

The Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK Transnational Higher Education Provision 2021-22 to 2025-26

Consultation - October 2020



Vision

For UK transnational higher education to be recognised worldwide as providing education of the highest quality, an outstanding student experience, added value and enhanced outcomes

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UK transnational higher education

The quality of UK transnational education (TNE) is based on the UK's secure, respected and robust academic standards, backed by common frameworks, and provides awards that enable TNE students to fulfil their potential as effective, contributing global citizens.

The excellence of the quality of UK TNE will be confirmed through independent evaluation by QAA. That confirmation maintains and helps to extend the established reputation of the UK's approach to quality assurance and quality enhancement, retaining and building international trust in UK TNE.



Part 1: Quality evaluation and enhancement of UK transnational higher education provision

1.1 Introduction and background

Introduction

1 The approach to the quality evaluation of UK transnational higher education (QE-TNE) provision outlined in this handbook applies across the UK and will operate over the academic years 2021-22 to 2025-26.

2 It was agreed, through work led by Universities UK International (UUKi) and GuildHE, and tested through consultation,¹ that the interests of UK TNE are best served by a programme of country-specific quality enhancement activity that provides additional insight and support to bolster institutions' knowledge of partner countries and build up their in-country networks. The programme consists of an agreed, published schedule of country-specific activity - normally three countries/territories per academic year² - comprising a major host country and two locations with smaller or developing/emerging TNE provision. The programme will be planned on a rolling basis with the intention that specific countries/territories are normally agreed circa 18 months in advance.³

3 UK degree-awarding bodies offering their awards through TNE, have full responsibility for the academic standards of their awards, wherever or however those awards are delivered; they have ultimate responsibility for the quality of provision, but may delegate aspects of that to partners. The starting point for QE-TNE is that providers' internal, and national external, quality assurance processes test the effectiveness with which a provider is meeting the Expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education - that these processes are robust and retesting is not necessary. The approach is designed to complement these internal and external quality processes, providing depth of insight into TNE provision, driving continuous improvement and providing confidence for the wide range of stakeholders - both in the UK and internationally.

The benefits of country-based quality enhancement for the UK's TNE

4 Country-based evaluation of UK TNE will be focused on quality enhancement. The published forward schedule supports this, as it encourages providers and their partners to ask reflective questions about their provision and approach in a particular country. The forward schedule enables QAA to work in depth with local agencies in the selected countries and to explore regulatory and other matters faced by UK providers. QAA will be able to agree ways in which it can deepen cooperation with local agencies and organisations for the benefit of UK TNE. The approach will enable greater local understanding of UK higher education and its approach to quality and standards and will enable detailed insights into host country operating environments for UK TNE. Therefore, it will build and deepen mutual understanding, cooperation and trust.

5 A quality enhancement approach identifies shared challenges, areas for development and effective solutions, through highlighting innovative and effective practice. The continual commitment of the UK to improve or enhance its TNE provision strengthens

¹ Future approaches to the external quality enhancement of UK higher education transnational education: consultation report available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/docs/qaa/international/tne-enhancement-consultation-report.pdf

² 'Normally' allows the programme to be responsive to the nature of host country selection. Up to three countries allows, for example, for fewer other countries to be visited in the same academic year as the host countries with very large numbers of TNE students and arrangements, such as China.

³ Given the timing of this consultation, there will be only about six months' notice for any activity scheduled in autumn 2021.

the reputation and standing of UK higher education, demonstrating the value the UK places on the quality of the student learning experience. Engagement with local authorities and regulators is a prime focus of QAA's country-based activity, together with information gathered through research into the local regulatory environment. QAA will also draw on surveys, visits, data, and student and employer views. Constructive peer engagement will provide insights and an external view on arrangements and approaches to UK TNE provision in higher education.

6 The approach is UK-wide and is built on collective benefit, shared practice and learning. One of the main goals is to maintain and strengthen the UK's premier position as a leading provider of high-quality transnational education. It will draw on the skills, experience and insights of peer reviewers to explore, in a spirit of enhancement, how providers ensure academic standards are maintained, how the equivalence of student outcomes is ensured, teaching and learning continuously improved, and high-quality learning provided in transnational education. Reviewers will explore the challenges involved and identify effective responses and approaches.

7 The approach will result in a suite of specific published reports and other outputs such as dissemination workshops. It will also lead to a range of guidance being produced that will draw on the intelligence gained on particular countries. Broader outcomes will go on to include the delivery of resources such as best practice toolkits, practical guidance, training courses and access to more extensive data.

8 In summary, a published programme of country-specific quality enhancement activity covering up to three countries/territories per year, will enable the production of a range of country-specific outputs, the development of a flow of wider outcomes and serves the interests of UK TNE by:

- providing confidence for the wide range of international stakeholders, showing the care the UK has for the quality of the student experience and consistent standards of UK awards
- confirming the equivalence of student outcomes
- enabling coverage of both major host countries and other locations or defined regions, including emerging host nations/territories that have strategic potential for TNE, as well as established smaller provision
- enabling relationships* to be built and a detailed focus on local needs and circumstances, through the country-by-country approach, building insight, mutual understanding and trust
- focusing on quality enhancement and the quality of students' learning experience
- demonstrating the strength of internal quality assurance by UK providers and the external assurance by the UK's funders and regulators
- providing a wide range of direct outputs and broader outcomes that support the continuing delivery and development of excellent TNE provision
- enabling two-way learning, improving approaches to quality in the UK and internationally
- finding ways to reduce the burden, both from a UK perspective and for host countries, removing duplication and extending mutual recognition
- supporting the continued growth of the UK's education exports.

* The approach enables relationships with local quality assurance agencies, regulatory authorities and relevant ministries to be strengthened alongside those with local British Council staff; QAA has extensive existing relationships, including those formalised through memoranda of understanding. This particular approach enables members of review teams to be involved with discussions alongside the QAA officer.

1.2 The importance of TNE for UK higher education

9 TNE is important - not only for UK higher education institutions; its strategic value is recognised by the Department for International Trade (DIT) and by the departments responsible for higher education in each of the UK's home nations. TNE contributes to the UK's soft power and influence⁴ and reciprocally supports the same agendas in host countries. In delivering TNE, UK universities will work with the host nation in support of the nation's own agenda - be it the aim to expand as a global hub for higher education or a more development-orientated aim (emerging economies with a young demographic will often look to TNE to meet the demand for higher education when it outstrips that available within the host country). TNE can help nations and individuals around the world to achieve their ambitions and aspirations. The mutual benefits are strong.

10 UK transnational education enables access to a high-quality standard of higher education for learners wherever they are located. The knowledge and understanding it helps to develop, and the mobility that it can enable, helps to deliver the internationalised and globalised educational experience that equips learners with the skills needed in the 21st century. For all these reasons, TNE is a strategically significant part of the operation of the vast majority of UK degree-awarding bodies. As well as helping to diversify sources of income and to develop education exports, TNE often leads to mutually valuable knowledge exchange or research relationships.

Internationalisation

11 Effective and relevant higher education in the 21st century must be globalised and equip graduates to understand the complexity and interconnectedness of the modern world. TNE is integral to how many UK universities aim to deliver their international/internationalisation strategies and to develop graduates able to take their place in a world where technology, communication, transport, the environment and political economies link individuals and societies more closely and change is a constant. For students, the choice of TNE study is a choice to experience aspects of internationalisation in their home country or region through the different and distinctive nature of a UK TNE award.

Size and scale

12 The UK is one of the world's largest providers of TNE. Universities UK International⁵ provides detailed figures each year on the size and scale of UK TNE. In broad terms, over 140 (of approximately 170) degree-awarding bodies in the UK have TNE provision and, since 2014-15, there have been over 650,000 students⁶ enrolled on UK TNE programmes each year in over 220 countries/territories across the world.

13 TNE embraces full undergraduate and postgraduate awards, joint and dual awards, articulation arrangements, franchised and validated provision, branch campuses, professional programmes, and open and distance learning.

14 Three providers, primarily of blended and distance learning, dominate the figures - Oxford Brookes University, the Open University and the University of London Worldwide; typically accounting for almost half of all UK TNE students. At the start of the

⁴ The importance of soft power and influence is stressed in the government's [International Education Strategy](#), jointly published by the Department for International Trade and Department of Education in March 2019.

⁵ Updated figures are normally published late autumn each year and can be found at: www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/International/Pages/tne.aspx

⁶ At time of publication the latest figures available were for 2018-19.

five-year QE-TNE programme, across the UK seven other providers had more than 10,000 students studying through TNE and a further 14 had more than 5000.

15 In terms of global regional spread, in 2018-19, around 50% (334,410) of UK TNE students were studying in Asia, followed by Africa, Europe and the Middle East. The top five host nations that year were China (78,175), Malaysia, Singapore, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

Figure 1: Regional distribution of UK TNE students, 2018-19



	North America	South America	Europe Union	Other Europe	Africa	Middle East	Asia	Australasia
All providers	4%	Under 1%	12%	3%	20%	9%	50%	Under 1%
Excluding the three main providers	4%	Under 1%	16%	2%	12%	11%	53%	Under 1%

1.3 Principles and enhancement in QE-TNE

The principles underlying new QE-TNE

16 The 11 principles proposed by the UUK/GuildHE working group were strongly endorsed by the UK sector through an open consultation which also clearly supported a more comprehensive and extensive version of country-based review, a broader set of outcomes and benefits.

17 The new enhancement model should:

- be UK-wide
- apply to all degree-awarding bodies who engage in TNE
- be valid for all types of TNE
- be cost-efficient
- be flexible and responsive
- minimise the burden to institutions, avoiding duplication of course or institutional review and aligning with the review processes of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), where relevant and appropriate
- have the student experience at its heart
- ensure the equivalence of student experience and student outcomes between TNE and UK-based students
- retain international trust and maintain the reputation of the UK's quality assurance approach
- be enhancement-led
- be informed by robust metrics where available and align with UK data-informed approaches where possible.

18 The title of the new method - the Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK Transnational Higher Education or QE-TNE - stresses the emphasis on enhancement. The approach in this handbook is derived from these principles.

Quality Enhancement in QE-TNE

Enhancement - the determination to seek continuous improvement

QAA defines enhancement as:

'Taking deliberate steps to bring about improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experiences of students.'

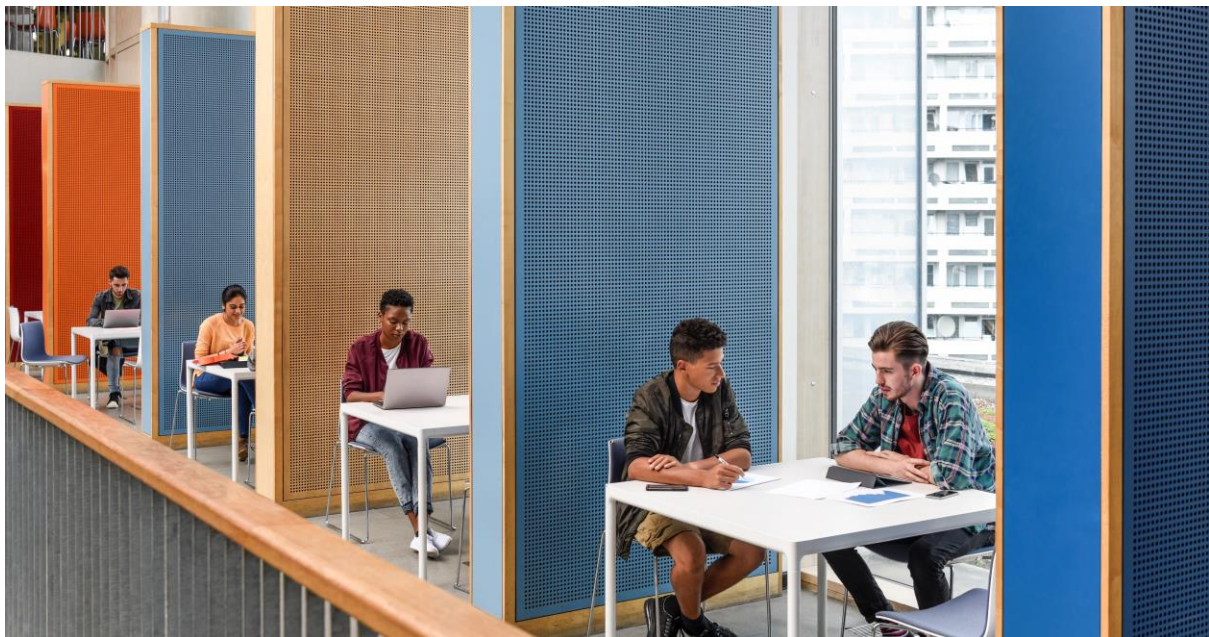
19 Quality enhancement approaches ask institutions *how* they are working strategically to enhance the quality of their students' learning experiences, and *how* they are engaging and working with their partners and their students to improve learning. Quality enhancement is about engaging critically with the purpose of quality assurance - to deliver quality improvement and to move beyond the concern with process. The basic premise is that: *wherever you are, you can always improve*. Excellence is never a thing achieved or 'job done' but a continuous, purposeful striving.

20 Quality enhancement is about managing beneficial change. The pace of change is ever-increasing and this means that managing change effectively for students and their learning is crucial to providing and maintaining high quality.

21 With quality enhancement, the emphasis is on effectiveness in practice, delivery, responding to student needs, managing quality, overseeing collaborative partnerships, setting and maintaining academic standards, and so forth. With quality assurance addressed by the UK's standard internal and external processes, QE-TNE is freed to be a constructive, collaborative, enhancement-oriented dialogue.

22 The focus on the quality of the student experience of learning, places the emphasis on the outcome and impact of internal quality assurance processes and policies. Having documented processes that are effective and followed is, of course, important. However, with the quality enhancement approach in QE-TNE, the focus will rather be on the ways in which those processes are used; how they produce data and information on the quality and effectiveness of provision in ways that not only confirm standards and expectations, but help providers to plan changes intended to benefit and enhance the student learning experience (and to evaluate the effectiveness of earlier initiatives).

23 The constructive dialogue that enhancement-based approaches allow takes full advantage of the expertise and experience of QAA's peer reviews in engaging in discussion with providers.



Part 2: The Handbook for the Quality Evaluation and Enhancement of UK Transnational Higher Education (QE-TNE)

2.1 Summary of the principal stages

Purpose and audiences

24 The primary purpose of this Handbook is to outline the approach for the quality enhancement and evaluation of UK transnational education (TNE) provision. It sets out how QAA will carry out QE-TNE activities through a robust and independent peer review process that delivers extensive benefits for the full range of stakeholders of UK TNE.

25 It is a comprehensive handbook covering the range of activity involved with evaluating and supporting the provision and continuing development of TNE by UK degree-awarding bodies.

26 The Handbook is, therefore, designed for:

- UK institutions and their international partner providers involved in the quality evaluation of TNE
- students studying through TNE provision with UK providers
- peer review teams conducting the work
- QAA staff managing and supporting the overall programme and the evaluation processes
- QAA staff in their work building relationships with quality agencies and education ministries or other authorities in support of UK TNE
- international quality agencies with an interest in the quality of TNE provision in their home country
- wider direct stakeholders including national and professional/statutory UK regulators, funders, central and devolved governments and the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA).

27 Evaluation visits and evaluation reports are one element of the overall approach. With the aim of reducing the burden on providers there will be greater emphasis on the preparatory and supporting work by QAA. That work will produce a substantial range of benefits, insight and intelligence for the UK sector (see Stage 5 below and Annex 4) as well as improve the evaluation element itself.

28 The focus is on the UK provider offering its awards through TNE arrangements. TNE partner organisations themselves are not subject to review or scrutiny in QE-TNE. They might be subject to review or scrutiny by local agencies if QAA and the local agency engage in joint review activity. Any such joint working is discussed and agreed during the planning stage of preparatory work for each QE-TNE evaluation. QAA can advise if providers are uncertain about whether specific activities are in scope of a QE-TNE evaluation.

Scope and coverage

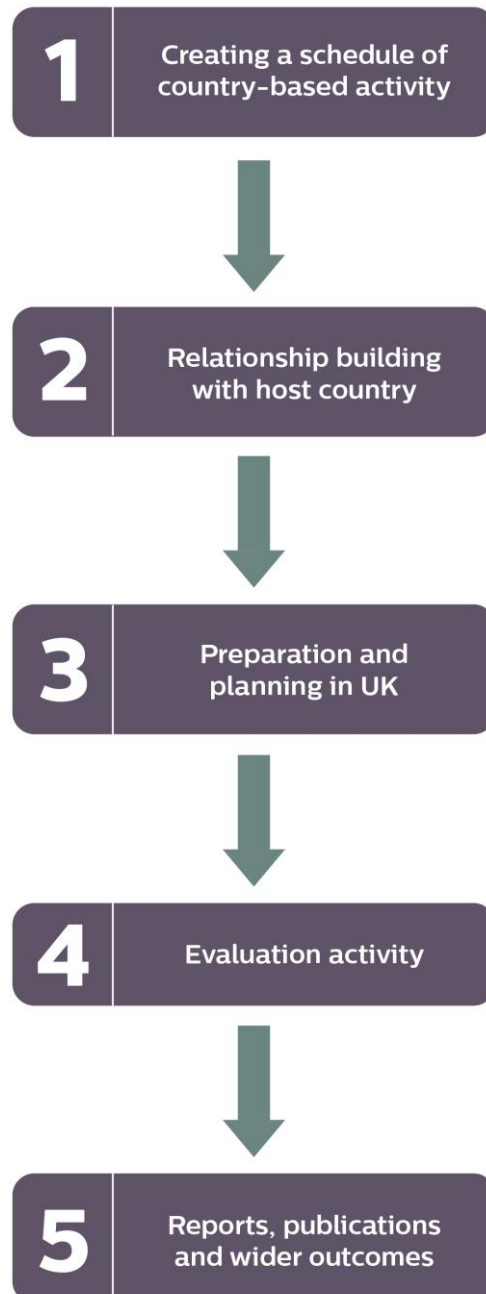
29 QE-TNE applies to all UK degree-awarding bodies delivering awards or other higher education provision through any kind of TNE vehicle. It encompasses:

- all UK higher education provision delivered outside the UK leading to UK awards at Levels 4-8 of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales*

and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) and Levels 7-12 of *The Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FQHEIS)

- all forms of partnership and delivery, branch campuses, joint and dual awards, franchised and validated provision, distance/flexible learning including that with direct support and blended forms of delivery, articulation arrangements and those involving parts of awards being delivered through TNE and parts in the UK.

30 There are five main stages to QE-TNE:



Stage 1: Creating a planned forward schedule of country-based activity

Outline

31 QAA will work together with UUKi and GuildHE, drawing on data and information, to identify proposed countries that best meet UK needs and the selection criteria. Information sources will include UUKi's publications on the scale of UK higher education TNE and trend analysis of the Higher Education Statistical Agency (HESA) data alongside HESA's Aggregate Overseas Record (AOR). This will be combined with information gained from international contacts and the UK sector. The proposals will be supported by a rationale and options will normally be presented alongside firm suggestions. The proposals will be considered by the UKSCQA which will ratify the final selection.

32 The initial schedule will cover 2021-22 and 2022-23 and will be agreed at UKSCQA in spring 2021, together with options for 2023-24. The selection for 2023-24 will be finalised in spring 2022 and options for 2024-25 noted - that pattern continuing until the end of the programme.

33 Once ratified by UKSCQA, the forward schedule will be published, this will cover both the agreed countries for the following two academic years and the options being considered for the third year. This will enable all parties to undertake preliminary work and to plan ahead.

Selection of countries for QAA's QE-TNE activity

34 The overall intention will be to select one major host country each year together with two other countries or territories such as, emerging, developing countries/territories or those with smaller TNE numbers. The criteria that will come into play in assessing the selection of countries is detailed below. While three countries is the working norm, it will be up to the equivalent of three. For instance, a regional approach might be taken or, where there is an especially large number of arrangements and student numbers, there could be two or three teams visiting a single host country rather than teams visiting three different countries.

The major host country

35 For the major host country, selection is straightforward. Taking into account the number of institutions operating in each, the main two criteria will be:

- a top 10 host country by student numbers (excluding numbers from the top three providers⁷ of distance learning) - accepting that countries which are in the top 10 will change from year to year
- length of time since the previous visit (with the intention to cover those not yet/not recently reviewed during the five-year programme).

⁷ As indicated previously, the 'top three' account for around half of all UK TNE students and change the numbers' profile disproportionately. They are each primarily distance learning providers. The programme overall will ensure that distance learning receives appropriate consideration. For the avoidance of doubt, the top three providers and all their delivery forms are included in the programme.

Selection of the second and third countries

36 For the choice of the second and third countries, there will be a wider range of criteria. These include:

- rapid expansion of UK TNE in-country (this could be increases in overall TNE student numbers or in the number of TNE arrangements)
- developing market for TNE with greater demand for higher education than the country can supply
- developing market where the country is seeking to stimulate greater take up of higher education TNE and is looking to work with UK providers to achieve this
- regulatory or legal changes in-country that have shifted the environment for UK TNE providers (negatively or positively)
- countries/territories aiming to establish themselves or extend their position as a higher education and/or TNE hub
- requests from countries (for example, to evaluate all UK provision or to work with the local agency in the evaluation of provision) - NB: this can help reduce regulatory burden; such requests should not be seen as indicative of issues
- established location that has not been visited or not been visited for an extended period
- geographical spread⁸
- support for countries of interest to the UK (for example, Commonwealth countries, the main countries identified as part of the International Education Strategy, for instance, by DIT, the Scottish or Welsh Governments or the Assembly in Northern Ireland)
- intelligence from UK or local regulators, funders or ministries that suggests it would be expedient to undertake a QE-TNE activity in a particular country.

Thematic analysis and investigation

37 The outputs of the overall programme will include thematic or comparative analysis of the outputs from a series of reports and country-based activities. This will be a cost-effective way to explore important cross-cutting themes in UK TNE and meet the desire to optimise the intelligence and benefits from the overall programme.

38 Thematic analysis may be supplemented with additional thematic investigation and information gathering to provide breadth of insight. For example, case studies could be requested representing the same topic in a wider range of countries or from the perspective of different providers or delivery types.

39 QE-TNE as an overall approach will be flexible so that a theme could replace the country focus in one selection. In such instances, specific proposals will be needed covering the rationale for the thematic topic/nature of the activity being evaluated and an assessment of what could be conducted from the UK. Cost implications will need to be taken into account if visits to more than one TNE host country were involved.⁹ Any thematic selection would be discussed and ratified by the UKSCQA in the usual way.

⁸ To date, most reviews have been in the Middle East and Asia and some more consideration needs to be given to Africa, and to North and South America, as well as to return to a higher proportion from Europe.

⁹ Adjustments would be needed across the programme to manage the higher costs over a delivery year.

40 Themes that might replace a country focus include:

- distance learning (DL) (quality, standards and the student experience in UK distance learning provision) NB: not all DL is TNE and some DL includes local support arrangements so is not only about online
- UK's approach to ensuring the quality of the student experience in branch campuses
- a multi-country study of the TNE student experience or of TNE graduate employability.

Stage 2: Relationship building with the host country

41 QAA has established relationships with leading agencies and quality assurance networks across the globe. These relationships are routinely used to strengthen understanding of the UK's quality systems and TNE provision. They also provide information and intelligence on the operating environment which feeds into QAA's wider work for UK higher education and which may feed into country selection in QE-TNE.

42 The opportunity provided by a published forward schedule of countries with QE-TNE enables specific and detailed discussions in advance of the in-country visit. Such discussions with host country governments/ministries, regulatory organisations and quality agencies will feed directly into the quality enhancement ethos, enabling maximum benefits to be gained by all from the process. A clear element of that benefit will be post-evaluation activities such as joint publications, webinars and dissemination. Where relevant, it will also involve new protocols to ease the regulatory pressure in-country on UK providers or local partners.

43 Part of QAA's work over the preparatory stages will aim to ensure that there is a sound understanding of the UK's quality assurance systems and confidence in them. It is intended that good mutual understanding will, for example, limit the need to duplicate processes (such as programme recognition) or to re-demonstrate how standards are secured.

44 Relationship building linked to QE-TNE therefore covers a range of activity.

Discussions with ministries/regulators/agencies will typically seek to:

- confirm policy and views on TNE from both local and UK perspectives
- confirm shared understanding of the UK's and the local regulatory and quality assurance systems
- identify any matters for further exploration
- identify local data sources and performance indicators that could help extend understanding of the effectiveness and impact of UK TNE for students
- share intelligence as part of the planning stage
- explore ways in which student views can be obtained across a range of providers¹⁰ to extend the understanding of the in-country UK TNE student experience
- explore ways to capture the views of employers and/or alumni
- agree protocols for the visit stage (for example, any joint activity or observer involvement)
- agree contributions to or any shared publications or outcomes.

¹⁰ For example KHDA in Dubai and CPE in Singapore both helped support a 2018 project [Enhancing the UK TNE Experience in Dubai and Singapore](#).

45 When appropriate (for example, when a number of activities can be combined to make it cost effective, or when travel costs are low), QAA will visit the target country in order to hold detailed discussions. However, optimum use will be made of technology to minimise direct and time costs, as well as the environmental impact of travel.

Stage 3: Preparation and planning in the UK

46 Once the schedule of countries for QE-TNE has been published, the next stage will be for QAA to schedule the programme for the forthcoming academic session and to begin detailed preparations.

47 With each target country, information gathering will include reviewing the AOR and surveying UK providers with TNE provision in the country to obtain the most up-to-date view of student numbers, arrangements and their status. Information gathered by the target country will be used where this is available. This information, and other available information, will then inform the selection of a representative range of arrangements for visits (be it from within the UK or in-country) and of topics for case studies. Case-studies will be institution-led and focus on sharing effective practice and learning from experiences.

48 Information will be sought from UK providers operating in the target country on particular benefits and challenges of operating in the country and any matters that they would hope could be explored or resolved as part of the wider engagement process. QAA can explore/help resolve matters with local agencies, be it directly as part of a QE-TNE engagement or as part of its ongoing work in support of UK higher education.

49 The initial recruitment and training of TNE academic and student reviewers will take place during early 2021. QAA will check reviewer availability for the forthcoming academic year, appoint reviewers to country teams (checking for conflicts of interest as usual before confirming teams). It will brief evaluation teams on the details of evolving plans and the operating environment in-country. Any new recruitment, additional or refresher training will be provided as required.

50 QAA will make the relevant practical arrangements and organise the detailed scheduling of visits and other meetings, in-country and in the UK.

Stage 4: Evaluation activity: in-country visits and activity, UK-based visits and case studies

51 UK-based visits are scheduled prior to the in-country visit. There are two types:

- Full UK-based visits explore selected arrangements in the same way as in-country visits, usually with four meetings scheduled over a day, and involve discussions with both staff and students. Staff and students from the arrangement join meetings through virtual means.
- A single meeting may be organised to support an institution in the preparation of its case study (be it by virtual means or onsite).

52 QAA will schedule a number of in-country meetings and activities:

- Visits to explore the selected arrangements, usually with four meetings scheduled over a day, involving discussions with staff and students. Staff from the UK provider may join meetings with staff through virtual means.

53 Meetings to discuss wider matters beyond the specific arrangements selected for evaluation:

- meetings with the relevant local authorities (for example, quality assurance agency, ministries and regulatory organisations)
- an event, where possible, to meet with a broad range of UK TNE students studying in-country
- meetings, where possible, with employers, alumni, local professional bodies and others who can provide insights into student outcomes and employability.

Stage 5: Reports, publications and wider outcomes

54 The reports and other resources are detailed more fully in Annex 4.

Published reports and outcomes for each country evaluation

55 Evaluation activity - visits and case studies - as well as QAA's wider engagement with each host country, will result in an extended series of published reports.

56 The overview report from each destination country details the scale and scope of UK TNE in the selected country, analysing the conclusions and findings emerging from visits and case studies. This is published on QAA's website.

57 For each country visited, the following will be published for members of QAA's TNE scheme (see Part 3 for details of scheme participation):¹¹

- A report on each TNE arrangement selected for evaluation - these offer recommendations and highlight areas of effective practice to support quality enhancement.
- A series of provider-led case studies normally exploring a specific aspect of their approach to TNE provision, facilitating shared learning towards enhancing practice.
- An analysis of the findings on the TNE student experience/students' views and student outcomes.
- A country report covering the operating environment for UK higher education. The country report will draw on the intelligence and information gained from engagement and evaluation activity on the operating environment. Where appropriate, country reports will be jointly published/badged with the local agency and may include contributions from organisations such as the British Council, DIT and UUKi.

58 In addition, dissemination events/webinars will be available to QAA TNE scheme members who are also QAA Members. Their overseas partners will also be able to access these events. Where there is additional support/funding, dissemination events may be held in host countries to enable more extensive in-country and partner involvement.

Wider resources and outcomes from QE-TNE

59 It will be evident that the new approach to TNE will embrace the engagement, relationships and deeper understanding gained and will be more than the evaluation of particular TNE arrangements. In addition to the specific outputs from the evaluation of individual TNE arrangements in each country, this approach will enable QAA to deliver a rich series of broader outcomes and benefits for its members with International Insights and memoranda of understanding (MoU) partners.

¹¹ The specific terms and conditions will give UK providers permission to share outputs with their TNE partners.

60 Activity across the QE-TNE programme will:

- strengthen the reputation and standing of UK higher education as part of international confidence in the UK's commitment to quality enhancement, the quality of the student experience and student outcomes
- build detailed country-specific intelligence and insights
- build relationships, increasing understanding and trust between UK and the host country's authorities and sector agencies
- help ensure that the approaches to quality assurance in the UK are well understood and the UK understands the drivers behind approaches in other countries
- enable strategic choices of target countries in support of UK and host nation interests
- support countries in implementing their strategic approach to hosting UK TNE.

61 The broader programme will therefore enable the production of a range of resources that draw on the information and insights gained over time. This may include: comparative or thematic analysis, best practice toolkits, practical guidance, training courses and better data; it may enable the development of territory-based communities of practice and networks. QAA will work with its member community and the commissioning bodies to develop further value-adding resources.



2.2 Process for quality evaluation and enhancement of UK TNE

Informing principles

62 The quality evaluation of UK TNE will be an evidence-based, enhancement-led process. The purpose will be to maintain the high quality and support the continuing improvement of UK TNE. It will strengthen and extend the relationships with host country authorities and stakeholders for the benefit of both the UK and host nations. The approach throughout will be collaborative; it will be about a constructive dialogue and shared learning. The information below should be read in this context.

Timeline

63 The indicative timeline is set out in Annex 1. In summary, if the first direct contact with UK TNE providers is 'week 0' then the preparatory stage is weeks 0-8; the analysis and evaluation stage - weeks 9-20; report drafting and production - weeks 21-31; with reports published in week 32; and dissemination events following four to six weeks later.

Publication of the evaluation schedule

64 The process starts with the publication of the forward schedule of the countries/territories that will form the focus for QE-TNE. This is well in advance of planned visits and will include both the confirmed countries for the next year, those firmly proposed for the following year and options for the subsequent year. This will encourage greater reflection on provision and arrangements in the countries involved - on what works well, on particular challenges and so forth - in doing so, it will deepen enhancement practices already in place.

65 The schedule will be published online by QAA on its main website and be widely promoted. The website will be updated with more precise information as the schedule is confirmed - that is, whether a country visit will fall in the autumn, spring or summer will be added to the list of three confirmed countries once broad scheduling has been agreed; as the month or actual dates are known, these will be added and so forth.

66 Publication of the schedule also initiates evaluation-related contact and discussion with the authorities of the target countries by QAA. This will cover matters such as, potential joint activity as part of the evaluation and detailed discussions on the operating environment, any potential developments in train, the nature of any local data on TNE, and TNE student outcomes. Contact will also be made with local British Council offices and other relevant organisations.

Reviewers and the review team

67 QE-TNE evaluation teams will normally comprise three reviewers,¹² one of whom will be a student reviewer. All reviewers are full and equal members of the evaluation team. Evaluations and evaluation teams will be managed by a QAA TNE review manager.

68 A specific briefing will be provided once each team has been appointed covering the operating environment in the target country and matters such as the size and scope of its UK TNE. Where possible, parts of the briefing will be provided from in-country experts (for example, a member of staff from the local quality assurance agency). A representative from

¹² QAA's reviewer pool includes international reviewers.

the local quality assurance agency or regulatory authority may, with agreement, join an evaluation team as an observer or participate where joint activity has been agreed.

69 QE-TNE is a peer review process centred on the evaluation and enhancement of the quality of the student experience of UK TNE. Reviewers will lead the analysis of evaluation material, lead meetings as part of evaluation meetings, draft the reports on individual arrangements and the student experience. Decisions are made collectively by reviewers as a team. Collective decisions include: the outcomes of evaluation activity in the form of recommendations, the identification of areas for development and of effective practice, the findings on the student experience and those in the overview report.

70 A single reviewer may support a provider in the production of a case study, if requested, to provide an external perspective in the evaluation of the topic. Some desk-based work will be undertaken by pairs of reviewers. All reviewers will be involved in both in-county and UK-based evaluation visits exploring individual arrangements and in all the meetings with staff and students.

71 All reviewers will be involved in in-country meetings with local agencies, ministries/authorities and, where arranged, with wider groups of students, alumni and employers. The involvement of reviewers in meetings with local agencies and authorities will be an important feature in deepening relationships, helping to form networks and developing mutual understanding.

72 QAA reviewers are appointed against published person specification. A summary of the skills required in all reviewers is included in Annex 5. All reviewers are trained in the specific method for which they are appointed. The selection of reviewers for each QE-TNE will reflect the particular areas of expertise required.

The role of QAA TNE review managers

73 All QAA review managers are trained in the review methods in which they work and therefore, there will be specific training and briefing for those who work as QAA TNE review managers.

74 The TNE Review Manager will oversee the collection of information, liaise with the responsible authorities in the host country, be responsible for communication around the evaluation and detailed scheduling. S/he will ensure that the evaluation follows the agreed procedures and protocols and be responsible for the coordination and editing of the published outputs.

75 The TNE Review Manager will liaise with local contacts and authorities to support activity designed to enable the collection of UK TNE student views more widely than the arrangements under scrutiny, as well as to obtain the views of employers and/or alumni.

76 Aspects of the preparation will be led by the TNE Review Manager but undertaken in conjunction with the team where possible. This includes the selection of the TNE arrangements that will form the focus of the evaluation and of case studies.

77 The TNE Review Manager is the liaison point with UK providers; UK providers liaise with their partners/overseas delivery sites. As well as drawing up the schedule of visits and meetings in-country, the review manager will ensure that all accommodation and in-country travel is arranged.

Initial survey: the selection of the arrangements for evaluation and case studies

78 In order to enable all relevant providers to shape evaluation activity and to maximise the collective benefit of QE-TNE, QAA will contact all UK higher education institutions with provision in each target country to collect up-to-date data for the publicly available overview report. Both factual, quantitative information and qualitative information on provider views are sought, with the latter seeking to establish if there are any particular matters UK providers consider important to be explored as part of the overall QE-TNE engagement.

79 Unless the AOR, or other data source in the UK, is further developed to provide the necessary up-to-date information, factual material on the destination country will be requested directly from providers. This will gather details of existing TNE arrangements and student numbers at programme level. A sample survey is included at Annex 2. In some countries local data on TNE may help supply this information, removing the need for collecting some information from UK providers.

80 The qualitative part of the initial survey will seek views about the opportunities and challenges of operating in the country and providers' suggestions for potential case studies. Opportunities and challenges may include matters such as recent or proposed regulatory changes; whether identified duplicated processes could be addressed or minimised; approaches to PSRB recognition; or could involve exploring differences in approaches to equalities or student representation.

81 QAA, in consultation with evaluation team members, will review provider and programme information and make an initial selection of arrangements and programmes for evaluation and topics for case studies. Providers selected are drawn from those who are participating in the QAA's TNE scheme (see Part 3). QAA will notify those providers whose TNE arrangements have been selected for evaluation or case study. With larger provision, QAA will liaise with providers to refine the particular delivery sites or programmes to be considered. Decisions will be finalised on some matters in liaison with providers (for example, whether visits will be in-country or in the UK).

82 The number of visits and case studies will vary depending on the country selected and the extent and range of UK TNE provision. As a guide, for a major host country, eight to ten site visits in-country would be usual with six to eight UK-based case studies, with fewer for smaller numbers, developing and emerging host countries. The main aim is to select a representative sample, that is one that reflects the pattern of TNE in the country under consideration. The primary visit will usually be in the UK when arrangements for distance learning are the focus, though an in-country learning centre could also be the basis of a visit.

Information request on provision to be sampled

83 QAA will ask the providers with arrangements selected for evaluation to submit a suite of available information to support the evaluation process together with a short self-evaluation. An indicative list of information and guidance on the self-evaluation is set out in Annex 3. The self-evaluation would normally be no more than four/five pages or a maximum of 3000 words.

Desk-based analysis

84 Pairs of reviewers from the identified evaluation team will conduct a preliminary desk-based analysis of the information provided, together with other available information.¹³ This desk-based analysis will be used to identify which arrangements will form the basis of in-country visits, which for UK-based visits and to confirm the selection of case studies. Providers will be notified of these decisions.

85 The desk-based work also enables reviewers to identify preliminary lines of enquiry for meetings at the visit stage of the process.

Detailed scheduling

86 The approximate timing of the in-country visit will be known from the published schedule. For each selected country, all in-country visits and meetings will take place as part of a single overseas trip by the evaluation team. All UK-based visits and activity take place before the connected in-country visits. The timeline in Annex 1 shows the windows within which visits will be scheduled.

87 Scheduling in-country visits will, of course, take into account local considerations, such as religious observance or festivals, local holidays, seasonal weather and so forth, alongside the availability of individuals from the local agency and authorities.

UK and in-country QE-TNE visit meetings

88 The TNE Review Manager is responsible for scheduling all visits (UK based and in-country). UK visits are scheduled prior to the country visit. UK visits may involve two reviewers or the whole team; in-country visits normally involve the whole team. The TNE Review Manager will attend all visit meetings and is responsible for the record of all meetings.

89 Both in the UK and in-country, site visits normally last one day for each provider. Typically, a site visit involves four meetings. One with staff with responsibility for managing and overseeing the provision; one with teaching and programme-level staff; one with students (some providers may also wish there to be a meeting with graduates); and a closing meeting with senior staff to review findings and clarify any matters.

90 Arrangements explored through a UK-based visit will include staff and students from the TNE provision joining via virtual means. Virtual means are similarly used to enable the UK provider to contribute to in-country meetings with staff. Expected lines of enquiry are shared in advance of visits to enable a constructive, enhancement-oriented dialogue.

91 UK providers will provide a key in-country contact for each site visit to enable effective communication on the day.

In-country meetings with authorities, students and employers

92 In-country activity will normally include a meeting with local regulators/authorities/quality agency and, where they can be organised, an open meeting with a wider group of UK TNE students, a similar meeting with UK TNE alumni, and a meeting with employers or representatives of employers' interests. These meetings involve the full evaluation team.

¹³ Such sources would include published reports (for example, by overseas agencies, QAA or PSRBs) and information arising from the work of UK funding and regulatory bodies.

93 In QE-TNE, particular emphasis is placed on the quality of the TNE student experience. Working in advance with UK providers and the host country agency, QAA will explore ways in which a wider sample of student views can be taken. It may be possible to administer a short survey and/or it may be possible to organise a central venue with an open invitation to TNE students to attend to share their experiences as TNE students. Any survey would seek to include distance learning students based in the country.

94 In a similar way, QAA will explore ways in which the evaluation can examine how UK TNE provision serves the country's employment needs. This will provide further insight into student outcomes and is a further benefit of country-based activity. Where possible, QAA will therefore seek to arrange meetings with, for example, employers, local professional bodies, alumni from UK TNE or from the relevant government ministry.

95 QAA will have been liaising with the host country in advance of the country visit, however, being in-country also provides an opportunity to meet representatives of the local authorities and agencies. These meetings will be used to explore the operating environment for UK TNE, shared matters of interest, any actions that could be taken to reduce the burden on providers (if, for instance, there are perceived to be elements of duplication), the nature of local data and information gathering that could provide additional information on, and insights into, the TNE experience. Meetings will enable local agencies to meet UK peer reviewers and to deepen understanding of UK approaches to quality. Where joint activity forms part of the programme there may also be discussion of what has been learned from those experiences. QAA may meet other organisations (such as staff from the British Council) while in-country.

Institution-led case studies

96 The detailed focus of institution-led case studies will be agreed between the provider and the evaluation team (the TNE Review Manager will coordinate this). The aim is to identify themes that will benefit and interest the wider sector by exploring challenges, the lessons learned, suggested best practice, and examples of innovative or effective practice. Case studies could, for instance, cover the lessons from closing a partnership or from adaptations in response to local regulatory requirements or other changes; another might detail the innovative way in which students work together across delivery sites or a student engagement initiative. Case studies are evaluative and may also be student-led.

97 Where requested, a reviewer may work with each institution providing a case study. A virtual meeting will enable the reviewer to ask questions and explore issues as part of an enhancement-led dialogue. With the focus on a specific topic or theme, a meeting would normally be no longer than two hours. It could involve individuals from the TNE provision. The purpose is to offer a critical challenge for the institution from an independent perspective or facilitate independent evidence (a reviewer could, for example, meet a group of students to explore their views of an innovation).

98 Case studies published are typically no more than eight pages long.¹⁴ They are drafted by the institution, with the draft identifying the evidence used. Case studies do not carry institutional logos. QAA will edit and format for consistency and the draft will be shared with the provider as a final check prior to publication.

Reports and evaluation outputs

99 A suite of reports is produced, each succinct and focused. The visit reports are drafted by reviewers based on the evidence they have examined, with the TNE Review Manager coordinating. Visit reports are short, normally eight to ten pages, and will include

¹⁴ In QAA house style using Arial 11 point for the main text.

the findings, any areas for development and highlight areas of innovative, interesting or effective practice to support quality enhancement.

100 The evaluation team will agree the overall conclusions and findings emerging from visits and case studies for the overview report, with the Review Manager providing the factual information detailing the scale and scope of UK TNE in the selected country (drawn from the initial survey as the most up-to-date available information). The overview report is published on QAA's main website.

101 Similarly, for the report analysing the TNE student experience in the target country - students' views and student outcomes - the evaluation team will agree the overall conclusions and findings emerging from across visits and any dedicated student meeting or survey for the report. Case study material will be drawn on where relevant. This report will include the intelligence and insights gained from any meetings with employers and local professional bodies where it has been possible to arrange them.

102 For institutions' draft case studies, the TNE Review Manager will undertake the final editing in accordance with QAA protocols and house style.

103 In addition, QAA will produce a country report covering the operating environment for UK higher education TNE for each country in the QE-TNE programme. The country report will draw on the intelligence and information gained from engagement and evaluation activity on the operating environment. Where appropriate, country reports are jointly published/badged with the local agency and may include contributions from organisations such as the British Council and UUKi.

104 The suite of detailed reports and the country report is available to all members with the TNE package (see Part 3) and is normally published around 12 weeks after the end of the country visit.

105 QAA Members with the TNE package will also be able to participate in dissemination events and/or webinars organised to share the outcomes, support wider learning and further enable enhancement. QAA will ensure it is possible for its members' TNE partners to sign up for dissemination webinars (or attend dissemination events in the UK). Where there is additional support/funding, dissemination events may be held in host countries.

Annexes

There are seven annexes to the Handbook.

Annex 1: Indicative timeline and touchpoints for QE-TNE evaluations

Annex 2: Preliminary survey - template for QE-TNE evaluations

Annex 3: Information request for selected provision and guidance on the self-evaluation for QE-TNE Evaluations

Annex 4: Reports, publications and wider resources arising from QE-TNE

Annex 5: Characteristics required in QAA reviewers

Annex 6: Other supporting information

Annex 7: List of QAA country-based reviews

Where required, operational guidance will be developed and published separately.



Annex 1: Indicative timeline and touchpoints for QE-TNE evaluations

An indicative overall timeline is accompanied by a table indicating what the QE-TNE process means for those UK providers selected for a visit or a case study.

Indicative standard timeline for a QE-TNE

Precise timings will depend on the specific QE-TNE and its scheduling within the academic year; the timing of activities will vary. The specific schedule for each evaluation will be published during the annual planning stage.

Liaison and contact with host country authorities and agencies is ongoing and only the initiating actions are included in this table.

Stage	Working weeks	Activity
Initial work	Spring each year for the following two academic years	QAA together with UUKi and GuildHE produce a paper for the UKSCQA of the forward schedule; following ratification by UKSCQA, the confirmed selection of countries for academic year (AY) is published.
		QAA writes to the host countries
	Approx 6 months in advance of evaluations	Selected countries for forthcoming AY scheduled by QAA in liaison with host countries
		QAA checks reviewer availability
Week -1	QAA identifies all UK TNE provision in selected country	
Preparatory stage	Week 0	Scoping survey sent to UK TNE providers (see Annex 2)
	Weeks 0-3	QAA works on reviewer allocation and teams
	Week 3	Survey returned to QAA
	Weeks 3-5	QAA analyses the survey returns
		Allocation of reviewers to teams (subject to confirmation)
	Week 5	Evaluation team composition confirmed week 5-6
		Providers notified of preliminary selection of arrangements for visits
		Selection finalised in discussion with providers, including which will be UK-based and which in-country visits
	By end week 6	Self-evaluation and information set requested from those selected for visits (see Annex 3)
		Topics of case studies discussed and finalised
Weeks 6-14	Institutions' draft case studies	
	QAA works on detailed scheduling	

Analysis and evaluation visit stage	Week 8	Information set and self-evaluation returned by providers
		Desk-based analysis begins
	Week 12	Schedule confirmed for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UK-based meetings and visits • country visit programme
	Week 14	Draft case studies submitted to QAA
	Weeks 14-18	UK-based meetings and visits
		Reports drafted as visits completed
	Weeks 19-20	In-country work and visits
Report drafting and production	Week 21-25	Report drafting
	Week 25	Draft report shared with providers to check factual accuracy
	Week 27	Draft reports with comments on factual accuracy returned
	Week 29	Final reports: sign-off and proofed within QAA
	Week 30	Final pre-publication reports and case studies shared with providers and confirmation for publication obtained
Public-ation	Week 32	Full suite of reports and case studies published
Dissemination	Between weeks 36-40	Dissemination events/workshops/webinars

QE-TNE evaluation touchpoints

In the new QE-TNE evaluation, **the only touchpoint** for all UK TNE providers is the **scoping survey** set out in Annex 2. This kicks off the process as 'week zero'.

Working weeks	QAA	All UK TNE providers with provision in-country
Week 0	QAA identifies all UK TNE provision in selected country	
	Scoping survey sent to UK TNE providers (see Annex 2)	Scoping survey received Weeks 0-3: work on scoping survey
Week 3	Survey returned to QAA and analysed	Return scoping survey

For providers selected for a visit or a case study, the process involves the following touchpoints. QAA will, of course, liaise with these providers throughout and be available in support.

Working weeks	QAA	Selected providers only
Week 5	Providers notified of preliminary selection of arrangements for visits; selection finalised in discussion, including which will be UK-based and which in-country visits	Selection of arrangements received and finalised with QAA agreeing the UK-based and in-country visits
	Conflict of interest check with providers on proposed members of the evaluation team	Reply re conflicts of interest with the proposed evaluation team
	Evaluation team composition confirmed asap thereafter	Team confirmed by QAA
By end week 6	Self-evaluation and information set requested (see Annex 3)	Self-evaluation and information set request received Weeks 6-8: work on self-evaluation and information set
	Topic of case studies discussed and finalised	Case study topic agreed Weeks 6-14: work on case study
Week 8	Information set returned by providers	Return self-evaluation and information set
Week 12	Schedule confirmed for evaluation visits and meetings	Schedule received for visits and planned meetings Preparation and organisational arrangements for visit meetings
By end of week 14	Draft case studies submitted to QAA	Submit draft case study
Weeks 14-20	Evaluation meetings and visits	Participation in meetings
Week 25	Draft report shared with providers to check factual accuracy	Receive draft evaluation report and check for factual accuracy (two weeks)
Week 27	Draft reports with comments on factual accuracy returned	Return any comments on factual accuracy to QAA

Annex 2: Preliminary survey - template for QE-TNE evaluations

All UK higher education awarding bodies delivering TNE provision in a selected host country will be asked to complete the following template, using an online form, providing detail on each arrangement in-country and for distance learning.

The factual information in part one of the survey feeds into the overview report which will be published by QAA on its main website and is publicly available. All respondents will be listed as part of the information base.

The whole survey is used to inform the selection of providers and arrangements for visits and case studies. The selection is made from those UK providers who participate in QAA's TNE programme.

Criteria for selection of arrangements for evaluation

Selection of arrangements for evaluation is primarily about identifying a sample that is representative of UK TNE activity in the country in question. The selection is made from those UK providers who participate in QAA's TNE scheme.

Data is drawn from HESA's AOR and the survey QAA undertakes. QAA looks at the number of institutions delivering TNE in the country, the nature of the TNE provision, the range of programmes/discipline areas and levels of study. QAA also looks to ensure that the UK's home nations are appropriately represented. QAA will seek to avoid selecting the same provider across multiple host countries, but those with TNE in a large number of countries may be selected for more than one country. QAA will consider including providers who only operate in one or two countries when those countries are in the known schedule.

UK funders and regulators or the authorities in a country may request the inclusion of certain arrangements. Such requests may indicate a desire for comprehensive selection (for example, all Welsh TNE providers), can indicate an area of concern, or may be due to interest in a new approach (for instance, a first branch campus for the host country). Where requests unbalance the representative nature of the selection, there may be additional arrangements selected, leading to a higher number of arrangements for visits; in such cases the requesting authority would be expected to contribute to costs.

Initial proposals are discussed with providers and this may influence final selection. Visit logistics may be a contributing factor.

Case studies are chosen for the insights and potential for shared learning that they offer, and the selection will be discussed by the QAA team working on TNE drawing on member and reviewer feedback.

Part 1: Factual information on UK TNE provision and students in
(QAA will add selected country/territory)

UK provider information	
UK institution (awarding body) name	
Contact name for the QE-TNE evaluation	
Contact details - email	
Contact details - phone number(s)	

For each TNE arrangement please provide the following information:

QE-TNE to <i>(QAA to add country)</i>	
Partner/provision information	
Partner organisation or name of provision in-country, for example, branch campus name (full name and any acronym commonly used)	
Partner/provision main location and address	
Partner/provision website	
Details of other locations if provision is offered at more than one site	
For distance learning please indicate if there is any in-country support	
Date partnership began	
Month and year of first student intake	

Please provide the following information at the level of the programme for each partnership/at your provision in-country/or for distance learning provision:						
Programme name (including award title)	Start date (initial student entry)	Subject area (Higher Education Classification of Subjects)	Programme delivered in UK or other TNE location?	Delivery mode (F/T, P/T, D/L, other)	Single/dual/ joint award?	Headcount (all years)
<i>Use * to indicate if a programme is being taught out</i>						
Date of data and AY it applies to						
<i>Example: BA (Hons) Graphic Design</i>	<i>2001</i>	<i>100061</i>	<i>Both</i>	<i>FT</i>	<i>Single</i>	<i>67</i>
<i>Add rows above as needed</i>						
					Total	

Part 2: Areas to explore as part of QE-TNE to and suggested case studies on UK TNE provision and students

Please outline any matters it would be useful for QAA to discuss with the relevant authorities in the host nation on behalf of your institution and UK TNE in-country.

This might include areas such as recognition of qualifications, barriers to delivery, match with home programme, inclusion of blended and online approaches etc.

Please indicate any areas of practice linked to your TNE activity in the selected country that you believe would make a good case study to share.

Case studies can be on any area of practice - about process from due diligence to ending a relationship; any element of operational delivery or oversight; staff support and development; the student experience; employability and evidence of value added etc. They can explore innovations and initiatives, share effective practice or illustrate learning from experience. Case studies are designed to contribute to the quality enhancement of UK TNE through sharing insights, experience and effective practice.

Annex 3: Information request for selected provision and guidance on the self-evaluation for QE-TNE evaluations

This information is only requested from those providers selected for evaluation and for the specific programme(s) selected where providers have multi-programme arrangements (where TNE is a branch campus or a partnership involves a large number of programmes). Programme-level information is only needed for the programme(s) selected.

Providers are expected to submit existing information together with a short self-evaluation of the arrangements selected for evaluation. Information is submitted in electronic format and QAA will provide details to enable providers to upload the information. It is presented here in the form of a checklist to help providers to assemble the relevant information and links. Not all of it will be relevant for all arrangements and few institutions will need to submit the full list.

Note: Some of the items have both assurance and quality/student experience functions. They are included here for their role in ensuring the quality of the student experience and to ensure that the method explores the material and questions that enable it to meet the agreed principles concerning the student experience and equivalence of student outcomes.

Part 1: Supporting information			
Background information and context			
	Indicative information/evidence	Details from institution (using your terminology)	Included/not included/part of item (number)
1	Relevant strategies, eg <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Institutional Strategy • International Strategy • TNE/Collaborative Provision Strategy 		
2	Due diligence on the partner and delivery country		
3	Agreement detailing the responsibilities of each party for the selected programme <i>(or complete the roles and responsibilities for TNE proforma below)</i>		
4	Operational manual or equivalent		
5	Reports from approval (and review) visits		
6	Procedures and contingency plans for ensuring student protection in the termination of an agreement with a partner		

Operational delivery and management			
	Indicative information/evidence	Details from institution (using your terminology)	Included/not included/part of item (number)
7	Staff development (re UK expectations and approaches to learning etc)		
8	Programme approval and reapproval/periodic review reports		
9	Relevant annual return(s) to local agencies		
10	Any reports from PSRBs and local accreditation/quality assurance bodies		
11	Annual programme monitoring reports		
12	External examiner reports and response to any matters raised		
13	Where not clearly included in annual programme monitoring or other information above, data and analysis of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • student admissions, achievement and progression • graduate employment • student feedback 		
14	Minutes of relevant committees (past two academic years) where monitoring/review/external examiner's reports are considered		
15	Evidence that shows how 'equivalence of student outcomes' is ensured and considered		
16	Information on student complaints and appeals		

Quality of the student learning experience			
	Indicative information/evidence	Details from institution (using your terminology)	Included/not included/part of item (number)
17	Student admissions including the responsibilities of partner institution		
18	Student-facing programme publicity and information		

19	Student support, including arrangements for induction, study support, careers information, wellbeing etc		
20	Student engagement, including student representation and feedback mechanisms		
21	Access to learning material (including access through a VLE/MLE)		
22	Involvement of UK-based staff in student learning		
23	Student programme 'handbook'		
24	Information on any special features (eg joint student projects across delivery sites)		

Part 2: Self-evaluation

Guidance: the self-evaluation helps reviewers to contextualise the supporting information and understand the nature of the provider and arrangement.

There are two main elements required. The first evaluates the place of the arrangement and programme(s) within the provider's overall approach to its TNE provision. The second element evaluates the arrangement and particular programme(s) themselves. The indicative topics for visit reports in the QE-TNE Handbook will help guide providers in producing their self-evaluation.

The self-evaluation is likely to be about four or five pages long (approx 3000 words). The main emphasis should be on the student learning experience and on the nature of partnership working.

The evaluation should be evidence-based and refer to the supporting information; there should be limited need for description. The self-evaluation is designed to enable the provider to demonstrate its capacity for critical reflection and to support reviewers to navigate the supporting evidence. The indicative topics for visit reports (see Annex 4) will help guide providers in producing their self-evaluation.

2.1 Evaluation of the arrangement and programme(s) within your overall approach to TNE provision.

2.2 Evaluation of the specific arrangement and programme(s) focusing in particular on the student learning experience and on the nature of partnership working (be it with a branch campus, a partner organisation or a learning centre).

Responsibilities record for TNE provision

UK higher education TNE providers work in collaboration with others to deliver their awards. Where the details of the division of responsibilities are not set out in another document or agreement, the pro forma below, completed for each arrangement (and programme as needed) selected for an evaluation visit, will help ensure that the QE-TNE evaluation team has a clear understanding of the delineation of responsibilities. The completed pro forma should be submitted no later than two weeks before an evaluation visit (uploaded in the normal way); it forms part of the evidence base for the evaluation.

Awarding body/organisation	
Selected delivery partner or provider and programme(s)	

Please identify responsibilities using the checklist below. Where the provider is fully responsible (implementation is fully devolved) - please mark the **delivery partner** column; where the awarding body/organisation has full responsibility - mark the **awarding body/organisation** column; where responsibility is shared or the provider implements under awarding body/organisation direction - mark the **shared** column, providing explanatory notes as required. Please support with **documentary reference(s)** to guide the evaluation team.

Area	Awarding body/organisation	Delivery partner	Shared	Documentary reference(s)
Programme development and approval				
Modifications to programmes				
Setting assessments				
First marking of student work				
Moderation or second marking of student work				
Giving feedback to students on their work				
Student recruitment				
Selection or approval of teaching staff				
Staff support and development				
Production of student handbook or equivalent				
Learning resources (including library resources)				
Student support				

Student representation and engagement				
Responding to external examiner reports				
Annual monitoring				
Periodic review				
Student complaints				
Student appeals				
Managing relationships with other partner organisations (such as placement providers)				
Production of definitive programme information				
Responsibility for enhancement				

Annex 4: Reports, publications and wider resources arising from QE-TNE

This annex provides further information on the nature and content of the planned, intended, published and wider resources that the new multi-country approach to the quality enhancement of TNE enables. It is divided into the specific outputs proposed as a result of each country visited and the wider resources and benefits that arise from the overall programme.

Publications and resources produced for each country visited

In-country evaluation activity - visits and case studies - as well as QAA's wider engagement with each host country, will result in a suite of published reports of different types and at least one dissemination event or workshop.

Overview report: publicly available, published on QAA's website

The overview report from each destination country details the scale and scope of UK TNE in the selected country, summarising the high-level conclusions and findings emerging from visits and case studies. It is published on QAA's public website.

The overview report will list all those UK higher education institutions with TNE students in the country in the year of the evaluation, and identify those who contributed to the survey so that the information base and the provision it relates to is clear.

Resources available to all providers participating in the QE-TNE programme

The following suite of publications will be available to all UK TNE providers participating in the QE-TNE programme.

Visit reports

The set of visit reports on the TNE arrangements of the individual providers selected for evaluation. These offer recommendations, identify areas for development and highlight areas of effective practice to support quality enhancement. There are likely to be eight to ten visit reports arising from the selection of a major host country with a smaller number where there is less extensive provision.

Visit reports will be structured around the topics outlined below, the example represents franchised provision and will be adapted to suit other delivery models. It is included here to help providers in preparing their self-evaluation and will also be used by reviewers and the QE-TNE Review Manager in drafting evaluation reports.

Reports will identify suggested areas for development, be it areas for action or in support of plans already in train. However, the main focus will be on identifying areas of strength, these may be examples of innovative or effective practice - especially those that benefit student learning or are connected with wider enhancement practice.

QE-TNE Visit Reports: Indicative content for franchised provision

Contextual information

Information about the evaluation process

Summary information about the provider:

- strategic approach to TNE
- connected management structure/responsibilities/oversight
- overall scale and nature of TNE provision.

Summary of provider's in-country TNE provision

Selected partnership and programme/s

Summary information on the partnership

The student learning experience and the enhancement of learning and teaching:

- approach to comparability in the student learning experience covering the approaches to:
 - 'tailoring' of the curriculum to local context
 - comparability of student experience in terms of teaching and learning
 - comparability in terms of access to/availability of learning resources
 - comparability in terms of access to/availability of student support
- approach to ensuring students understand UK approaches to learning, teaching and assessment
- supporting students in their development as learners
- learning environment provided, including the use of virtual resources
- approach to working in partnership with students
- approach to seeking and responding to student feedback
- approach to involving students in the quality and enhancement of learning
- approach to student diversity.

Provider-partner working:

- approach to partner involvement in enhancing learning and teaching and contributing to the management of the quality of learning
- ways in which the information from the partner/partnership is used to enhance learning and teaching
- approach to how partner staff are supported to deliver/support a UK award
- approach to engaging, developing and supporting partner staff.

Equivalence of outcomes:

- overall approaches to ensuring equivalence in TNE student outcomes (likely to cover (i) award outcomes - assessment, assessment practices and regulations, external examining, reference points and data and (ii) graduate outcomes and employability)
- how approaches to equivalence work in relationship to the partnership
- approach to using data to inform decision-making and evaluation.

Summary of findings

Provider-led case studies

Typically, case studies explore a specific aspect of a provider's approach to their TNE provision. There is no set format. However, case studies should be evaluative and evidence-based, succinct and focused. They are normally six to eight pages long. Case studies are prepared by providers but will be edited by QAA in accordance with QAA house style. Support is available through the QE-TNE Review Manager or one of the Peer Review Team and a short meeting can be arranged (normally virtual) for a reviewer to explore the territory with the provider to help test the evidence or to suggest alternative perspectives.

Case studies may be on any area of practice, or might explore an aspect of institutional strategy or policy. They may focus on process, from due diligence to ending a relationship; on any element of operational delivery or oversight; on areas such as staff support and development; on the student experience or partnership working with students; they may explore employability and evidence of value added.

Case studies can explore innovations and initiatives, share effective practice or illustrate learning from experience. Those with a more strategic focus may look at how a particular arrangement illustrates or has helped advance strategic purpose, for example, by leading on to a research collaboration; or illustrates an institution's policy towards students' learning across branch campuses. Case studies might illustrate any of the informing principles that have shaped the QE-TNE approach.

Case studies are designed to contribute to the quality enhancement of UK TNE through sharing insights, experience and effective practice, and provide an opportunity for providers to showcase and celebrate UK TNE. Providers are encouraged to work with their TNE students where this is relevant to a case study topic or to support their students to produce a student-led case study.

Student experience report

QE-TNE places particular emphasis on the quality of the student experience. A specific short report will be produced for each country that looks across all the material to analyse and summarise findings on the TNE student experience in-country.

The analysis will include consideration of: students' views of their TNE programme and learning experience; the ways in which students are involved as partners in enhancing the learning experience; how well learning expectations are communicated and matters such as comparability and equivalence understood; and student outcomes and employability.

Whenever possible, the student experience report will include a wider range of student views (for example, those of distance learners and from provision not selected for evaluation). Where it has been possible to arrange in-country or virtual meetings with alumni and with employers/employer representatives - the resulting intelligence and insights will be incorporated in the student experience report.

The country report

Country reports are established and valued QAA publications. A country report, covering the operating environment for UK higher education, will be produced on each country visited. The country report will draw on the intelligence and information gained from engagement with local authorities and agencies on the operating environment.

As in the past, where appropriate, country reports will continue to be jointly published/badged with the local agency and may include contributions from organisations such as the British Council, DIT and UUKi, alongside information from local organisations and authorities.

Resources available to providers participating in the QE-TNE programme who are QAA Core Members

Dissemination events/webinars

QAA Core Members will have access to additional resources. It is planned to arrange dissemination events or webinars following the completion of each country selected for QE-TNE. The intention will be to schedule these four to six weeks after the publication of the reports listed above. QAA will seek to ensure events are open to members' overseas partners from the country in question.

Where there is additional support/funding, dissemination events may be held in host countries to enable more extensive in-country and partner involvement. In-country events have been valued and very positively received in the past. QAA will seek to offer virtual events, where practical, and will take advantage of other regional activity to offer in-country follow up.

Wider resources, outcomes and benefits of QE-TNE for QAA Members with International Insights

A more extensive range of resources is available to QAA Members with access to International Insights.¹⁵

The new approach to evaluating UK TNE provision embraces the engagement, relationships and deeper understanding gained and is more than the specific evaluation activity. In addition to the specific outputs from the evaluation of TNE in each country, this approach will enable QAA to deliver a series of broader outcomes and benefits for its membership and to fulfil the underlying goals in the quality evaluation and enhancement of UK TNE.

The broader programme enables the production of a range of resources that draw on the information and insights gained over time. This will include comparative or thematic analysis, a range of workshops and other resources. QAA will work with its member community and the commissioning bodies to identify and develop useful, value-adding additional resources.

Comparative and thematic analysis

One of the real benefits of a programme based on three countries or territories each academic year is that it very rapidly produces a rich seam of information that lends itself to valuable comparative and thematic analysis.

If, on average, each country selected results in eight evaluation reports on selected arrangements and eight institution-led case studies, that is 42 sources of data each year that can be coded and analysed. This will enable QAA to interrogate that data to produce a regular flow of thematic analyses. Topics may result from the material itself because they are mentioned frequently, be it as areas for development or examples of effective practice, or they may be selected in order to understand what the data tells us about a given topic.

At times there will be an absence of information, this can be used to investigate a topic separately (given that absence of evidence is not evidence of absence), or might lead onto a further heading in QE-TNE evaluation reports, shaping what is explored through the method and indicative of how it can be responsive. A topical example in 2020 with the COVID-19 pandemic, would be online learning - this could have moved from scant mention to a specific heading to explore.

¹⁵ International Insights is available to all QAA Members in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and to those who sign up for this additional service in addition to voluntary QAA Core Membership in England

Workshops, training resources and practical guidance

The overall QE-TNE programme and the rich, timely data it produces will enable the delivery of workshops and other resources for QAA Members with International Insights with the topics demand-led. QAA will be able to work with its membership to develop resources such as best practice toolkits, training materials, student-facing guidance (for instance, on aspects of what it means to be a student studying for a UK award in their home country, online or in-country - acting as a regional higher education hub).

Illustrative examples from QAA's activity in 2020 would be the kinds of topics and material produced as part of its Covid-related suite of guidance on [TNE, International Policy and Practice](#). Other examples from the past would include workshops on Due Diligence or the workshops and resources emerging from the [Focus On Collaborative Activity](#). This resulted in strands of work on Building Learning Communities at a Distance and Sharing Practice (with outputs including case studies, sample templates and a card activity).

The relationships QAA has with quality assurance agencies across the world will enable QAA to work with them to offer sessions led by local experts to brief QAA Members delivering TNE on planned or recent regulatory changes and their implications for TNE.

Whole UK benefits and benefits for UK TNE host nations: Relationship building and developing mutual trust

Activity across the QE-TNE programme is designed to strengthen the reputation and standing of UK higher education as part of delivering international confidence in the UK's commitment to quality enhancement, the quality of the student experience and student outcomes. QAA has ongoing relationships with many agencies internationally, these will support the planning and preparation stages of in-country evaluation (scheduling, agreeing joint activity or observer involvement) and so forth.

A particular benefit of evaluation visits for building relationships and mutual trust with QE-TNE is that it enables representatives of local agencies and authorities to meet QAA reviewers and for reviewers to be directly involved in discussions. QAA reviewers are senior staff and experienced students who will bring their grounded expertise to those conversations and demonstrate the strength of the UK's peer review system. This will help increase understanding and trust between the UK and the host country's authorities and sector agencies.

Throughout the programme, QAA will be enabled to help ensure that the approaches to quality assurance in the UK are well understood and that the UK understands the drivers behind approaches in other countries. This mutual understanding is vital to building trust. QAA is uniquely well placed, working as it does as a UK agency across and with each of the UK's home nations, to answer questions and address any misunderstandings with regard to UK approaches to quality. Conversely, QAA is equally well-placed to feed the understanding and insights it gains from discussions with other agencies back into the UK higher education sector.

QAA, therefore, both supports countries in implementing their strategic approach to hosting UK TNE and supports UK TNE providers to pursue their international and TNE strategies.

QAA has [memoranda of understanding](#) (MoU) or letters of intent (LoI) with a number of quality assurance agencies across the world. QAA's MoU and LoI partners will be able to access all the country-specific resources from QE-TNE.

Annex 5: Characteristics required in QAA reviewers

QE-TNE is carried out by teams of peer reviewers. Peers are staff with senior-level expertise in the provision, management and delivery of higher education; or they are students with experience in representing students' interests.

QAA periodically advertises for individuals to act as peer reviewers and will promote a call through a range of channels. QAA appoints reviewers against published role descriptions and person specifications - these cover the generic requirements for all QAA reviewers and specific requirements for particular methods or reviewer roles. QAA seeks to ensure that its pool of reviewers reflects the diversity of UK providers and of the UK population; the pool includes international reviewers.

The credibility of review draws upon the up-to-date knowledge and experience of review teams and, therefore, QAA tends to appoint reviewers who are currently employed as staff by providers; student reviewers may be current students or sabbatical officers. However, recognising that knowledge and experience have a life span beyond a period of employment or study, QAA normally allows individuals who remain engaged with higher education developments, to continue as reviewers for up to three years after they have left the sector.

All reviewers are trained in the specific method for which they are appointed. Refresher training is also provided. Training is provided for reviewers ahead of the academic session when it is anticipated that they will be conducting a review, primarily for those appointed to teams.

Qualities required in all reviewers

QAA expects all reviewers to demonstrate the ability to:

- understand a range of perspectives
- relate to a range of individuals, from students to senior managers and officials
- lead discussions about strategic and operational approaches to the management of quality and academic standards, and enhancement of the student learning experience
- assimilate a large amount of disparate information and analyse it to form reliable, evidence-based conclusions
- maintain the confidentiality of sensitive matters
- display excellent oral and written communication skills
- work with electronic and/or web-based communication systems effectively
- work effectively as part of a team
- adhere to agreed protocols, procedures and deadlines.

Specific knowledge and skills for QE-TNE

- knowledge and understanding of the UK Quality Code and of the arrangements for quality assurance and enhancement in the UK
- experience and knowledge of UK TNE
- cross-institutional experience (beyond a department or subject area) in contributing to the management of academic standards and/or quality enhancement or participating as a representative of students' interests.

In recruiting to the pool of reviewers, QAA tries to ensure that it represents a wide range of providers, roles and levels of seniority and is broadly balanced in terms of disciplines and the range of protected characteristics. When recruiting QAA encourages, and may specifically seek, applicants from any groups who are underrepresented in the reviewer pool. QAA recruits international as well as UK-based reviewers.

Annex 6: Other supporting information

Complaints and appeals

QAA has formal processes for receiving and dealing with complaints. Details of this process are available on the [QAA website](#).

As there are no formal judgements reached in the QE-TNE Evaluation, there is no appeals process.

Glossary

A specific glossary may be produced. For the consultation, please see [QAA's Glossary](#).

Annex 7: List of QAA country-based reviews

QAA QE-TNE

These will be added to the online Handbook each year

2021-22
2022-23
2023-24
2024-25
2025-26

QAA country-based reviews 1997-2019

2019: Malaysia
2018: Hong Kong
2017: Ireland
2015: Greece and Cyprus
2014: Caribbean
2013: United Arab Emirates
2012: China
2011: Singapore
2010: Malaysia
2009: India
2008: Greece and Cyprus
2007: Hong Kong
2006: China
2005: Bahrain, Oman
2004: Sri Lanka
2003: Denmark, Germany, Italy, Malaysia
2002: Greece, Singapore, Denmark, Spain, Switzerland
2001: Hong Kong
2000: Ireland, South Africa, Spain
1999: Israel, Malaysia, Oman, South Africa
1998: Bahrain, Bulgaria, United Arab Emirates, Greece, India, Hungary, Israel, Poland
1997: Germany, Greece, Netherlands

Part 3: Scheme participation, pricing and the Statement of Participation

Scheme participation and pricing

106 To meet the purposes behind the proposed programme of quality enhancement activity in support of UK TNE, it is important that most, if not all, UK degree-awarding bodies that offer TNE in any form participate in the scheme.

107 This will enable it to be fully 'UK-wide' (principle 1), to 'apply to all degree-awarding bodies who engage in TNE' (principle 2) and to 'retain the international trust and maintain the reputation of the UK's quality assurance approach' (principle 9).

108 In the commissioning letter, QAA was asked to 'develop a package of in-country activity and review to supplement QAA's existing International Insights' activity', to 'charge providers for access to the new system' and to 'develop a payment system that includes a significant differential fee component'.

109 This could have been interpreted as access to the scheme being restricted to QAA Members who also signed up to, or had automatic access to, International Insights and paid the additional charge for the TNE scheme. However, and in discussion with UUKi and GuildHE, it was thought that a better interpretation was for the TNE package to be a distinct offer open to all UK degree-awarding bodies delivering TNE and for the differential fees to reflect both, whether or not a provider is a QAA Member, and their TNE student numbers.

110 There will be a further level of differentiation through access to the resources from the scheme.

UK-wide benefits	TNE scheme participants	QAA Member benefits	Benefits for International Insights
Outcome report per country	PLUS	PLUS	PLUS
Strong relationships with host countries	Visit reports	Dissemination events and resources	Thematic analysis
Mutual trust and recognition	Case studies	TNE partner access to events	Best practice guides
	Student experience report		Toolkits and practical resources
	Country report		Training events

Pricing

111 The basis of QE-TNE is the collective benefit to UK TNE providers from the confidence it builds in UK TNE through international engagement, relationship building and mutual understanding that it provides. In conjunction with this, all TNE scheme members

have access for all to country outcome reports, all visit reports, the full suite of case studies, student experience reports and the country report.

112 Feedback from the consultation will be used to clarify the final figures for each pricing band. The fee ranges below are indicative.

	Benefits and resources able to be accessed	Charging model
TNE scheme members who are not also QAA Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All the country-specific published outputs including the related country reports 	Three/four fee bands ranging between £4,000 and £14,000 per annum
TNE scheme members who are QAA Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All the country-specific published outputs including the related country reports Country-specific dissemination events, workshops and webinars 	Existing membership charge plus three fee bands ranging between £2,000 and £4,000 per annum
TNE scheme members who are QAA Members with International Insights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All the country-specific published outputs including the related country reports Country-specific dissemination events, workshops and webinars The full range of wider published analyses and resources (including thematic reporting, best practice guides, workshops and training) 	Existing membership charge plus three fee bands ranging between £2,000 and £4,000 per annum

NB: The pricing proposals at this stage do not include any costs potentially arising from any Statement of Participation.

Fee bands

113 TNE student numbers by provider range from 5 to over 260,000 - a considerable range - however, fee bands will only be distributed across the UK degree-awarding bodies offering TNE (approximately 140). A large number of providers are at the lower end of the TNE student numbers scale and, if a four rather than three band model is favoured, the greater granularity will be at that end. The fee range for QE-TNE is not extensive - likely to be between £2,000 and £4,000 for QAA Members, and £4,000 to £14,000 per year for providers who are not QAA Members. The final figures will depend on responses to the consultation and the numbers of providers who sign up to the scheme; they will be confirmed early in spring 2021.

	Number of TNE students	
	Option 1	Option 2
Band 1	Up to 999	Up to 199
Band 2	1,000 to 4,999	200 to 999
Band 3	5,000+	1,000 to 4,999
Band 4		5,000+

The Statement of Participation

114 The [commissioning letter from UUKi and GuildHE](#) also asked QAA to offer participants a statement of participation which could be a kitemark or a TNE Quality Enhancement Mark. It was indicated that this would be publicly available to indicate both, what kind of evaluation providers have received and what enhancement recommendations have been issued. This reflected the outcome of the earlier consultation in which 56% agreed/strongly agreed that buying into the scheme should be associated with a Mark or Statement with only 21% disagreeing/strongly disagreeing. The consensus was also that a Mark that was solely dependent on participation did not provide sufficient assurance of quality or evidence of commitment to quality.

115 Any Mark or Statement is primarily an outward-looking device and, as such, must command the confidence, and have credibility, in the eyes of the authorities and agencies in TNE host countries, of partners and potential partners, TNE students and potential students. UK providers will want to have confidence that the Mark meets this criterion and offers value for money.

116 A Mark or Statement in this context would seem to be about evidencing practice above baseline quality and standards, evidencing the commitment to enhancement and excellence.

117 **Potential options:**

1. **A Mark or Statement linked to participation in the scheme.** The only credible option that might enable a Mark linked with participation would be if the terms and conditions of participation in the scheme included provider commitment to the Core and Common practice of the UK Quality Code and to the QAA Advice and Guidance on Partnerships. This would add to the QE-TNE method as it would need to be evidenced by providers and confirmed by reviewers as part of the process.

That could be achieved through an initial charged-for, one-off desk-based exercise whereby providers mapped and evidenced their practices against the Core and Common practice of the UK Quality Code and the QAA Advice and Guidance on Partnerships. The evidence would be scrutinised and confirmed by reviewers (checking back with providers as needed). The evidence would primarily be that arising from internal and external quality processes coupled with a short account of evidencing the commitment to enhancement and excellence.

Providers could thereafter provide an annual statement confirming that there were no significant changes in their practices and approach, or a short summary of any changes, supported by appropriate evidence, that would then be reassessed by reviewers. This would enable continuing good standing to be demonstrated.

2. **A Mark or Statement linked to providers with arrangements selected for evaluation.** On a country-by-country basis, a Mark or Statement could be issued only to those providers with an arrangement selected for evaluation. The Statement indicating the country. This would mean that UK TNE providers not selected would not have access to the Mark/Statement; there is a risk that this could imply lesser quality.

Even for providers with arrangements selected for evaluation, it is not straightforward as there is a range of options in the use of a Mark/Statement. Could a Mark only be applied to the specific arrangement evaluated? Could it also be

applied to other programmes/provision with that partner or delivery site? Could it be applied to all of a provider's TNE activity in a country? Could it be used by the relevant partner or only with direct provision, such as a branch campus? Although QE-TNE does not result in a judgement, the recommendations in a report could indicate weakness and shortcomings - on what basis might a Mark be withheld or denied? Could providers who develop a case study also use the Mark/Statement?

With these questions settled, the cost implications of this option are minimal. Most fundamental with this option, as use is limited, would such a Mark/Statement carry any real value or meaning?

- 3. A Mark or Statement linked to all UK TNE providers in countries selected for evaluation.** On a country-by-country basis, a Mark or Statement could be available for all UK TNE providers in the TNE scheme where UK TNE had been evaluated if additional elements were added to the process to give all providers' use of a Mark credibility in the eyes of the host country authorities and stakeholders. The additional element could be a subset of the information required for selected provision, designed to evidence how UK expectations are met with respect of TNE in the country and how the provider evidences its commitment to enhancement and excellence by alignment with the Core and Common practices of the UK Quality Code and QAA Advice and Guidance on Partnerships.

There would be a cost/resource implication for providers and for QAA. Where a provider operates in a number of the countries that are selected across the overall programme, the burden would reduce as evidence would only need to be updated and tailored.

118 **Other considerations:**

Distance learning provision: It is unclear how a Statement or Mark could best relate to distance learning provision. A potential option could be the thematic review of UK distance learning as an alternative to a country selection, so long as the increased costs of considering the experience of students in multiple locations could be accommodated through other selections. Another option could be provider-commissioned and paid for review of this aspect of their operation (for example, by the 'big three' providers of distance learning). Where distance learning is supported by in-country learning support centres, these may be selected as an arrangement for evaluation and covered through any Mark linked to country-based approaches.

Links to enhancement recommendations made: The commissioning letter suggested that a Mark/Statement could provide links to the enhancement recommendations made. However, evaluation reports are not publicly available so the simple option of a link to the evaluation report is not available. This would mean that evaluation reports would have to identify and specify the findings that can be made publicly available, providers would then be able to publish those complete findings and link that information to the Mark. This would mean the guidance on reports would need to be modified but otherwise would be straightforward.

Withdrawal, lack of good standing: There would need to be a process by which any Mark or Statement could be withdrawn and, therefore, what would constitute the loss of good standing. A general Mark that went with participation would likely need to be withdrawn following concerns or evidence of a lack of good standing in any of a provider's TNE provision. A Mark linked to a specific country might only need to be withdrawn for use in that country. However, any decision would have to be linked to criteria and the nature of the evidence made clear. An appeals process would likely be needed. There would need to be a system through which concerns about provision could be raised and assessed; it would need

to be clear how this related to the wider national systems in the UK for concerns to be raised.

Assessment of 'good standing' and judgements: QE-TNE evaluation uses sampling - it is an enhancement-focused approach and does not result in a judgement. It would be best for the integrity of QE-TNE if this approach is retained, therefore direct involvement through selection for evaluation could only result in a Mark confirming that specific provision had been evaluated (this could grow to more than 200 specific arrangements over the life of the programme if it included case studies).

However, the nature of any Mark or Statement of Participation involving the assertion or implication of good standing does require a confirmatory assessment. The basis of any such assessment most logically is the Core and Common practices of the UK Quality Code and QAA's Advice and Guidance on Partnerships. This could be a specific separate exercise (as outlined in option 1 above) drawing on external quality assessments where available to minimise the resource demands.

Concluding comments

119 This is a complex area. QAA together with UUKi and GuildHE will use the feedback from the consultation to agree the best way forward. Progress with the implementation of QE-TNE overall will not be impacted if questions around any Mark or Statement take additional time to resolve.

Appendix

Background to the new approach

Development of a revised approach 2018-21

Led by Universities UK and GuildHE, discussions took place over 2018 and 2019 with key stakeholders about future approaches to the oversight by the UK of its TNE provision. In autumn 2018, UUKi established a working group jointly with GuildHE to consider the complexities and propose options. It was led by Professor Alistair Fitt, member of the UUK Board and Vice-Chancellor of Oxford Brookes University.¹⁶ It reported to the UUK Board and GuildHE Executive in spring 2019.

Discussions were complex, involving balancing a wide range of factors including: the different policy drivers and approaches in the UK's home nations; the preservation and protection of the reputation for quality and standards of UK higher education; the protection and promotion of the student interest; the need to provide appropriate reassurance to international partners, agencies and governments; the desire to reduce burden and costs on TNE provision; and the desire of both providers and governments to increase education exports.

In the context of that complexity, the working group considered a wide range of potential models and proposed two to form the basis of a consultation. The working group also produced the set of 11 principles that would guide any future approach.

Consultation and its outcome¹⁷

The open consultation ran from October 2019 to January 2020. The outcomes were analysed by an independent consultant. A series of recommendations were then taken to the Board of UUK and GuildHE Executive for approval (as well as being received and considered by QAA's Board). Throughout, QAA worked in conjunction with UUKi and GuildHE, and in liaison with the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA), to support the sector and funders/regulators in developing the evidence base for making decisions on the way forward.

The principles underlying new QE-TNE evaluation

The 11 principles state that the new enhancement model should:

- be UK-wide
- apply to all degree-awarding bodies who engage in TNE
- be valid for all types of TNE
- be cost-efficient
- be flexible and responsive
- minimise the burden to institutions, avoiding duplication of course or institutional review and aligning with the review processes of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs), where relevant and appropriate
- have the student experience at its heart
- ensure the equivalence of student experience and student outcomes between TNE and UK-based students

¹⁶ Oxford Brookes University is the UK's largest provider of TNE - it had 260,155 students in 2018-19

¹⁷ www.qaa.ac.uk/international/transnational-education-review

- retain international trust and maintain the reputation of the UK's quality assurance approach
- be enhancement-led
- be informed by robust metrics where available and align with UK data-informed approaches where possible.

In order to demonstrate how the principles have shaped QE-TNE, they are explored in more detail here, drawing on wider outcomes from the consultation. Some principles are grouped and the order shifted to foreground students and to enable a logical flow of information.

A UK-wide approach built on the high quality of UK higher education (principle 1)

The UK's higher education TNE is extensive and successful. That success is built on the UK's reputation for the quality of its provision and for robust, respected academic standards. It is a reputation recognised by TNE students and their families, by the many organisations partnering with the UK, by overseas governments, and by local regulators and quality agencies. Beyond the UK, UK higher education is seen as homogenous. It is UK awards that are important and relevant, and not the variations in educational systems, fees, funding, approaches to quality and regulation between the UK's home nations. TNE students studying with a UK university are looking to achieve a qualification or professional award assured against UK standards and benchmarks.

The [UK Quality Code for Higher Education](#) (the UK Quality Code) applies across the UK and it is this that sets out the Expectations and practices that define and/or guide academic standards and academic quality assurance of UK higher education, wherever and however it is delivered. QAA's [Advice and Guidance on Partnerships](#) is a core reference point used by most UK TNE providers.

The UK higher education sector and core stakeholders confirmed the importance of a UK-wide approach to the evaluation of UK TNE.¹⁸ A visible and active approach to TNE evaluation demonstrates, to international stakeholders and interests, the UK's commitment to the quality and standards of its TNE provision and the importance of the TNE student experience to the UK. This high-level commitment reinforces universities' own procedures and the particular external quality assurance requirements of each home nation.

The student experience at the heart of the approach (principle 7)

Students are the main beneficiaries of UK TNE and its principal stakeholders. The new approach extends the ways in which students' views will be sought. More of the output of the process will concern the student experience. Wherever practical, students from all UK TNE providers will be provided with the opportunity to share their views as part of the in-country process.

Providers may offer student-led case studies and it is expected that one or more case study from each country destination will evaluate an aspect of the student learning experience or an innovative approach to learning, collaborative working or assessment.

¹⁸ The outcome of the consultation on future approaches to the external quality enhancement of UK TNE conducted by UUKi, GuildHE and QAA in 2018-19, showed 95% of responses agreeing with the need to retain a UK-wide approach, with only 1% disagreeing.

Ensuring the comparability of the student experience and equivalence student outcomes between TNE and UK-based students (principle 8)

A key concern for TNE students and local regulators is the equivalence of award outcomes and comparability of the quality of the student experience. One of the purposes of QE-TNE will be explicitly to explore and demonstrate how UK providers seek to ensure comparability of student experience - accepting, of course, that provision often also needs to be tailored to the delivery context. Therefore, QE-TNE will look at a provider's definition of comparability and approach to tailoring (which may be specific to a location and programme). Importantly, it will also explore both how well provision is tailored to the local context - any factors that have an impact on the ability to do so, how effectively notions of comparability, equivalence and tailoring to context is communicated to students; and how well it is understood by them.

QAA will use QE-TNE as an opportunity to discuss/explore available information on graduate outcomes with host country authorities with the intention of supporting the production and availability of data on TNE student employability. QAA will seek to extend the understanding that can be gained about employment needs in-country and how UK TNE helps to meet these. Where practical, QE-TNE will explore the views of employers and alumni as part of in-country engagement.

A comprehensive approach, covering all TNE providers and types of TNE (principles 2 and 3)

The approach applies to all degree-awarding bodies which engage in TNE. It is designed to be valid for all types of TNE - from distance learning¹⁹ to branch campuses. Therefore, it is broader in scope than previous TNE review methods.

The programme of activity, covering three countries each academic year, will enable proportionate coverage of UK TNE. TNE provision in up to 15 different countries or territories will be reviewed over the five years of the programme. With a major host country included each year alongside smaller host nations - developing and emerging markets, this will enable approximately 15-40% of in-country activity to be considered, plus a proportion of that delivered via distance learning/locally-supported distance learning.

The extension from one to three countries/territories, specifically, provides greater coverage of host countries as well as more opportunity to review delivery in emerging as well as established, core markets. To date, distance learning has been included in some of the UK's national institutional-level review methods but has not been an explicit part of TNE review, other than when supported by local in-country learning centres. This new approach will include distance learning and learners.

An aligned and complementary approach, minimising burden (principle 6)

UK degree-awarding bodies offering their awards through TNE, have full responsibility for the academic standards of their awards, wherever or however those awards are delivered; they have ultimate responsibility for the quality of provision, but may delegate aspects of that to partners. The starting point for QE-TNE is that providers' internal, and national external, quality assurance processes test the effectiveness with which a provider is meeting the Expectations of the UK Quality Code²⁰ - that these processes are robust and retesting is not

¹⁹ 'Distance learning' is used throughout to denote and embrace all forms of open, distributed, flexible or online forms of learning, both supported and unsupported - be it by a learning centre, local tutor or in combination with blended and other learning formats.

²⁰ National external quality assurance in Scotland and Wales requires HEIs to meet the Core and Common practices of the UK Quality Code; the national external quality assurance system in England is based on the Core practices.

necessary. The approach is designed to complement these internal and external quality processes, providing depth of insight into TNE provision and driving continuous improvement. The approach will include ways to enable the alignment - where relevant and appropriate, accreditation and review by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs).

The approach in QE-TNE reduces the requirements on providers selected for evaluation compared with former approaches to TNE review. QE-TNE places greater emphasis on the benefits enabled by a wider programme of TNE activities. These will enable QAA to generate information and guidance, insights and intelligence for the sector. QAA will also work to extend mutual understanding and address specific regulatory matters and complexities as part of how it prepares for, and follows up, in-country evaluation activity - thereby further easing the burden on TNE activity where possible. Such regulatory matters might include whether UK and host country programme approval processes can be streamlined or how to address potential tensions between a local requirement for consistency between UK and in-country delivery with the need to ensure that an award can be tailored to optimise its relevance for the local context, economy and skills needs.

The cost-efficiency and benefits of a country-based approach (principle 5)

A country-based approach to the evaluation of UK TNE is cost efficient. It will target resources on specific TNE host countries, enabling detailed understanding and insights to be gained. This depth of knowledge could not be gained as efficiently or effectively with other approaches. The approach will enable travel and time to be used efficiently through the focus on specific countries or territories in turn. It will generate rich and current output with analytical reports, drawing on all the material produced, alongside the detailed case studies and reports on selected arrangements. With a number of countries selected each year, quite quickly QE-TNE will enable thematic and comparative analysis across a range of host countries and TNE arrangements. It will therefore provide the benefits of a thematic approach without the considerable cost and complexities of visiting multiple locations involved in taking a fully thematic approach. The richness of the output will support shared learning and collaborative benefit.

Covering up to three countries/territories each year rather than one, QE-TNE is more comprehensive than previously and therefore, the overall cost is higher. Nevertheless, the greater breadth and coverage, and range of resources generated, will make it far more effective in meeting the needs of UK TNE and international stakeholders, and will enable cost efficiencies. Each activity will be designed to be as cost-efficient as practical, while also being designed to maximise the beneficial output and greatest value for the UK sector.

Virtual means will be used whenever appropriate to limit travel costs, time investment and environmental impacts. Nevertheless, in-person discussions and physical visits are important for effective engagement and relationship building and will remain fundamental to the approach.

Informed by available robust metrics and aligned with data-informed approaches in the UK (principle 11)

All credible internal and external quality review methods draw on available data - be it directly or through exploring how a provider uses available data to understand itself, the effectiveness of its practices, and to revise and improve them. QE-TNE will consider how a provider uses data - from internal processes, from UK sources and from a host country - to understand its TNE students' experience and student outcomes.

QAA will collaborate with host countries to understand the kinds of metrics and data that are available locally, to explore how these can be used to support UK TNE arrangements and to evidence impact and effectiveness. It will also explore future plans to extend data gathering or publish new information.

An approach that is flexible and responsive (principle 5)

The selection of countries itself enables the approach to respond to particular opportunities or challenges. Each programme of activity will be tailored to the country and in response to information from UK providers. The purposes and outcomes of each evaluation can be adapted (for example, in response to specific challenges or barriers in-country, or to live issues), as can the number and range of arrangements selected for detailed evaluation. Therefore, the approach is context-responsive and will vary from country-to-country. The approach will also be sensitive to the impact on particular UK providers in the selection of arrangements and case studies, both in seeking to involve a range of UK providers and avoiding the selection of arrangements from the same provider across a series of destinations where other, similar arrangements could be used.

The focus on quality enhancement in QE-TNE means that there is not a list of assurance matters to work through - although some assurance questions are very relevant (such as 'how do you seek to ensure equivalence in student outcomes?'). QE-TNE reports will be narrative reports identifying the particular matters explored. In common with established practice in TNE review, QE-TNE will not result in a judgement. These characteristics will enable the whole approach to be flexible and responsive and to adapt, for instance, in response to the publication of new data sets.

The nature and pace of change is unlikely to allow a fixed method to operate effectively over a five-year programme - not if it is to be as pertinent in the final year as it was when planned prior to year one. Therefore, the approach will change as needed as, for instance, more data emerges, as patterns of learning and teaching change, or in the face of wider or more disruptive change.

An enhancement-led approach (principle 10)

UK TNE providers are committed to the continuing development of TNE. They are proud of how it enables students to access UK higher education even if they are not able to be internationally mobile or if they wish to stay within their home region. The UK's established quality assurance processes enables QE-TNE to focus on that continuing development, on enhancing provision, on exploring common challenges and sharing effective practice.

Enhancement-based approaches also provide assurance, just as primarily assurance or metrics-oriented processes also enable enhancement. Quality enhancement and quality assurance are not opposed and neither precludes the other.

There are two main reasons why the evaluation of UK TNE has enhancement as one of its defining principles. Firstly, quality assurance is fully addressed by the internal and external quality assurance processes used within the UK (and QAA can seek to ensure how this is achieved is understood within host countries, as well as to address any areas of uncertainty or misunderstanding). Secondly, the size, scale and complexity of UK TNE means that evaluation visits cannot cover all UK providers and all programmes and delivery sites; therefore, it is a representative and illustrative sample which is selected. With an illustrative sample, no overall judgement can be made on a provider in the way it would be through

quality assurance.²¹ Whereas, recommendations for development and the identification of effective practice arising from selected arrangements do support quality enhancement in UK higher education and TNE, enabling shared learning. The nature of the approach to quality enhancement in QE-TNE is detailed more fully below.

An approach designed to retain international trust, maintain and deepen the reputation of the UK's approaches to quality assurance (principle 9)

Retaining international trust and maintaining the UK's reputation brings all these principles together, summarising the primary purpose of evaluating UK TNE. Country-based review has, historically, served the UK well in providing visible and robust evidence of the UK's commitment to ensuring and demonstrating the strength and quality of its TNE provision. TNE review has illustrated how important engaging with host countries is for the UK and that TNE is about partnerships, local interests and mutual benefits. Indeed, it is the partnerships, students' and local interests that are central to many UK providers' commitment to TNE.

Trust in the reputation of approaches to quality assurance in the UK in part stem from QAA, its work within the UK and its international engagement. In the UK, this includes the initial and subsequent development of the UK's quality frameworks and tools, which are themselves widely acknowledged and respected. Shared standards and guidelines, qualifications frameworks and regional quality assurance networks have been mirrored in the ASEAN region, in the Middle East and in Africa. QAA and the UK therefore reflect a shared global language in approaches to quality.

QAA is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance (ENQA) in the European Higher Education Area²² and is listed on the European Quality Assurance Register (EQAR). It has undergone three successful reviews by ENQA, each confirming the compliance of its practices and approaches with the *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area* (known as the ESG). QE-TNE is designed to continue to align with the ESG and to incorporate the essential characteristics of external quality assurance in Europe: published review method, self-evaluation, peer-review that includes students, and published reports. QAA is a full member of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education (INQAAHE) and is also recognised as meeting the INQAAHE Guidelines of Good Practice.

Quality enhancement in QE-TNE

This section sets out in more detail what is meant by enhancement, and how the approach in QE-TNE focuses on enhancement; it looks at some of the core characteristics of enhancement-led practice.

Enhancement - the determination to seek continuous improvement

QAA defines enhancement as: 'Taking deliberate steps to bring about improvement in the effectiveness of the learning experiences of students.'

Therefore, as stated in the introduction, quality enhancement approaches ask institutions *how* they are working strategically to enhance the quality of their students' learning

²¹ For example, it is not possible reliably to extrapolate conclusions from the detailed review of a franchised programme in computer science in one country to a validation arrangement in graphic design in a different country.

²² The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) was formally established in 2010 and, in May 2020, comprised 48 nations; it is part of the Bologna Process launched in 1999, that has enabled progressive harmonisation in higher education across Europe.

experiences, and *how* they are engaging and working with their partners and their students to improve learning. Quality enhancement is about engaging critically with the purpose of quality assurance - to deliver quality improvement and to move beyond the concern with process. The basic premise is that: *wherever you are, you can always improve.*

The focus on the quality of the student experience of learning, places the emphasis on the outcome and impact of internal quality assurance processes and policies. Annual monitoring can be used as an example to illustrate this. QE-TNE will take, as its starting point, that other internal and external quality assurance processes²³ will have confirmed that all annual monitoring meets UK norms and has been completed in a timely way. However, it will then seek to explore questions such as:

- What have you learned from annual monitoring that is enabling you to deliver this programme more effectively for the TNE students who take it?
- How does your UK partner involve you and your students in the enhancement plans that emerge from annual monitoring?
- How do you apply the learning and outcomes from particular arrangements across your wider TNE portfolio?

Core characteristics of enhancement

Core characteristics of enhancement include: critical self-evaluation; partnership working and collaborative practice; student involvement and engagement; evidence and peer-based evaluation; and transparency, openness and trust. Each of these is important within QE-TNE.

Critical self-evaluation

The ability to be critically self-evaluative is fundamental to an enhancement culture. Self-evaluation uses both evidence and reflection systematically to identify areas for action. Actions implemented will then be evaluated to establish the extent to which changes have enabled the intended benefits to be realised. It is a continuing cycle. In higher education students may be involved in all stages.

Once providers and TNE arrangements/programmes for evaluation have been identified as part of QE-TNE, providers will be asked to produce a short self-evaluation of the arrangement and programme(s) involved. Case studies forming part of QE-TNE are expected to be evaluative with only sufficient description to set the evaluation and evidence in context.

Partnership and collaborative practice

Collaborative, partnership working is characteristic of quality enhancement and is a strong feature of the QE-TNE method through shared learning, mutual and collective benefit. Partnership itself is fundamental to much TNE activity.

Collaboration is the basis of how QAA will work with the sector, through UUKi and GuildHE, and with its own membership to identify target countries for ratification by the UKSCQA. All UK higher education TNE providers will be asked to identify particular issues and challenges that QAA can usefully explore with the host country. QAA will work closely in partnership

²³ QAA reviewers routinely read all recent reports on providers as part of their preparation for any review, including those available from PSRBs. For higher education providers in England, reviewers will be able to check their status on the [OfS Register](#).

with local agencies and ministries to build trust and mutual understanding and to address any duplication in regulatory matters connected with UK TNE provision.

Student engagement and involvement

QE-TNE involves students - as reviewers and in the processes of evaluation - with the student experience as the main focus of enquiry. QE-TNE assumes that UK providers are committed to understanding their TNE students' experience of learning and to engaging them in the quality enhancement of their learning.

The consideration of the cultural context of student engagement and involvement is important in TNE and in its quality evaluation. It is recognised that the extent to which student engagement and involvement happens, and how it happens, may be informed by local norms and cultural expectations in particular countries - as well as by norms around the expectations of the role of staff

In quality enhancement, engaging and involving students goes well beyond seeking their views through periodic student surveys, even when that includes effective and timely feedback to students on the actions taken as a result of their views.

In a quality enhancement culture, students will have opportunities to work with programme or other staff in bringing about enhancements in their learning experience and in shaping the future direction of learning. Students will inform the setting of priorities and influence decision-making, working with staff to develop solutions, to plan and implement actions.

Well-developed student engagement is not easy; it requires commitment and the ambition to create a culture of engagement with a strong focus on learners and learning. The challenges are greater where student cohorts are heterogeneous and a range of approaches may be needed to engage particular student groups. Similarly, creating a sense of engagement at a distance is challenging, and can involve the added complexity of engagement activity by both a partner provider and by TNE providers.

QE-TNE reviewers will be interested in how UK providers seek to enable student engagement and involvement at a distance.

Evidence and peer-based evaluation

In line with all QAA review processes, QE-TNE will be an evidence-based process. Extensive use of data is characteristic throughout (from facts and figures about the overall scale and scope of UK TNE, through programme-level information brought together for the evaluation, to evidence about student outcomes). Evidence should underpin self-evaluation by providers and qualitative and/or quantitative evaluation underlie their assessment of the effectiveness of approaches and changes. The findings and conclusions of evaluations will be based on evidence; effective practice and areas for development will be identified through the consideration of evidence.

Transparency, openness and trust

Transparency starts with a published evaluation method. Openness and trust should flow through the method, as it is based on collective benefit, assisted by the fact that there is no formal quality assurance judgement. Building trust and mutual understanding between a host country and the UK will be a principal outcome of the engagement with each country.

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