QAA Membership 2021-22: Highlights

We’ve enjoyed many successes working in partnership with QAA Members. This report highlights some of the key achievements of the 2021-22 membership year so far. You can use it as a round-up of our resources, as well as a reminder of shared wins.

- Understanding challenges and offering insights based on analysis and forward-thinking enables us to provide expert advice to governments and policymakers, influencing sector-wide decisions and legislation which supports UK higher education.
- Working with members, we’re shaping the future of learning, teaching and assessment.
- Leading the way on academic integrity, we have championed the introduction of legislation to outlaw essay mills while continuing to support our members and students to keep academic standards secure.
- Partnering with the sector to strengthen the external examining system.
- Providing insights and facilitating networking with institutions and agencies around the world strengthens partnerships between our members and international providers.
- Engaging with developments in micro-credentials, nationally and internationally, ensures our members have the information they need to manage modular qualifications and develop flexible learning pathways.

It is important that we continue to help to maintain and enhance UK higher education’s global reputation for excellence and being part of QAA Membership helps to assure the high standards and quality that are at the heart of the reputation of UK higher education.

Gavin Brown, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, University of Liverpool

QAA’s convening power offers real value, ensuring our members have an expert voice informing and influencing governments and other key agencies inside and outside the UK.

Our resources and activities are designed to help you and your students with the challenges of the rapidly changing higher education environment.

Further details on our membership work this year follows, including a round-up of key data on events and resources.
Shaping the future of learning, teaching and assessment

We are at the forefront of the sector-wide focus on innovative approaches to learning, teaching and assessment for the future. Building on the experience of the rapid pivot to digital delivery, this has involved identifying what good will look like, and working collaboratively to provide insights and practical tools to help support busy staff and students.

- Members are enhancing their digital and hybrid delivery using our imaginative Hallmarks of Success playbooks, which provide high-level guiding principles that underpin excellent practice, as well as pointing out road blocks and how to address them.

> The Hallmarks of Success playbook provides an excellent roadmap to creating useful and engaging assessments in the modern educational landscape.

Sean Holm, Student at Swansea University and member of the QAA Student Strategic Advisory Committee

- An impressive collection of Open Educational Resources, resulting from a Collaborative Enhancement Project led by De Montfort University, are empowering providers globally to embed mental wellbeing in their curricula.

- Our Made Digital research highlights the approaches to delivery and assessment that are associated with improved student engagement and achievement. The report offers innovative and practical ideas for members to consider as they support their students in digital and hybrid environments.

- Over 50 PVCs joined us at a Strategy Summit focused on post-pandemic pedagogy and future teaching and learning strategies linked to improved student engagement.

- Assessment was a key theme at this year’s Quality Insights Conference which covered a wide range of topics including enabling compassionate assessment, sustainable and authentic approaches to assessment, and assessment in the connected curriculum.

- Findings from our Collaborative Enhancement Project led by the University of Portsmouth, are helping academic staff to adopt inclusive teaching and learning practices which work for students with different characteristics and support efforts to address the awarding gaps.
We’ve prepared a suite of attractive, short resources for students to use to sharpen their understanding of the language and purpose of assessment.

We have a sustained focus on equality, diversity and inclusivity throughout our work which is reflected in the composition of our advisory groups and content of sector reference points. We have also produced advice and complementary reflective questions to help course leaders create inclusive subject communities.

Our interactive workshop on assessment strategy encouraged cross-institution collaboration as senior leaders and academic managers shared examples of assessment and feedback practices which have proven to enhance student experience and generated helpful tips for other members.

The Inclusive Learning Communities resources were extremely helpful in providing both an overview of the sector and a range of specific, targeted case studies for us to reflect on when planning our own provision in this area.

Andrew Petersen, Head of Quality, Compliance and Student Records, University of Leicester

Embedding academic integrity and mitigating misconduct

We work with sector agencies, government departments, regulators and politicians, along with our members to promote academic integrity and prevent academic fraud.

Your support has led to terrific success in influencing legislation to outlaw essay mills. In April, an amendment was passed to the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill that criminalises essay mills in England. We know this legislation is important to our members who will be able to make clear to their students that using an essay mill means they are engaging with a criminal entity. We are continuing to work with the Department for Education and devolved administrations to discuss the issues surrounding academic misconduct and hope to see the essay mills ban applied across all home nations.

Academic Misconduct Penalties Advice and a supporting webinar series helped members to develop fair and proportionate academic misconduct processes. We are continuing to explore the impact these approaches have on students’ learning experiences.

In collaboration with members, we explored how course leaders can use innovative assessment design to reduce cases of contract cheating and shared positive approaches in an interactive webinar.

Through two of our Collaborative Enhancement Projects, we are exploring how linking academic integrity to inclusion and accessibility can improve student experience. These projects will produce a substantial collection of resources for members including a model to aid development of student academic integrity champions, good practice guides for accessibility and equity in proofreading, and a range of guidance materials to deliver inclusive and accessible education with academic integrity.

Being a QAA Member gives our institution access to a wide variety of helpful resources and guidance documents, which supports the benchmarking of our practice with sector norms and supports us in the development and review of key quality assurance processes.

Pearl Slater, Head of Academic Governance and Policy, Bath Spa University
Micro-credentials, credit and flexible pathways

Micro-credentials are being explored by many providers as a way of meeting student and employer demand for more flexible ways of studying and supporting skills development. Our work is helping members to develop their thinking and practices in relation to modular qualifications, enabling them to respond quickly to opportunities including those emerging as part of plans for a lifelong loan entitlement in England.

- Working with an advisory network, comprising members from a range of providers across all four nations of the UK, we developed a Characteristics Statement for Micro-credentials which is supporting practitioners in their preparation for and delivery of micro-credentials and related flexible study pathways.

- Our ‘Making Use of Credit’ webinars have enhanced members’ understanding of using credit in different contexts, such as to create ‘stackable’ qualifications and short courses, design imaginative postgraduate qualifications and in the recognition of prior learning.

- Bi-monthly briefings and reflections on policy and practice are helping members keep up-to-date with the latest global developments in micro-credentials.

- A series of monthly events focused on different aspects of micro-credentials and the opportunities and challenges they present, enabled members to share practices such as how they create more flexible learning pathways and how institutions might use them to support employability and entrepreneurship.
Effective student engagement in quality

We provide opportunities for students, student representatives and sabbatical officers to engage meaningfully in quality assurance and enhancement.

- Our Quality Matters Conference prepares newly-elected student officers and student representatives for the year ahead by providing an introduction to student engagement in quality.
- The Student Engagement Toolkit and complementary training, developed with our student community, provides support and inspiration for student reps and staff.
- Our termly Engaging Students in Quality and Standards newsletter is keeping members up-to-date with the latest activities, projects and key information about student engagement in quality practice across the UK.
- This year’s Evolving Student Engagement event will inspire practitioners who are passionate about student engagement to share practice and collectively explore the challenges that providers and student bodies are facing in relation to partnerships, belonging, inclusivity and transitions to and through higher education.
- QAA’s Student Strategic Advisory Committee enables us to engage students and student representatives from across the UK in our planning and decision making.

"Using the activities in the Student Engagement Toolkit to break down our existing practice has enabled me to think more clearly about our enhancement needs, and to reach out to other teams across my institution to discuss how we could work more collaboratively to enhance student feedback mechanisms and how these are embedded within the University."

Emma Bates, Student Voice Manager, University of Essex

Subject Benchmark Statements

A major benefit of being a QAA Member is having the opportunity to join advisory groups to shape and inform our sector reference points, including Subject Benchmark Statements.

- We are supporting members to address inequalities in student outcomes and awards by incorporating wider social goals into the Subject Benchmark Statements including equality, diversity, inclusivity and accessibility.
- Working with specialist advisory groups involving 242 academics and 14 students from member institutions, employers and PSRBs, we have published 13 revised Subject Benchmark Statements.
- In partnership with the College of Policing, members and wider stakeholders, we developed a new Statement for Policing.
- 13 new advisory groups are currently reviewing the next set of Subject Benchmark Statements which will be published in spring 2023.

Use the search on our website to find the Statements you’re most interested in.
Global engagement and TNE

Our global reach and strong network of international partnerships enable us to support members in securing and reinforcing UK higher education’s global reputation for excellence and enhancing the student learning experience wherever students are studying.

- We’re liaising with governments, agencies and institutions in 31 countries to promote and improve understanding of quality assurance and enhancement between UK and international partners, influence policy and strengthen partnerships between our members and institutions globally.
- A series of interactive webinars have facilitated the collaborative exploration of risks associated with delivering TNE including due diligence, quality assurance processes, maintaining academic standards and student experience.

“QAA has an exemplary record in supporting institutions in their TNE activities. Bringing practitioners together in webinars and networks strengthens the community of practice. We have a common interest in the quality of UK provision through TNE.”

Professor David Law, Academic Director: Global Partnerships, Keele University

- Our country programmes are providing invaluable insights into the HE and regulatory landscapes in key countries for UK TNE, partnerships and collaboration. Our latest report covers high level intelligence about regulations, challenges and opportunities in Viet Nam, with further materials to come on Indonesia, Morocco and Tunisia.

This membership year we have worked in: Albania, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Egypt, Fiji, Germany, Ghana, Gibraltar, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Ivory Coast, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Macau, Malta, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, People’s Republic of China, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Thailand, Tunisia, UAE, Ukraine and Vietnam.
Reviewing the external examining system

We are working with Universities UK and GuildHE to strengthen the external examining system and ensure the external examiner role is more widely understood outside the HE sector.

- Over 160 members attended our Roundtable discussions in early 2022 to share their thoughts and feedback on external examining practices and we received 105 responses to an online survey.
- Working with an advisory group drawn from across the UK we have produced a set of succinct external examining principles that we hope will be appended to the UKSCQA Statement of Intent.
- Later in the membership year, we will publish more detailed advice for members on good practice in external examining covering matters such as avoiding conflicts of interest and providing more detail on the different roles examiners can fulfil to ensure each institution realises the full value of having this network of experienced individuals working across the whole sector.

Education for Sustainable Development

Through the development of resources and activities, we’re supporting members to embed Education for Sustainable Development within their institutional processes and curricula.

- Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Guidance continues to be one of the most popular resources accessed by members.
- A suite of case studies, developed in partnership with AdvanceHE and our members, is inspiring others through providing practical examples of ESD activities - from single workshops to long-term community engagement projects.
- Four of our funded Collaborative Enhancement Projects are delivering further insights and outputs for the sector including principles and tools to support the monitoring and evaluation of ESD and a framework with associated resources to help members integrate ESD into quality processes.
Collaborative Enhancement Projects

We are funding over 30 Collaborative Enhancement Projects in which members are working together to enhance student learning experiences. The broad range of project topics include academic integrity, enterprise and employability, Education for Sustainable Development, apprenticeships, postgraduate research, future pedagogy and micro-credentials.

- A series of videos and resources which is helping students prepare for their PhD viva examinations.
- A Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) to support providers with the design and delivery of flexible online and blended modules.
- Research reports and reflections which explore the differing perceptions of teaching and learning quality among undergraduate students from different ethnic backgrounds.
- Open Educational Resources which empower providers to embed mental wellbeing in their curricula.
- An evidence-informed and validated Social Induction Framework and interrelated tools to help staff apply it.
- A website to bring together contributions that have helped to guide, shape and challenge our collective thinking about compassionate pedagogy and belonging.
- Pedagogic resources and case studies to enhance active online reading.

I was a co-investigator in a Collaborative Enhancement Project last year. I had a very positive experience, which inspired me to put together a multi-institutional proposal this year. Through these projects, QAA have created an excellent opportunity for academics to pursue the otherwise underexplored areas of modern pedagogy.

Professor Raheel Nawaz, Director of Digital & Technology Solutions, Manchester Metropolitan University

We have delivered a selection of valuable and versatile outputs delivered so far.

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- Pedagogic resources and case studies to enhance active online reading.

The opportunities that QAA provide to enhance student engagement and experience are excellent, and I’m grateful to be able to access their content and learn from them.

Andrew Petersen, Head of Quality, Compliance and Student Records, University of Leicester

Supporting Successful Student Transitions

Key transition points for students, such as entering higher education, moving between levels or modes of study and progressing into employment, are exciting times - but they can also be challenging for students and those who support them.

- Our extensive collection of toolkits, short papers, case studies and lesson ideas offers positive approaches and practical solutions to support a range of transitions, such as moving into higher education for the first time or returning to university after a break. The latest resources to be added to this suite include a case study on monitoring and enhancing retention among underrepresented groups, a podcast on transitioning into college-based higher education, and an expanded version of the Student Guide to the Hidden Curriculum.

The opportunities that QAA provide to enhance student engagement and experience are excellent, and I’m grateful to be able to access their content and learn from them.

Andrew Petersen, Head of Quality, Compliance and Student Records, University of Leicester
New opportunities to discuss, develop and debate

The membership programme is underpinned by events, networking opportunities and professional development courses which bring together colleagues in a wide range of roles - along with students - to share innovative approaches, develop knowledge and benefit from QAA’s expertise.

It’s really important that similar institutions are able to get together to share their opinions and their experiences and explore what it means for us as a HE provider, and also to be able to forge some really valuable conversations.

Zulakha Desai, Assistant Principal for Higher Education, Myerscough College

- We have established a series of popular member networks which provide opportunities for colleagues in a broad range of roles or provider types to engage in discussions about current issues and explore ideas collaboratively with peers from across the sector.

- Our member events provide opportunities to develop and exchange ideas on the latest policy and practice. These include our flagship Quality Insights Conference, Member Network event and two annual conferences for students - Quality Matters and Evolving Student Engagement.

- Alongside the popular Introduction to Quality and Quality in Practice: Quality Management Professional Development programmes, we’ve expanded our training offer this year to include new Quality in Practice modules to support academic staff members and those responsible for quality assurance and enhancement to reflect on their approaches to course design and development and monitor and evaluate their programmes.

‘The University has welcomed the wide range of events, workshops, networking and professional development opportunities that membership with the QAA offers. In a rapidly changing higher education environment, these opportunities have been valuable in exchanging ideas on the emerging policy landscape.

Malcolm Todd, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Leeds Trinity University
Resources and activities for your whole organisation

Up to end of April, in Membership 2021-22 we delivered:

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<th>Type</th>
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<th>Delegates</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Training programmes</td>
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Our members rated the overall satisfaction for the quality of content delivered through these activities at 4.5/5.

We created over 75 new resources and made these available to 3,476 registered users on our Membership Resources Site.

Thank you for your continued support, collaboration, engagement and enthusiasm which has ensured QAA continues to deliver for the UK HE community.

QAA Membership gives the University of Cambridge access to valuable resources that help us manage and enhance the quality of education at the University. Its events facilitate our interaction with other and diverse higher education providers to share problems, practice, challenges and solutions. QAA continues to stay true to its co-regulatory principle of designing supportive resources for and with the sector. This serves as a timely reminder of how the sector remains stronger by working together.

Professor Graham Virgo, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education, University of Cambridge

Don’t miss out on the latest news and activities

These are just a few highlights from our vast and lively Membership programme. If you have not already signed up to receive the weekly Member Update which signposts to the latest sector news, as well as recent publications and forthcoming activities, you can do so easily via this short form.

Find out what is coming up next by visiting our [website](#) and check out our new brochures to explore the key themes and topics for Membership 2022-23.