpretations leading from those inaccuracies. These can only relate to evidence made available to the review team in the period before or during the review visit; the review team will not consider amending the report to reflect evidence, changes or developments made after the review visit ended. The draft report will also be shared with the LSR where relevant, who will be invited to provide comments by the same deadline. If your institution provides higher education leading to qualifications of separate awarding bodies, then any other awarding bodies discussed in the report will also receive a draft copy and be invited to comment on any factual errors or errors of interpretation.

The review team will consider your response and make any changes it deems necessary, incorporating those changes in a revised report.

The overall judgement

The three possibilities for the overall judgement are:

- the programme meets all the standards for International Programme Accreditation for ACE Impact
- the programme meets all the standards for International Programme Accreditation for ACE Impact subject to meeting specific conditions
- the programme does not meet the standards for International Programme Accreditation for ACE Impact.

These possibilities and the next steps are explained below.

The programme meets all the standards for International Programme Accreditation for ACE Impact

Where the draft report concludes that the programme meets all 10 of the IPA for ACE Impact standards, the report will be finalised (following receipt of your feedback regarding factual accuracy). The finalised report will be sent to you together with the outcome letter.

Where accreditation is awarded, QAA will share the International Programme Accreditation badge with you, together with details on how and where it can, and cannot, be used. The accreditation period is five years and is subject to a satisfactory mid-cycle review which must be completed for the full five years' accreditation to be granted.
Your IPA for ACE Impact report will be published on QAA's website. The report sets out the review team's confirmed findings (overall judgements, recommendations and good practice) and analysis as confirmed by the Accreditation Panel. Your institution/programme team can make the report available via its media outlets.

Where successful with IPA for ACE Impact, you will be able to make the following statement:

"[The programme] has received a successful review from the UK’s Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) undertaken in [Month] [Year], and has been awarded QAA International Programme Accreditation until [Month] [Year]."

After the report has been published, the programme team is expected to provide an action plan, signed off by the head of your institution and the head of the programme, responding to the recommendations, if any, and giving any plans to capitalise on the identified good practice. The action plan must be published on your institution/programme website(s); the link to your action plan will be published on the QAA website alongside the IPA for ACE Impact report. Further details of how to produce an action plan are in Appendix 13.

If the programme undergoes a successful review but, without good reason, does not provide an action plan within the required timescale, QAA will reconsider the overall outcome of the review and the right to use the QAA logo and the award of accreditation may be withdrawn.

On or around each anniversary of the accreditation date, QAA will contact your institution and request confirmation that there have been no changes in its circumstances which may affect the institution's ability to continue to meet the eligibility criteria or which might otherwise impact on the IPA for ACE Impact process or the programme's accreditation. Where your institution does declare a change, QAA will investigate this and may take further action.

The programme meets all the standards for International Programme Accreditation for ACE Impact subject to specific conditions

Where only one (or at most) two of the IPA for ACE Impact standards are not fully met, the Accreditation Panel may decide to set specific conditions that enable a successful IPA for ACE Impact outcome to be achieved. They will only be set where they relate to a very small number of weaknesses that, while potentially significant, only impact on whether the one (or at most two) IPA for ACE Impact standards are met. The Accreditation Panel will only do this if they consider that the weaknesses can be rectified in a short space of time and in a way that can be sufficiently analysed through a brief desk-based exercise following specific actions undertaken by the institution/programme team and a subsequent submission to QAA of further evidence.

Where the draft report concludes that the programme meets all the IPA for ACE Impact standards subject to meeting specific conditions, the review process will be extended by a maximum of 12 months to allow the programme to meet those conditions and the review team to confirm that it has done so successfully. QAA will work with you to set out a time frame with follow-up actions.

The programme team is expected to provide an action plan within four weeks after receiving the draft report. The action plan should be signed off by the head of your institution and the head of the programme. This should address any specific conditions set by the review team, as well as respond to any other recommendations and set out any plans to capitalise on any good practice identified.

Once the programme team has completed the necessary actions and submitted relevant
evidence to QAA, a follow-up desk-based analysis will be undertaken to determine if the programme has now satisfied the conditions set and consequently meets the IPA for ACE Impact standards. A report recommending whether to revise or retain the original outcome will then be submitted to the Accreditation Panel for a final decision. The Accreditation Panel has two options: the programme meets all the standards for International Programme Accreditation for ACE Impact, or the programme does not meet the standards for International Programme Accreditation for ACE Impact. Once the panel has made its decision, the process as indicated (above and below) is followed.

The programme does not meet the standards for International Programme Accreditation for ACE Impact

Where the Accreditation Panel confirms a review team's conclusions that the programme does not fully meet the IPA for ACE Impact standards, the outcome of the IPA for ACE Impact is unsuccessful. In this instance, the draft report will be sent to the programme team to consider whether it wishes to appeal the overall judgement. If the programme team chooses not to appeal, then the report will be published on the QAA website.

Any appeal should be made within four weeks of receiving the draft report and should be based on the findings contained within it. QAA will not publish the report, meet a third-party request for disclosure of its contents, or consider the action plan during the appeal process. Where an appeal is unsuccessful, the report will be published promptly after the end of the appeal process. Further details of how to appeal against the review outcomes can be found in Appendix 15.
Stage 4: The mid-cycle review

The mid-cycle review takes place two to three years after a successful review, as a requirement for the continued validity of your QAA International Programme Accreditation. It provides an opportunity for the programme team to receive feedback on how it is following up on recommendations and features of good practice found during the QAA review. A successful mid-cycle review is required to retain the QAA International Programme Accreditation badge for the full five years granted by the Accreditation Panel.

The mid-cycle review is a desk-based study. The key stages in mid-cycle review are shown and explained in more detail below.

The mid-cycle review process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Before mid-cycle review</th>
<th>During mid-cycle review</th>
<th>After mid-cycle review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Review team appointed</td>
<td>• Desk-based analysis</td>
<td>• Draft report to Accreditation Panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Virtual preparatory meeting</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Accreditation Panel decision</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Supporting documentation</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Draft report to institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Factual amendments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Final report and outcome to institution</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The process takes place over approximately four months. An indicative timeline for the mid-cycle review stage can be found in Appendix 2.

Before the mid-cycle review

The mid-cycle review team

QAA appoints a team of two, including one QAA Officer and one reviewer who is a subject expert to carry out the mid-cycle review.

The QAA Officer will coordinate the review and act as the primary point of contact with the institution/programme team. The institution/programme team will be told who the QAA Officer is and will be welcome to get in touch to ask questions.

The QAA Officer will advise and guide the reviewer in their deliberations to ensure that decisions and the overall conclusion are securely based on the evidence made available by the programme team. The QAA Officer is responsible for editing and producing the report, as well as acting as a reviewer. Further details about the role of the QAA Officer can be found in Appendix 3.

QAA will agree names of the proposed QAA review team for confirmation by you in advance of the review. You will be informed which institutions or organisations the members of the review team work for and whether they have declared any other interests (such as membership of a governing body of another institution). QAA will ask you to indicate any actual or potential conflicts of interest that reviewers might have with the programme and may adjust team membership in light of that information.
The facilitator
The institution/programme team must nominate a facilitator to work with the QAA Officer. The facilitator helps to organise and ensure the smooth running of the mid-cycle review stage and improve the flow of information between the QAA team and the programme under review. The development of an effective working relationship between QAA and the programme through the facilitator should help to avoid misunderstandings (for example, the programme team misunderstanding what QAA requires, or QAA misunderstanding the nature and scope of the programme). Further details about the role of the facilitator can be found in Appendix 3.

Supporting documentation
As part of the preparation for the mid-cycle review, the programme team will be asked to submit a brief evidence-based report to QAA summarising:

- any major changes in the structure and organisation of the programme since the IPA for ACE Impact review
- any key strategic developments (for example, in learning and teaching, research or information management) since the review
- actions taken to address the recommendations identified in the IPA for ACE Impact review
- actions taken to further any features of good practice identified in the IPA for ACE Impact review
- the programme team’s intentions for the further development of quality assurance procedures and for the enhancement of learning opportunities.

This brief evidence-based report is likely to be the first piece of evidence the review team will encounter in the mid-cycle review process. It will continue to be used throughout the process, both as a source of information and as a way of navigating the supporting documentation.

The report must be accompanied by supporting documentation as evidence. You may also be asked for additional information by the review team following the QAA team's desk-based analysis of your submission.

QAA may also compile information about the programme from publicly-available sources. This will vary depending on the programme and may include the most recent reports relating to the programme from other national and international agencies and organisations, and other organisations with which the programme works in partnership, and information that is freely available on the institution/programme website.

Virtual preparatory meeting
The QAA Officer will contact you approximately three months in advance to agree the schedule for your mid-cycle review. Prior to your submission, the QAA Officer will arrange a virtual preparatory meeting with the programme lead. The QAA Officer will deliver a briefing on the mid-cycle review process which is followed by the opportunity for you to ask questions. The QAA Officer will explain and agree logistics, such as arrangements for the uploading of documentary evidence, at this stage.
During the mid-cycle review

A QAA Officer and a reviewer conduct the mid-cycle review to evaluate:

- the programme team's response to recommendations and any features of good practices identified in the IPA for ACE Impact review
- whether quality assurance and enhancement arrangements appear appropriate in light of evolving programme priorities and contexts
- whether any changes in the programme might impact on the extent to which the standards are being met.

After the mid-cycle review

Following the desk-based analysis, the review team will finalise its key findings from the mid-cycle review and produce a review report setting out QAA's conclusions about the progress made against the recommendations in the IPA for ACE Impact report and highlighting perceived strengths and weaknesses in current and future plans for quality assurance and enhancement. The report will also propose a conclusion regarding the continuing validity of the International Programme Accreditation.

Once the team has drafted its report, it will be reviewed by an independent panel of QAA Officers who were not involved in the review of the programme. The purpose of this QAA internal moderation process is to check whether the review has been conducted in line with the published method and whether the review findings are clearly articulated, evidence-based and consistent.

The draft report will then be presented to the QAA Accreditation Panel. The Panel will consider the report and reach a decision as to whether or not the programme can continue to use the QAA International Programme Accreditation badge until the end of the five-year accreditation cycle. The Accreditation Panel meets every three months and meetings are scheduled at least 12 months in advance. All completed IPA for ACE Impact reports are presented to the next scheduled Accreditation Panel meeting following completion of the QAA internal moderation process.

Approximately two weeks after the Accreditation Panel meeting, the programme team will receive the draft report. The programme team lead has the opportunity to respond within two weeks of receipt of the draft report, telling QAA of any factual errors or any misinterpretations leading from those inaccuracies. The review team will then consider your response and make any changes it deems necessary, incorporating those changes in a revised report.

Approximately eight weeks after the Accreditation Panel meeting, the finalised report will be sent to you together with an outcome letter confirming whether the programme is making satisfactory progress since the successful IPA for ACE Impact and that the period of validity of the QAA Programme Accreditation can be continued to the end of the five-year accreditation cycle.

The final report will be published on the QAA website.

If the mid-cycle review report indicates the existence of potentially serious difficulties in the institution/programme team's management of quality and standards, QAA may decide that further engagement is necessary, or that the programme's licence to display the QAA programme accreditation logo should be suspended or withdrawn, or that the accreditation should end.
End of accreditation period

Towards the end of the programme accreditation period, you will be invited to apply for a new IPA for ACE Impact review. Details of the process to be followed will be provided during the final year of the programme accreditation period.

Where you choose to seek a further five-year accreditation, the process for the renewal of IPA for ACE Impact commences at Stage 2: Review.
Appendices

Appendix 1 - Supporting documentation required at application stage

The programme team will be asked to supply the following information to support your application:

- a brief description of the institution, its mission and ethos
- a list of programmes (courses) provided
- the locations where learning takes place
- academic partnerships (if any)
- student and staff numbers (headcount) specifically for the programme under review
- proof of legal identity and assurance that there are no current legal disputes taking place that may be relevant to the application
- proof of licence to practise (the right to operate as a higher education institution); proof of recognition by the relevant national authority
- proof of ownership/lease of the facilities used for learning
- proof of financial good standing
- a short narrative explaining the rationale for the decision to undergo IPA for ACE Impact
- proof that you have informed your relevant national quality assurance authority or other relevant agency or ministry to make them aware of the programme's intention to request an IPA for ACE Impact
- Description of the programme to be accredited - Programme Specification (see Appendix 17)
Appendix 2 - Indicative timeline for each stage

Stage 1: Application timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 0</td>
<td>Receipt of documentation, institution submits application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week +1</td>
<td>QAA Officer initial screening check and request for additional documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week +2</td>
<td>Supplementary documentation received</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week +3</td>
<td>QAA Officer completes initial screening</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week +3</td>
<td>QAA holds a screening panel meeting to decide whether your application can proceed to the next stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week +4</td>
<td>QAA sends letter confirming outcome and next steps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Stage 2: Gap analysis timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week -10</td>
<td>Institution/programme team confirms decision to proceed to gap analysis stage and makes payment QAA allocates a QAA Officer and an assessor and informs programme team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week -9</td>
<td>Preparatory meeting between QAA Officer and your programme team Gap analysis visit schedule and QAA team confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week -6</td>
<td>Your programme team uploads gap analysis documentation to QAA's secure electronic site QAA team begins desk-based analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week -4</td>
<td>QAA team reviews gap analysis documentation QAA team requests additional documentation (if required)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week -2</td>
<td>You uploads additional documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week -1</td>
<td>QAA team continues desk-based analysis QAA team prepares for gap analysis visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 0</strong></td>
<td><strong>Gap analysis visit takes place</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>QAA sends draft comments to you for the purposes of allowing you to advise QAA of factual errors or errors of interpretation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Stage 3 and 4: Review and accreditation timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week -18</td>
<td>Institution/programme team confirms decision to proceed to review stage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>and makes payment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QAA allocates a QAA Officer and informs programme team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week -16</td>
<td>Preparatory meeting between QAA Officer and programme team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review schedule confirmed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week -14</td>
<td>Review team agreed with programme team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week -12</td>
<td>Programme team uploads a self-evaluation document (SED) with supporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>documentation to QAA secure portal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week -12</td>
<td>Review team begins desk-based analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week -9</td>
<td>QAA Officer requests any additional documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week -6</td>
<td>Programme team uploads additional documentation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week -5</td>
<td>Review team continues desk-based analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week -4</td>
<td>Review team holds its first team meeting to discuss the outcome of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>desk-based study, and the programme for the review visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The QAA Officer informs you of:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the review team’s main lines of enquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• who the review team wishes to meet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• any further requests for documentary evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week -2</td>
<td>Programme team uploads additional documentation and confirms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>attendee lists for the visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QAA prepares for the review visit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Week 0</strong></td>
<td><strong>Review visit takes place</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week +2</td>
<td>QAA review team prepares draft report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Draft report goes to QAA internal moderation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week +4</td>
<td>Draft report goes to QAA Accreditation Panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Week 0** | QAA review team presents recommendation to the QAA Accreditation Panel.  
Accreditation decision is taken |
|  | (Accreditation Panel normally meets once per quarter with at least four meeting dates set in advance. All completed IPA for ACE Impact reports are presented to the next scheduled Accreditation Panel meeting following completion of the QAA internal moderation process.) |
| Week +2 | QAA Officer sends draft review report to you (and Lead Student Representative (LSR) where relevant) for the purposes of allowing you to advise QAA of factual errors or errors of interpretation |
| Week +4 | You (and LSR where relevant) advise QAA of any factual errors or errors of interpretation (incorporating any comments from partner organisations) |
| Week +9 | QAA sends outcome letter and final report to you  
QAA publishes final report on QAA website |

**Stage 5: Mid-cycle review timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Week -8 | Preparatory meeting between QAA Officer and programme team  
Review schedule confirmed |
| Week -6 | Review team agreed with programme team |
| **Week 0** | Programme team uploads a brief evidence-based report with supporting documentation to QAA portal |
| Week +1 | Review team begins desk-based analysis |
| Week +2 | QAA Officer requests any additional documentation (if required) |
| Week +3 | Programme team uploads additional documentation |
| Week +4 | Review team continues desk-based analysis |
| Week +5 | QAA review team prepares draft report  
Draft report goes to QAA internal moderation |
| **Week 0** | QAA review team presents recommendation to the QAA Accreditation Panel  
Accreditation decision is taken |
<p>|  | (Accreditation Panel normally meets once per quarter with at least four meeting dates set in advance. All completed IPA for ACE Impact reports are presented to the next scheduled Accreditation Panel meeting following completion of the QAA internal moderation process.) |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week +2</td>
<td>QAA Officer sends draft review report to you for the purposes of allowing you to advise QAA of factual errors or errors of interpretation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week +4</td>
<td>You advise QAA of any factual errors or errors of interpretation (incorporating any comments from partner organisations)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week +9</td>
<td>QAA sends outcome letter and final report to you</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>QAA publishes final report on QAA website</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3 - Roles and responsibilities

Attributes of gap analysis/review team members

The principal attributes expected of gap analysis/review team members include:

- experience of managing quality and academic standards in higher education or recent experience of being a student in higher education
- a clear understanding of the governance and management of higher education institutions
- an ability to assimilate, analyse and synthesise a substantial amount of documentary material
- an ability to engage in discussion and debate with programme representatives to identify and comment on key issues relating to quality
- an ability to produce written commentary on the findings of review activity and to assist in drafting the report
- a willingness to work as a member of a review team and share responsibility for collective decisions and an overall conclusion
- at least one member of the review team to be a subject specialist who will be able to comment on the indicative programme content and appropriateness of learning, teaching, assessment and student support to ensure student achievement of the programme intended learning outcomes.

Responsibilities of the QAA Officer

The principal responsibilities of the QAA Officer at the gap analysis stage are to:

- ensure compliance with the process set out in this handbook
- liaise with the institution about the schedule for the gap analysis stage
- keep a record of all meetings relating to the gap analysis stage
- oversee the follow-up to the gap analysis visit
- edit and produce the gap analysis stage report.

The QAA Officer is also an assessor at the gap analysis stage.

The principal responsibilities of the QAA Officer at the review and mid-cycle review stages are to:

- ensure compliance with the process set out in this handbook
- liaise with the facilitator about the schedule for the review programme
- confirm arrangements for the first review team meeting and review visit(s)
- keep a record of all meetings relating to the review
- oversee the follow-up to the review and accreditation stages
- present the review report and the review team findings to the Accreditation Panel
- edit the review report and oversee its production.

The QAA Officer is also a reviewer at the mid-cycle review stage.
Role and responsibilities of the facilitator

The person appointed as facilitator must be willing to become familiar with the IPA for ACE Impact process and should have:

- a good working knowledge of the institution/programme's systems and procedures, and an appreciation of matters relating to quality and standards
- the ability to communicate clearly in English, build relationships and maintain confidentiality
- the ability to observe objectively
- the ability to provide objective guidance and advice.

The facilitator will be expected to:

- act as the primary contact for the QAA Officer during the preparations for accreditation
- act as the primary contact for the review team during the visit
- provide advice and guidance to the review team on the SED and any supporting documentation
- provide advice and guidance to the review team on the programme's structures, policies, priorities and procedures
- ensure the review team is provided with additional evidence, clarifying evidence requests as needed
- help ensure that the programme has a good understanding of the matters raised by the review team, thus contributing to the effectiveness of the gap analysis/review
- meet the review team on request during the visit, in order to provide further guidance on sources of information and clarification of matters relating to the programme's structures, policies, priorities and procedures
- where relevant, work with the lead student representative to ensure that the student representative body is informed of and understands the progress.

The facilitator will not be present for the review team's private meetings. However, the facilitator will have the opportunity for regular meetings with it at other times, which will provide opportunities for both the review team and the programme team to seek further clarification outside of the formal meetings. This is intended to aid communication between the programme team and the review team during the review and enable the programme team to gain a better understanding of the review team's lines of enquiry.

The facilitator is permitted to observe any of the review team's other meetings, except those with students and private review team meetings. When observing, the facilitator should not participate in the discussion unless invited to do so by the review team.

The facilitator may legitimately:

- bring additional relevant information to the attention of the review team
- seek to correct factual inaccuracy
- assist the programme team in understanding matters raised by the review team.

It is for the QAA team to decide how best to use the information provided by the facilitator.

The facilitator is not a member of the QAA team and will not make judgements about the provision. The facilitator does not have access to QAA's electronic communication system for QAA teams.
The facilitator is required to observe the same conventions of confidentiality as members of the QAA team. In particular, the confidentiality of written material produced by QAA team members must be respected, and no information gained may be used in a manner that allows individuals to be identified. However, providing that appropriate confidentiality is observed, the facilitator may make notes on discussions with the QAA team and report back to other staff, in order to ensure that your institution has a good understanding of the matters being raised. This can contribute to the effectiveness of the review, and to the subsequent enhancement of quality and standards.

**The QAA team has the right to ask the facilitator to disengage from the review process at any time, if it considers that there are conflicts of interest, or that the facilitator's presence will inhibit discussions.**

**Responsibilities of the lead student representative**

The lead student representative (LSR), if there is one, should receive copies of all key correspondence from QAA.

The LSR should normally be responsible for:

- organising or overseeing any written student submission
- helping the QAA team to select students to meet
- advising the QAA team during the visit, on request
- liaising internally with the facilitator to ensure smooth communication between the student body and the programme team
- disseminating information about the review to the student body
- collating the students' comments on the draft review report
- coordinating the students' input into the programme team's action plan.

The LSR is permitted to observe any of the review team's meetings with students but not the meetings with staff. The LSR will, however, be invited to attend the final meeting with the programme team towards the end of the review visit.

QAA expects the programme team to provide appropriate operational and logistical support to the LSR and, in particular, to share relevant information or data to ensure that any student submission is well-informed and evidence-based.
Appendix 4 - Supporting documentation required at gap analysis stage

The gap analysis is designed to show that the programme can demonstrate it is able potentially to meet the 10 standards set out in Part 1 of the ESG. The gap analysis is a self-assessment, carried out by the programme team at the institution. The QAA gap analysis team verifies the gap analysis conducted by the programme team and makes a recommendation on whether the programme can proceed to Stage 3 - Review.

The criteria for the gap analysis are the 10 standards set out in Part 1 of the ESG. Full details and guidelines are available on the ENQA website.

The programme team should show, by reference to evidence, that there are appropriate policies, procedures and processes in place to enable the 10 ESG standards to be met. By analysing the gap analysis conducted by the programme team, the QAA gap analysis team determines whether there is the potential for the programme to be able to demonstrate that it meets the relevant standard in each case at the Stage 3 - Review.

The gap analysis team do not assess the effectiveness of the policies and procedures or their implementation. Such assessment takes place during Stage 3 - Review.

Evidence to support the gap analysis might include, but is not limited to:

- institutional and/or departmental strategies
- operational plans
- policies
- procedures and protocols
- handbooks or guidance
- programme and module specifications
- organigrams of committee or managerial structures
- committee terms of reference
- reports of internal and external reviews
- memoranda of cooperation with partner organisations
- public information - for example, website.
Appendix 5 - Technical requirements for the gap analysis and review submission and supporting documentation

The institution/student submission and supporting documentation must be uploaded to QAA's secure electronic site. The precise date for doing these will be confirmed in writing. We will explain by letter how the submission and supporting evidence should be uploaded.

The table below shows the key technical points to consider when compiling and uploading the institution/student submission and supporting evidence to QAA’s secure electronic site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Length of submission</th>
<th>To ensure the submission is clear and legible for the QAA team, the following guidelines on formatting must be adhered to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Arial font, 11-point (minimum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• single-line spacing (minimum)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• 2 cm margins (minimum).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall presentation</th>
<th>The gap analysis document/self-evaluation document and supporting evidence should be supplied in a coherent structure:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• all files together, with no subfolders or zipped files</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• documents clearly labelled numerically, beginning 001, 002, 003 and so on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• ensure that each document has a unique reference number - do not number the same document with different numbers and submit it multiple times.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>File-naming convention</th>
<th>Only use alphanumeric characters (a-z and 0-9); for spaces use the underscore (_); and the hyphen (-). Do not use full stops and any other punctuation marks or symbols, as these will not upload successfully.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>File types to avoid</th>
<th>Do not upload:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• shortcut files (also known as .lnk and .url files)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• temporary files beginning with a tilde (~)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• administrative files such as thumbs.db and .DS_Store.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For technical assistance with uploading files, please contact your QAA Officer or the QAA service desk on +44 2829 331111, or email onedesk@m5servicedesk.ac.uk. The service desk operates from Monday to Friday between 9.00 and 17.00 UK time.
Appendix 6 - Sample schedule for the gap analysis and review visit

A typical schedule for a two-day gap analysis visit might look like this. The actual schedule will be determined by the review team in agreement with the programme team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09.00-10.30</td>
<td><strong>Meeting 1</strong> with Dean of Faculty or Head of Department and senior staff responsible for quality assurance and enhancement - to include a presentation by the programme team of no more than 15 minutes. The head of your institution is welcome to attend a meeting with the review team, but this is not obligatory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30-11.00</td>
<td>QAA team private meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.00-12.00</td>
<td><strong>Meeting 2</strong> with a representative group of students and alumni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00-13.30</td>
<td>QAA team private meeting and working lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.30-14.30</td>
<td><strong>Meeting 3</strong> with a group of staff responsible for the delivery of teaching and academic support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.30-15.00</td>
<td>QAA team private meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.00-16.00</td>
<td><strong>Meeting 4</strong> with a group of staff responsible for delivery of support services (for example, library, IT, counselling, language development support, career services)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.00-16.30</td>
<td>QAA team private meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.30-17.00</td>
<td>Meeting with facilitator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09.00-10.00</td>
<td>Observations of the physical resource provision and virtual learning environment (for example, teaching spaces, laboratories, library, self-study spaces, recreational spaces, online learning and teaching systems)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00-10.30</td>
<td>QAA team private meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30-13.30</td>
<td>QAA team private meeting and working lunch</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 13.30-15.00  | **Meeting 5** - final meeting with main contact and other members of the Senior Team as appropriate to:  
• provide general feedback  
• advise on recommendations regarding progression to review and, if relevant, scope and timing of review  
• provide some information and advice in relation to preparing for the review stage and the difference from gap analysis |
| 15.00-16.00  | QAA team private meeting                                           |

A typical schedule for a two-day review visit might look like this. The actual schedule will be determined by the review team in agreement with the programme team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Day 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09.00-10.30</td>
<td><strong>Meeting 1</strong> with Dean of Faculty or Head of Department and senior staff responsible for quality assurance and enhancement. The head of your institution is welcome to attend a meeting with the review team, but this is not obligatory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time</td>
<td>Day 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30-11.00</td>
<td>QAA team private meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.00-12.00</td>
<td><strong>Meeting 2</strong> with a representative group of students and alumni</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00-13.30</td>
<td>QAA team private meeting and working lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.30-14.30</td>
<td><strong>Meeting 3</strong> with a group of staff responsible for the delivery of teaching and academic support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.30-15.00</td>
<td>QAA team private meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.00-16.00</td>
<td><strong>Meeting 4</strong> with a group of staff responsible for delivery of support services (for example, library, IT, counselling, language development support, career services)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.00-16.30</td>
<td>QAA team private meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.30-17.00</td>
<td>Meeting with facilitator</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Day 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>09.00-10.00</td>
<td><strong>Meeting 5</strong> with stakeholders - employers and any other appropriate interested parties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.00-10.30</td>
<td>QAA team private meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.30-12.00</td>
<td>Observations of the programme's physical resource provision and virtual learning environment (for example, teaching spaces, laboratories, library, self-study spaces, recreational spaces, online learning and teaching systems)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.00-13.30</td>
<td>QAA team private meeting and working lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.30-14.30</td>
<td><strong>Meeting 6</strong> - final meeting with Dean of Faculty or Head of Department, the facilitator and LSR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.30-17.00</td>
<td><strong>Review team meets alone to agree key findings</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The key findings consist of:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• the overall judgement about whether the programme meets all 10 programme accreditation standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• specific conditions (applicable if at least one IPA for ACE Impact standard is not met)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• recommendations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• features of good practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 7 - Meeting protocol for gap analysis and review visits

This appendix sets out QAA’s protocol for QAA team meetings with representatives of the programme team undergoing IPA for ACE Impact at various stages. Time is always limited, and it is important that the review team makes best use of the available time in its meetings with staff and students on the programme.

QAA has many years of experience of running such meetings and the protocol is based on that experience. We respectfully ask institutions undergoing IPA for ACE Impact to abide by this protocol.

- A schedule of meetings is agreed in advance of the review visit. Any suggested changes that are proposed during the visit should be discussed between the QAA Officer and the facilitator at the earliest opportunity.

- The people attending a meeting are agreed in advance with the programme team. Any changes to personnel or students attending should be notified to the QAA Officer at the earliest opportunity.

- Numbers attending meetings are limited. Experience tells us that smaller meetings are more effective than larger meetings. Meetings with staff are normally expected to include no more than 10 people plus the review team. Student meetings normally involve no more than 12 students plus the review team. This allows for more in-depth discussion and for all to take part.

- The programme team is asked to ensure participants are invited to the meetings.

- Meetings are generally question and answer sessions. A presentation (about the programme) is only required in the first meeting with the senior staff and in the meeting to discuss facilities. The presentations should be brief (for example, 15 minutes). The QAA Officer may give an overview presentation at the opening meeting, or this may have been sent out prior to the meeting for participants to view. Any presentation should be agreed in advance with the QAA Officer.

- All meetings are led by QAA.

- Meetings will start on time and will not be extended beyond the end time published in the schedule. A meeting may finish earlier than the published end time.

- Those attending a meeting should arrange to be available, uninterrupted, for the duration of the meeting and not leave the meeting except through illness, fire alarm or another emergency.

- Staff at the institution should be briefed not to interrupt a meeting when it is in progress.

- Staff and students should be encouraged to speak freely during meetings. The record of the meeting does not identify individuals, and neither will they be identified in the published report.

- Meetings with students must not be attended by staff of the programme. If a student is also a member of staff, they should not attend meetings the team holds with students.

- Meetings will not be recorded.
Appendix 8 - Examples of practice to meet the programme accreditation standards

Listed below are examples of practice that may be witnessed by the review team that may help them to determine the extent to which the programme meets the IPA for ACE Impact standards (the 10 ESG Standards). They are adapted from the guidelines set out in the ESG for each standard, expanded to reflect examples of practice operating effectively that a QAA review team may consider if a programme meets a standard. The examples should be considered as a guide only, in acknowledgement that not all of them will be appropriate for all programmes. Each programme will have its own examples on which it can draw to provide evidence to the review team. The examples below are not an exhaustive list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Examples of good practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Policy for quality assurance</strong>&lt;br&gt;Clearly set out policies and arrangements for managing quality assurance standards, including where activities are carried out by other parties, appropriate to the context in which the institution is operating.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Design and approval of programmes</strong>&lt;br&gt;Clearly-defined processes, roles and responsibilities for programme design and approval in line with institutional strategy together with appropriate oversight of processes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Student-centred learning, teaching and assessment</strong>&lt;br&gt;Strategic approach to learning and teaching, understood by staff, students and others involved in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>Examples of good practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teaching and learning with processes to collect and analyse appropriate information to ensure the continued effectiveness of the strategic approach.</td>
<td>be achieved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assistance for students in understanding their responsibility to engage with the learning opportunities provided.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Feedback to students that is sufficiently detailed and focused to enable them to monitor their individual progress and further their academic development.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Learning and teaching practices that are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Qualified and supported staff responsible for teaching or supporting students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Staff responsible for assessing student work, or conducting associated assessment processes, who are competent to undertake these roles.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Secure assessment policies, regulations and processes, including those for the recognition of prior learning.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clear processes for marking assessments and moderating marks.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Clear structures and processes for the operation of assessment panels and awards boards.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Processes for preventing, identifying, investigating and responding to unacceptable academic practice.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assessment and feedback practices that are informed by reflection, consideration of professional practice, and subject-specific scholarship.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Staff and students have a shared understanding of the basis on which academic judgements are made.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Volume, timing and nature of assessment that enables students to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Academic appeals and complaints procedures that are understood by students, conducted in a timely and fair manner, and acted upon</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard</td>
<td>Examples of good practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>---------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>appropriately.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Processes that make available opportunities for students to raise matters of concern without risk of disadvantage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriate and effective arrangements for representing the collective student voice at all institutional levels, to support quality assurance and promote enhancement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td><strong>Student admission, progression, recognition and certification</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transparent recruitment and admission policies and processes that are consistently and fairly applied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recruitment and admission policies and processes informed by strategic priorities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Processes for recognition of prior learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Procedures for handling appeals and complaints about recruitment and admission.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Processes to inform prospective and current students, at the earliest opportunity, of any significant changes to a programme to which they have applied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information provided to successful applicants to enable them to make the transition from applicant to student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Information provided to students to enable their development and achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunities for students to develop skills that enable their academic, personal and professional progression, including through informal learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Commitment to equity that enables student development and achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Processes that determine and evaluate how student development and achievement is enabled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policies and systems that facilitate successful academic progression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Record of studies provided to students on completion of their programme, which provides evidence for others of the students’ achievement in their academic studies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td><strong>Teaching staff</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policies and practices for the recruitment of suitably qualified staff. Support provided to staff in the development of teaching methods and the enhancement of the student learning experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Systems and procedures to monitor the delivery of teaching and learning, and to ensure that the standards required for individual programmes of study are being met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Policies for providing and recording continuing professional development opportunities for staff involved in teaching or supervising students, including the encouragement of scholarly activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Promotion of staff scholarship to inform teaching practice.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Encouragement of innovation in teaching methods and the use of new technologies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Arrangements for ensuring that part-time and sessional teaching staff, including postgraduate students who teach or support learning, are equipped for their roles.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>6</th>
<th><strong>Learning resources and student support</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appropriate systems for allocating, planning and providing learning resources and student support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Defined roles and responsibilities for staff that enable student development, mobility and achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provision of appropriate and current learning resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Provision of appropriate specialist technical and IT resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Qualified and supported staff who enable students to develop and achieve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Access to the required learning resources, with opportunities for students to develop the skills to use them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Information provided to students that specifies the learning opportunities and support available to them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Comprehensive academic and pastoral support for students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Guidelines that set out what is expected of students and what students can expect of the programme.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Information management</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 8 | Public information | - Recruitment information and activities that enable prospective students to make informed decisions.  
- Published process for application and admission to the programmes of study.  
- Clear current information about the programme.  
- Easy access for students to all current policies, procedures and other information. |
| 9 | Ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes | - Processes, roles and responsibilities for ongoing monitoring and periodic review of programmes.  
- Deliberate steps to use the outcomes of ongoing monitoring and periodic review to enhance provision to ensure a supportive and effective learning environment is maintained.  
- Evaluation of ongoing monitoring and periodic review processes, and action taken to improve them where necessary.  
- Use of reference points and external expertise in ongoing monitoring and periodic review.  
- Involvement of students in ongoing monitoring and periodic review.  
- Arrangements to support and develop staff contribution to ongoing monitoring and periodic review.  
- Process to protect the academic interests of students when a programme is closed. |
| 10 | Cyclical external quality assurance | - Consideration of action taken and progress made since the previous external quality assurance activity when preparing for the next one. |
Appendix 9 - Student engagement and involvement

Introduction

Students are central to the review process. In every IPA for ACE Impact there are many opportunities for students to inform and contribute to the process. Students are likely to be involved together with the programme team in preparations for the review and may produce materials for it. The review team will meet a representative selection of students and will work with the LSR, and students are likely to be involved in responding to the review as the programme develops and seeks to implement the resulting action plan.

Students are also a vital part of QAA's processes. All IPA for ACE Impact review teams must include a student. Student reviewers are full members of review teams, contributing in the same way as other members.

QAA will help to brief and support the LSR. Institutions must support the participation of their students' union and/or representatives in the review, providing training, advice and access to information.

Develop student submission

The function of the student submission is to help the review team understand what it is like to be a student at their institution and on the programme, and how students' views are considered in the institution's decision-making and quality assurance processes. Evidence from students informs the review team's investigations during the review visit.

The student submission should aim to represent the views of the breadth and diversity of students on the programme. It should draw on existing information, such as results from student surveys and recorded outcomes of meetings with staff and students. It should not be necessary to conduct surveys especially for the student submission.

Any student submission is usually a written document but can take alternative forms, such as video, presentations or podcasts. The submission should be concise and should provide an explanation of the sources of evidence that informed its comments and conclusions.

The student submission should not name or discuss the competence of individual members of staff. It should not discuss personal grievances. It should also seek to avoid including comments from individual students who may not be representative of a wider group.

The student submission must include a statement of how it has been compiled and by whom, and the extent to which its contents have been shared with and endorsed by other students. There is no template; however, it may be based around a set of case studies. How case studies are chosen and shared with the wider student body should be clear. Case studies can be about particular local approaches that are valued by students or about wider initiatives that have had a beneficial impact on learning or support. For instance, students may present case studies on particular initiatives in the programme that develop their employability skills. Alternatively, students may want to highlight how changes introduced across the whole institution are helping to develop employability.

Any separate student submission should be posted to the QAA secure electronic site by no later than nine weeks before the review visit. The QAA Officer will confirm the precise submission date.
Sharing the student contribution with the programme

Given that the student contribution is such an important piece of evidence in the review process, its development will often have involved discussions with staff who may have supported students in its evolution. In the interests of transparency and fairness, there is an expectation that it will be shared with the institution - at the latest when it is uploaded to QAA's secure electronic site. Ideally, both the institution's self-assessment and any student submission should reflect how institutions and students routinely work together and the content of neither will be a surprise to the other.

Meetings with students as part of IPA for ACE Impact

The review team will meet with students and student representatives as part of IPA for ACE Impact. Student representatives will normally be part of each of the meetings or briefings in the preparatory part of the process. During the review visit, the review team will meet with a representative range of students and alumni. The LSR normally helps to select students and alumni to meet the team and to brief them on the nature of IPA for ACE Impact and their role within it.

Continuity

Each IPA for ACE Impact occurs over a period of several months. Both the programme team and the students will have been prepared well before the start of the review and will continue to be involved in action planning afterwards. Institutions/programme teams are expected to ensure that students are fully informed and involved in the process throughout. The student representative body and the programme team should develop a means for regularly exchanging information - not only so that students are kept informed but also to encourage them to get involved.

The student representative body is expected to have an input into the programme team's action plan following the review.
Appendix 10 - Writing a self-evaluation document at review stage

This annex demonstrates an effective approach to structuring and writing a self-evaluation document (SED).

A suggested structure

**Section 1: Brief description**

The description should cover:

- the institution's mission and ethos
- recent major changes in the programme under review
- implications of changes, challenges, strategic aims or priorities for safeguarding academic standards and the quality of students' learning opportunities in the programme
- details of the external reference points, where relevant, that the institution and programme are required to consider (for example, national requirements, the requirements of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies, and qualification frameworks).

**Section 2: Track record in managing quality and standards**

Briefly describe the institution and programme team's background and experience in managing quality and standards, including reference to the outcomes of previous external and internal review activities and the institution/programme team's responses. Where relevant, describe how the recommendations from the last external and internal reviews have been addressed, and how good practice identified has been built on. Refer to any action plans that have been produced as a result of reviews.

**Section 3: Quality assurance standards in relation to the ESG Standards**

Comment separately on how the programme addresses each of the 10 ESG Standards.

Reference the evidence used by the programme team to verify that each standard is being met and is effectively managed, as well as any relevant benchmarked datasets. The evidence should include a representative sample of the reports of internal and external examiners/verifiers (where relevant), programme approvals and periodic reviews, as well as the programme team's response to those reports (for example, as minutes of committee meetings), where applicable. (See Appendix 9 for examples of practice used to determine how effectively the programme meets the IPA for ACE Impact standards.)

Simplistically, you should comment on:

- what you do
- how you do it
- why you do it that way
- how well you do it
- how you know how well you do it.

**Writing style and referencing**

An effective approach to writing the SED is to provide, for each section, an opening statement containing an evaluation, then qualify it with supporting evidence - for example:

'There is a comprehensive staff development policy [reference to policy] and the institution
offers a wide range of staff development activities which are systematically recorded [references to the evidence of this]. Although higher education activities are planned in accordance with the requirements of staff, the analysis of the impact of higher education developmental activities on academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities is underdeveloped.'

Such a statement would typically be followed by a clear indication of what is being done to address an area identified for development - for example:

'The Programme Lead and the Human Resources Manager are currently reviewing the staff development policy. It will be strengthened by requiring Higher Education Programme Managers to conduct an annual evaluation of the impact of staff development and training on the standard and quality of higher education provision. This will serve to improve the planning and sharpen the focus of future events. The revised policy [reference to revised policy] will be available from the start of the new academic year, supported by training for Programme Managers and briefings for staff [Minutes, Higher Education Development team meeting, 23 July 2019, paragraph 2].'

Drafting
Circulating the draft SED to higher education staff (and, if appropriate, students and other stakeholders) for comment, widens the perspective and helps to keep colleagues informed and engaged in the process. Ideally, the document should be owned by many, but read as one voice.

Paragraphs
It is important to make the SED as easily navigable as possible as it is used by the review team throughout the review. To help in this we ask that institutions number each paragraph sequentially throughout the document. That is to say, do not start new paragraph numbers for each section.

Referencing
The SED must include clear references to the evidence to illustrate or substantiate its contents, since it is not the responsibility of the review team to seek this evidence out. Evidence included must be clearly relevant to the evaluation and as specific as possible. It is quite acceptable - indeed it is to be expected - that the same key pieces of evidence will be referenced in several different parts of the SED.

In order for the review team to be able to operate efficiently, both in advance and during the review visit, it is important to ensure that all evidence documents are clearly labelled and numbered.

It is equally important to ensure that each evidence document is clearly referenced to the appropriate text in the commentary using the same labelling and numbering system, and providing paragraph numbers and dates of minutes as appropriate.

QAA will explain by email how the SED and supporting evidence should be uploaded to the secure electronic site. The QAA Officer will inform the programme team of the date by which this must be done. See Appendix 5 for technical requirements for the review submission and supporting documentation.
Appendix 11 - Guiding principles for determining the need for an onsite visit

Where Covid and other travel restrictions exist, QAA will work with institutions on the assumption that reviews are conducted online but with the proviso that QAA can make a decision that some or all elements of the review may require the team to visit the site. Any onsite presence will be required to ensure the process is robust and fairly assessed.

Guiding principles for determining the need for an onsite visit

- The institution comes from a country that does not have clear regulations or well-established QA systems.
- A lack of technological capability on the part of the institution to provide evidence through electronic or online means - this could be written records, online access for observations of teaching and learning, and online observation of specialist facilities and resources.
- The nature of the programme would be more appropriately explored through onsite meetings.
- Concerns raised during the desk-based analysis that might lead to a negative outcome which in the view of the review team would be more appropriately explored through onsite meetings.
- Concerns raised during the desk-based analysis that require the team to be able to control the sampling and investigation of evidence (wider sample base) as well as meeting with students where serious concerns have been raised.
- The need to take account of the foreign travel advice from the UK government.
- The need to take account of and support the health and mental wellbeing of QAA staff and reviewers, as well as staff and students for the institution under review.
- The requirement of the commissioning/regulatory body to conduct the whole or parts of the review/assessment onsite in order to satisfy their needs.

Review teams need to also consider whether conducting the visit onsite will be detrimental to the inclusion of members of staff and students who would not be able to come to the review site. This may be, for instance, where the institution has a number of sites that are geographically dispersed.

The review team can decide that only specific activities need to be conducted onsite and that the other elements could be done online. This is what we would term as a hybrid visit. Hybrid visits are considered lower risk as there is scope to restrict the number of reviewers going onsite and the time spent onsite, thereby reducing risks of contracting Covid and disrupting the review.

Whatever the arrangements for the visit, the team need to be mindful of the fact that the institution is given sufficient opportunity to provide evidence and represent itself in the review.
Considerations for hybrid visits

A hybrid visit is one where some elements of the review/assessment are undertaken onsite while other elements are undertaken virtually. If this is the case, the review team and QAA Officer need to consider:

- how the scheduling of the onsite and online elements will support the overall review
- whether the full team or certain members of the review team need to visit the site
- the need of the QAA Officer to be onsite with the reviewer(s)
- travel arrangements - for instance, whether members of the team should travel separately and by car
- use of Covid-secure hotels (provided by QAA’s travel agency)
- Covid working protocols produced by QAA, the institution and hotel as well as nation-specific Working Safely Guidance.

Hybrid meetings

Hybrid meetings are meetings where a group of in-person attendees connect virtually with other meeting attendees. This may be achieved through either party interacting using video conferencing software as individuals or as a group.

In QAA's experience, hybrid meetings have limitations and should be avoided where possible unless the institution/meeting participants have the specific technology to support these meetings. If these types of meetings are used, it is recommended that a test run is conducted and timely access to IT support can be made during the meeting at the institution/QAA.
Appendix 12 - How the review findings are determined

The judgement matrix below shows how findings are determined by the review team.

Step 1 - Determine if each standard is met

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A programme demonstrates that it meets a standard if either of the following statements is true:</th>
<th>A programme demonstrates that it does not meet a standard if either of the following statements is true:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are no recommendations for improvement in relation to this standard. OR Any recommendations for improvement do not relate to issues that, individually or collectively, present any serious risks* to the management of this standard, and they relate only to: • minor omissions or errors • a need to amend or update details in documentation, where the amendment will not require or result in major structural, operational or procedural change • the requirement to complete activity that is already underway in a small number of areas that will allow the programme to meet the standard more fully • the programme's practices to drive improvement and enhancement.</td>
<td>There are recommendations for improvement in relation to this standard, and they relate, either individually or collectively, to: • weakness in the operation of part of the institution's governance structure (as it relates to quality assurance) or lack of clarity about responsibilities • insufficient emphasis or priority given to quality assurance in the institution's/programme's planning processes • quality assurance procedures that are not applied rigorously enough. OR, more seriously There are recommendations for improvement in relation to this standard, and they relate, either individually or collectively, to: • ineffective operation of parts of the institution's governance structure (as it relates to quality assurance) • significant gaps in policy, structures or procedures relating to the quality assurance of the programme • breaches by the institution of its own quality assurance procedures in relation to the programme.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Some moderate risks may exist, and these must be addressed in the programme's action plan in order to avoid more serious problems developing over time.

**Note:** When a standard is met in full, there may be findings of good practice in relation to it; however, a standard may also be met without any good practice being identified. **Note:** A finding of good practice does not guarantee that a standard is met in full. A finding of good practice may only enable the programme to partially meet the standard.
Step 2 - Determine the overall judgement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>…meets all the accreditation standards</th>
<th>…meets all the accreditation standards subject to meeting specific conditions</th>
<th>…does not meet the accreditation standards</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All 10 standards have been met.</td>
<td>Only one (or at most two) of the standards have not been fully met.</td>
<td>Condition is set and needs priority action by the programme within an identified timescale (a maximum of 12 months) to ensure the standard is fully met.</td>
<td>More than two standards have not been met.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** For further details of the overall judgement and follow-up actions, please refer to the Review Stage above.
Appendix 13 - Guidance on producing an action plan

Background

Following the IPA for ACE Impact, the programme team is required to produce an action plan in response to the conclusions of the report. The action plan is intended to support the institution in the continuing development of your higher education provision by describing how the programme team intends to take the findings of the IPA for ACE Impact forward and, by extension, continue to engage with the ESG. Through its publication, the action plan constitutes a public record of the programme team’s commitment to take forward the findings of IPA for ACE Impact, and so will promote greater confidence among students and other external stakeholders about the quality assurance of higher education at the institution.

This action plan should be produced jointly with student representatives, or representatives should be able to post their own commentary on the action plan. It should be signed off by the head of the programme team and be published on the institution/programme website. A link to the report page on QAA’s website should also be provided. The programme team will be expected to update the action plan annually, again in conjunction with student representatives, until actions have been completed, and post the updated plan to the institution/programme website.

We do not specify a template for the action plan because we recognise that each institution/programme team will have its own way of planning after the IPA for ACE Impact; however, an example is provided below.

Example action plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendation or good practice</th>
<th>Action to be taken</th>
<th>Date for completion</th>
<th>Action by</th>
<th>Success indicators</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that all higher education student representatives have access to training and ongoing support to ensure they can fulfil their roles effectively</td>
<td>Develop and implement a training programme and induction pack for higher education student representatives</td>
<td>Insert appropriate date</td>
<td>Senior Management Team</td>
<td>All new higher education student representatives receive an induction pack and undertake training prior to the first student-staff liaison meeting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What do we mean by these headings?

**Recommendation or good practice**

As identified by the review team and contained in the IPA for ACE Impact report.

**Action to be taken**

The programme team should state how it proposes to address each of the recommendations and good practice in this column. Actions should be specific, proportionate, measurable and targeted at the issue or problem identified by the review team.
Date for completion

The programme team should specify dates for when the actions proposed in the previous column will be completed within the timescale specified by the review team. The more specific the action, the easier it will be to set a realistic target date.

Action by

The programme team should identify the person or committee with responsibility for ensuring that the action has been taken. If a person is responsible, the action plan should state their role rather than their name.

Success indicators

The programme team should identify how it will know - and how it will demonstrate - that a recommendation or good practice has been successfully addressed. Again, if there is a specific action and a clear date for completion, it will be easier to identify suitable success indicators.
Appendix 14 - QAA Accreditation Panel

QAA convenes an Accreditation Panel at regular points throughout the year and maintains a calendar of meetings. Where a review panel submits the review outcome and recommendation regarding International Programme Accreditation for ACE Impact, it will be considered at the next scheduled panel meeting.

The Accreditation Panel, which may sit virtually, will consist of:

- Chair - member of QAA Executive team (not the CEO)
- Deputy Chair - member of QAA senior staff
- Five ordinary members:
  - one UK-based member
  - three international members
  - one student member.

Appointments to the panel shall be for a period of three years with the option of reappointment. Appointments for the student member shall be for a period of one year, extendable by the period of one year.

Other attendees may be invited to meetings to support the panel in its decision-making and discharging of its business.

The panel will review all IPA for ACE Impact reports submitted since the previous panel meeting. A record of discussions and decisions will be maintained and available for inspection. A database of decisions, dates and panel members will be maintained by the International and Professional Services team.

The decision of the Accreditation Panel will be notified to the head of the applicant institution.
Appendix 15 - Complaints and appeals

QAA has a process for considering complaints about its own operation and services. It also has a process for considering appeals against accreditation judgements. Details can be found on the QAA website.

Complaints and appeals can be raised in the event that QAA finds that a programme has been unsuccessful in achieving International Programme Accreditation for ACE Impact and the institution considers either that:

- there was a procedural irregularity in the IPA for ACE Impact such that the legitimacy of the decision or decisions reached are called into question; or
- there is material that was in existence at the time which, had it been made available before the IPA for ACE Impact was completed, would have influenced the judgements of the IPA for ACE Impact team, and in relation to which there is a good reason for it not having been provided to the review team during the IPA for ACE Impact.

In the event of a 'does not meet' judgement, the institution may submit a written representation to QAA, including evidence, within four weeks of receiving the Accreditation Panel outcome. The procedure for submitting an appeal or complaint is available on the QAA website. Appeals can only be made if the overall outcome is 'does not meet the IPA for ACE Impact standards.'
Appendix 16 - Privacy and disclosure of information

An effective IPA for ACE Impact requires access to a considerable amount of information, some of which may be sensitive or confidential. Institutions and their staff can be assured that confidential information they disclose to QAA during the various stages of IPA for ACE Impact will not be publicly released or used in an inappropriate manner. QAA is committed to processing personal information in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and UK data protection laws. Our Privacy Notice tells you what to expect when QAA collects personal information.

QAA’s review policies and procedures provide the following assurances:

- Information provided by the programme team is used only for the purpose of review.
- Information marked by the programme team as 'confidential' is not disclosed to any other party by QAA or by individual reviewers, though it may be used to inform review findings.
- Staff, students or other people who are invited to provide information may elect to do so in confidence, in which case the information is treated in the same way as confidential information provided by the programme team.
- Review meetings are confidential - the review team does not reveal what has been said by any individual, nor are individuals identified in the review report. The programme team is encouraged to require the same degree of confidentiality from people whom the review team will meet during the review.
- QAA and its reviewers store confidential information securely.
- Review teams are required to destroy material relating to a review, including the self-evaluation document and any notes or annotations they have made, once the review is complete.
- Review teams make no media or other public comment on reviews in which they participate. Any publicity relating to a review is subject to QAA policies and procedures and will be managed by QAA's public relations team.
Appendix 17 - Glossary of terms

Accreditation
A status awarded to an institution that demonstrates it has been subject to a successful QAA review of its quality management.

Accreditation Panel
A group of external and internal experts who consider reports made by QAA review teams and which makes decisions about whether an organisation is awarded accredited status.

Action plan
A plan developed by the institution after the QAA review report has been published that is signed off by the head of the institution. It responds to the recommendations in the report and gives any plans to capitalise on the identified good practice.

Annual monitoring
Checking a process or activity every year to see if it meets expectations for standards and quality. Annual reports normally include information about student achievements and may comment on the evaluation of courses and modules.

Collaborative arrangement
A formal arrangement between a degree-awarding body and another higher education institution. These may be degree-awarding bodies who the institution collaborates with to deliver higher education qualifications on behalf of the degree-awarding bodies. Alternatively, it may be other delivery organisations who deliver part or all of a proportion of the institution's higher education programmes.

Degree-awarding body
Institutions who have authority - for example, from a national agency - to issue their own awards. Institutions applying to IPA for ACE Impact may be degree-awarding bodies themselves or may collaborate to deliver higher education qualifications on behalf of degree-awarding bodies.

Desk-based analysis
An analysis by the review team of evidence, submitted by the institution, that enables the review team to identify its initial findings and subsequently supports the review team as it develops its review findings.

Enhancement
See Quality enhancement

European Standards and Guidelines
For details, including the full text on each standard, see www.enqa.eu/index.php/home/esg

Examples of practice
A list of policies and practices that a review team may use when considering the extent to which an institution meets the standards for review. The examples should be considered as a guide only, in acknowledgement that not all of them will be appropriate for all institutions.

Externality
The use of experts from outside a higher education institution, such as external examiners or external advisers, to assist in quality assurance procedures.
**Facilitator**
The member of staff identified by the institution to act as the principal point of contact for the QAA Officer and will be available during the review visit, to assist with any questions or requests for additional documentation.

**Good practice**
A feature of good practice is a process or way of working that, in the view of a QAA review team, makes a particularly positive contribution to the institution's higher education provision.

**IPA for ACE Impact standards/the standards for International Programme Accreditation for ACE Impact**
These are the 10 internal quality assurance standards of Part 1 of the *European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (Brussels, 2015; often referred to as the European Standards and Guidelines or ESG).

**Lead student representative (LSR)**
An optional voluntary role that is designed to allow students at the institution applying for IPA for ACE Impact to play a central part in the organisation of the review.

**Mid-cycle review (MCR)**
A review by a QAA Officer and one reviewer, two to three years after the IPA for ACE Impact, of how the institution has responded to IPA for ACE Impact recommendations and furthered any features of good practice.

**Oversight**
Objective scrutiny, monitoring and quality assurance of educational provision.

**Peer reviewers**
Members of the review team who make the decisions in relation to the review of the institution. Peer reviewers have experience of managing quality and academic standards in higher education or have recent experience of being a student in higher education.

**Periodic review**
An internal review of one or more programmes of study, undertaken by institutions periodically (typically once every five years), using nationally-agreed reference points, to confirm that the programmes are of an appropriate academic standard and quality. The process typically involves experts from other higher education institutions. It covers areas such as the continuing relevance of the programme, the currency of the curriculum and reference materials, the employability of graduates and the overall performance of students. Periodic review is one of the main processes whereby institutions can continue to assure themselves about the academic quality and standards of their awards.

**Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs)**
Organisations that set the standards for, and regulate the standards of entry into, particular professions. Professional qualifications (as distinct from academic qualifications) are determined by PSRBs, and they may stipulate academic requirements that must be met in order for an academic programme to be recognised as leading to, or providing exemption from part of, a professional qualification.

Where degree-awarding bodies/awarding organisations choose to offer programmes that lead to, or provide exemption from, specific professional qualifications, the requirements of the relevant PSRB will influence the design of academic programmes, but the responsibility for the academic standards remains with the degree-awarding body/awarding organisation that is awarding the academic qualification.
Where institutions have PSRB accreditation for their programmes, review teams will explore how accreditation requirements are taken into account in the setting and maintaining of standards and the quality assurance of programmes. Review teams will also explore how accurately information about accredited status is conveyed to students.

**Programme of study**
An approved course of study that provides a coherent learning experience and normally leads to a qualification.

**Programme Specification**
A concise description of the intended aims and learning outcomes of a programme of study, detail of how these outcomes can be achieved and demonstrated, and further information including the mode and duration of study, programme-specific regulations and the structure of the programme.

**Quality enhancement**
The process by which higher education institutions systematically improve the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported.

**QAA International Programme Accreditation badge**
A graphic provided by QAA under licence to institutions that have successfully completed an IPA for ACE Impact and have been accredited by QAA's Accreditation Panel.

**Quality assurance**
The systematic monitoring and evaluation of learning and teaching, and the processes that support them, to make sure that the standards of academic awards meet the necessary standards, and that the quality of the student learning experience is being safeguarded and improved.

**QAA Officer**
A member of QAA staff who is responsible for managing all stages of the review, including liaison with the facilitator and the lead student representative (if appropriate).

**Recognition of prior learning**
Assessing previous learning that has occurred in any of a range of contexts including school, college and university, and/or through life and work experiences.

**Recommendation**
Review teams make recommendations where they agree that an institution should consider developing or changing a process or a procedure in order to improve the institution's higher education provision.

**Reference points**
Statements and other publications that establish criteria against which performance can be measured.

**Self-evaluation document**
A self-evaluation report by an institution. The submission should include information about the institution as well as an assessment of the effectiveness of its quality systems.

**Subject Benchmark Statements** describe the nature of study and the academic standards expected of graduates in specific subject areas
**Student submission**
A document representing student views that describes what it is like to be a student at the institution and on the programme, and how students' views are considered in the institution's decision-making and quality assurance processes.

**Validation**
The process by which an institution ensures that its academic programmes meet expected academic standards and that students will be provided with appropriate learning opportunities. It may also be applied to circumstances where a degree-awarding institution gives approval for its awards to be offered by a partner institution or organisation.

**Work-based learning** consists of structured opportunities for learning and is achieved through authentic activity that is supervised in the workplace. This can be undertaken either in work placements or, if the student is in associated employment, in their own workplace.