UK Quality Code for Higher Education

Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality

Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching

PART

B

Contents

About the Quality Code

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code) is the definitive reference point for all UK higher education providers. It makes clear what higher education providers are required to do, what they can expect of each other, and what students and the general public can expect of them. The Quality Code covers all four nations of the UK (England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales) and all providers of UK higher education operating internationally. It protects the interests of all students, regardless of where they are studying or whether they are full-time, part-time, undergraduate or postgraduate students.

The Quality Code has three Parts. Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards contains three Chapters and seven Expectations. Each of the 11 Chapters of Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality, and Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision contain a single Expectation.
An Expectation expresses the key principle that the higher education community has identified as essential for the assurance of academic standards and quality within the area covered by the respective Chapter or Part. Higher education providers reviewed by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) are required to meet all the Expectations. The manner in which they do so is their own responsibility. QAA carries out reviews to check whether higher education providers are meeting the Expectations.[2]

The Expectations in Part C and each Chapter of Part B are accompanied by a series of Indicators that reflect sound practice, and through which providers can demonstrate they are meeting the relevant Expectation. Indicators are not designed to be used as a checklist; they are intended to help providers reflect on and develop their regulations, procedures and practices to demonstrate that the Expectations in the Quality Code are being met. Each Indicator is supported by an explanatory note that gives more information about it, together with examples of how the Indicator may be interpreted in practice. Indicators are grouped into clusters under a heading. There are no Indicators in Part A. The explanatory text provided directly supports the relevant Expectation.

Each Part and Chapter has been developed by QAA through an extensive process of consultation with higher education providers; their representative bodies; the National Union of Students; professional, statutory and regulatory bodies; and other interested parties.

The *UK Quality Code for Higher Education: General Introduction*[3] should be considered in conjunction with this document. It provides a technical introduction for users, including guidance concerning the terminology used and a quick-reference glossary. A more detailed glossary is available on QAA's website.[4]

The Quality Code and legislation

Higher education providers are responsible for meeting the requirements of legislation and any other regulatory requirements placed upon them, for example by funding bodies. The Quality Code does not interpret legislation nor does it incorporate statutory or regulatory requirements. Sources of information about other requirements and examples of guidance and good practice are signposted within the Part or Chapter where appropriate. Higher education providers are responsible for how they use these resources.

Equality and diversity in the Quality Code

The Quality Code promotes an inclusive approach by embedding consideration of equality and diversity matters throughout. Promoting equality involves treating everyone with equal dignity and worth, irrespective of the group or groups to which they belong, while also raising aspirations and supporting achievement for people with diverse requirements, entitlements and backgrounds. An inclusive environment for learning anticipates the varied requirements of learners, for example, because of a declared disability, specific cultural background, location or age, and aims to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities. Higher education providers, staff and students all have a role in and responsibility for promoting equality.

Equality of opportunity involves enabling access for people who have differing individual requirements as well as eliminating arbitrary and unnecessary barriers to learning. In addition, disabled students and non-disabled students are offered learning opportunities that are equally accessible to them, by means of

inclusive design wherever possible and by means of reasonable individual adjustments wherever necessary. Offering an equal opportunity to learn is distinguished from every student having an equal chance of success, because this is dependent on a range of factors including their motivation and engagement in learning.

All higher education providers have legal obligations which they must meet, for example in relation to equality of opportunity and eliminating unlawful discrimination (in the UK particular considerations, such as the anticipatory duty to provide reasonable adjustments, apply to disabled students). The Quality Code does not seek to duplicate or interpret these requirements.

About this Chapter

This publication is a new Chapter of the Quality Code. It incorporates and supersedes the *Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education (Code of Practice), Section 2: Collaborative Provision and Flexible and Distributed Learning* (*including e-learning*) *(2010), Part B: Aspects Specific to Flexible and Distributed Learning*, and the *Code of Practice, Section 9: Work-based and Placement Learning* (2007). It also incorporates and supersedes those parts of the *Code of Practice, Section 3: Disabled Students* (2010) relating to learning and teaching. The evaluation of the Academic Infrastructure and consultation on subsequent changes which resulted in the development of the Quality Code identified the need for the introduction of a Chapter on learning and teaching covering all modes of study.

This Chapter was subject to public consultation between May and July 2012 and was published in September 2012. It became a reference point for the purpose of reviews carried out by QAA in August 2013.

Introduction: Learning and teaching

This Chapter focuses on the learning opportunities which higher education providers make available to students and on the staff who teach and who enable learning, including those staff who are not employees of the higher education provider and/or are not based at the provider. It applies to any learning opportunities which lead to the award of a UK higher education qualification or the award of academic credit, whether through short courses involving single modules or multi-year programmes of study.
It covers students studying at all academic levels covered by *Chapter A1: UK and European Reference Points for Academic Standards[5]* (that is, all undergraduate, master's and doctoral students) and irrespective of their:

- location - for example, campus-based, on placement or otherwise in a work place, distance learning, or with a partner, delivery organisation or support provider within the UK or internationally
- mode of study - for example face to face, e-learning, blended learning, or work-based learning, whether full-time or part-time
- academic subject
- age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy or maternity, race, ethnic origin or national identity, religion or belief, sex, or sexual orientation
- previous educational background, breaks since the last experience of academic study, or time spent in the workplace
- nationality or fee status - for example home, European Union or international.

UK higher education embraces a wide variety of modes of both learning and teaching, which can be used in different combinations. These include flexible and distributed learning, work-based or placement learning, and technology-enhanced learning. At one end of the continuum, programme delivery, learner support and assessment are all provided by staff of the degree-awarding body on its campus(es). The other end of the continuum can be represented by a distance-learner who:

- has no direct contact with the degree-awarding body, its staff or other students
- studies their programme with a delivery organisation that is not the degree-awarding body
- receives support for learning from an organisation (support provider) that is neither part of the delivery organisation nor the degree-awarding body.

Between these two ends of the continuum, there are many possible combinations involving learning and teaching, support, and assessment delivered by the higher education provider, and/or partner and/or delivery organisation, and/or support provider. Some or all of the learning opportunities may be provided, for example, by an employer or organisation offering a work-based or placement learning opportunity, or an employer supporting its employee(s) on a higher education programme where the workplace is used as a learning environment. Work-based or placement learning opportunities can take place outside the UK, for example through exchange schemes.

The Chapter **does not** assume that:

- a student's place of study is physically located within the higher education provider whose academic award will be given on successful completion of the programme of study
- a student's programme of study is delivered directly by the degree-awarding body
- a student is directly supported by staff of the degree-awarding body
- a student is routinely working with other students
- the assessment of a student's achievement takes place at the location of the degree-awarding body.

Where learning and teaching is delivered through an organisation other than the degree-awarding body the responsibilities of each of the parties is defined in a written agreement between them.

Ultimate responsibility for the academic standards of the award and the quality of learning opportunities made available rests with the degree-awarding body. Sound practice in the management of such arrangements is articulated in *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others*.[6]

More detailed information about research degrees is provided in *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*.[7]

What contributes to effective learning and teaching?

Identifying effective learning and teaching is complex, as it is influenced by many factors, which vary between individuals and different learning environments. Individuals **learn** when they acquire new (or modify existing) knowledge, behaviours, skills or values. There are many different ways to **teach**, all aimed at helping a student to learn. There are many ways to empower learners with the confidence to participate, critically and creatively, in the study of their subject area(s).

The central themes of this Chapter are:

- inclusive learning through promoting equality, diversity and equal opportunity
- higher education providers, staff (all those who facilitate learning), students and other stakeholders working in partnership
- learning facilitated by enthusiastic and capable staff through teaching and other types of support for learning, whether formal or informal.

Equality, diversity and equal opportunity

Diversity of staff and students brings with it different ideas, knowledge and experiences that contribute to an enriched learning environment. Promoting equality involves treating everyone with equal dignity and worth, irrespective of the group or groups to which they belong, while also raising aspirations and supporting achievement for people with diverse requirements, entitlements and backgrounds. An inclusive environment for learning anticipates the varied requirements of learners, for example, because of a declared disability, specific cultural background, location, or age, and aims to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities. Higher education providers, staff and students all have a role and responsibility to promote equality.

Equality of opportunity involves enabling access for people who have differing individual requirements as well as eliminating arbitrary and unnecessary barriers to learning. The nature of students' particular learning experiences may vary according to location of study, mode of study, or academic subject, as well as whether they have any protected characteristics, but every student experiences parity in the quality of learning opportunities. In addition, disabled students and non-disabled students are offered learning opportunities which are equally accessible to them, by means of inclusive design wherever possible and by means of reasonable individual adjustments wherever necessary.

Offering an equal opportunity to learn is distinguished from offering an equal chance of success.

Working in partnership

In general, effective learning in higher education occurs when there is a partnership between the higher education provider, their staff and students, and any external stakeholder that results in:

- teaching that aims to be inspirational
- the co-production and enhancement of creative and transformational learning, and
- a schedule of assessment that is effective both in supporting learning and safeguarding academic standards.

Transformational learning involves a process of becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others, and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation.

Partnership in this Chapter uses the definition set out in *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*,[8] emphasising that partnership is about joint working and not a formal legal relationship based on equal responsibility and liability. Joint working is based on a mature relationship and mutual respect. In the case of learning and teaching, a partnership between staff and students can empower students to develop further as active and independent learners who recognise and take responsibility for their own learning. Such a partnership, whether through formal or informal arrangements, acknowledges that while providers are responsible for providing inclusive learning opportunities and support for learning, the effectiveness with which the learning opportunities are used is a matter for students themselves.

This Chapter address the concept of students engaging with learning opportunities and teaching activities. *Chapter B5: Student Engagement* considers how higher education providers engage with students through their quality systems.

Teaching and support for learning

This Chapter is underpinned by recognition that learning and teaching take place in a variety of forms, involving a mix of formal and informal, and that what is commonly described as 'support for learning' plays a key role. For that reason the term 'teacher' is used to refer to any member of staff involved in facilitating student learning. Teaching is anything a teacher does to facilitate learning.

The term 'staff' refers to anyone involved in teaching or facilitating student learning. It includes, but is not limited to, academic staff, graduate teaching assistants, specialist learning support staff, library staff and technicians employed by the higher education provider. It also includes staff not employed by the higher education provider but who interact with students studying for one of their awards; for example, through an arrangement with a delivery organisation or through facilitating placement learning.

Effective learning and teaching activities and practices are enabled through and depend on staff who are appropriately qualified for their role and who engage throughout their career in continuing professional development, in the evaluation of their practice, and in developing their understanding of their subject and the learning process as it relates to their subject.

Practices and resources that enable students to develop and achieve their academic, personal and professional potential underpin effective learning and teaching. These topics are covered in *Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement*.[9]

The role of assessment in learning and teaching

This Chapter addresses the role of assessment in promoting learning, especially as the basis for reflection and dialogue between staff and students. This activity is often referred to as assessment **for** learning and equated with formative assessment, being developmental. It is contrasted with assessment **of** learning - often equated with summative assessment - the principal purpose of which is to determine student attainment against predetermined criteria. An effective approach to summative assessment, however, reflects the capacity of any form of assessment to enable ongoing learning. Assessment of learning is addressed in *Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning.*[10]

To derive maximum learning benefit from assessment students need to receive timely feedback in a manner that is supportive, yet includes some personal challenge. Effective feedback is the result of: agreeing and communicating clear criteria before students complete the task; assessment that uses those criteria; and feedback based on the criteria and timed so that students can use it constructively in their next stage of learning. Effective feedback for learning also takes into account the need to build confidence as well as to communicate where and how improvements can be made. Effective feedback to support learning involves an ongoing dialogue between the student and staff, the student and their peers, and the student and an employer, for example, where the student is in a work-based or placement learning environment.

External links

Higher education providers are responsible for ascertaining which laws and regulations apply to them. To meet the Expectation of this Chapter of the Quality Code, higher education providers may wish to consider the indicative lists of further guidelines, references and resources. QAA takes no responsibility for the content of external websites.

Expectation

The Quality Code sets out the following Expectation about learning and teaching, which higher education providers are required to meet.

> **Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.**

Indicators of sound practice

The Indicators below are mutually dependent, so they should not be considered in isolation. For example, strategy is not divorced from learning design, and learning design is informed by the careful evaluation of the effectiveness of actual practices through the collection and analysis of robust evidence. Furthermore, it may become evident from the evaluation of learning and teaching that the strategy itself requires modification.

The basis for effective learning and teaching

Indicator 1

Higher education providers articulate and implement a strategic approach to learning and teaching and promote a shared understanding of this approach among their staff, students and other stakeholders.

One strength of UK higher education is the diversity of its providers in terms of mission and range of provision. Each higher education provider sets out, in a form it deems appropriate, and implements its strategic approach to learning and teaching, indicating how it promotes student learning across all of its provision, across all academic levels, and all organisational levels (for example provider, faculty and department).

This strategic approach addresses the learning opportunities for every student, irrespective of: location of study (for example, whether on a campus or in a work-based or placement environment, in the UK or outside the UK) or mode of study (for example, part-time or full-time, or distance learning supported by technology). It considers how every student can experience parity in the quality of learning opportunities (see *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others*).[11]

In agreeing their strategic approach, higher education providers recognise that effective learning occurs when students are enabled to:

- engage actively in learning, and participate fully in the learning opportunities that are presented to them
- understand their learning environment, its culture and resources
- embrace the aims and expectations of their chosen programme of study
- demonstrate understanding of, and an ability to reflect upon, the ways in which their skills and knowledge are developing
- recognise and value their existing knowledge and skills, and build upon them
- make effective and responsible use of advice, guidance and feedback from formative and summative assessment that is provided during their programme of study
- avail themselves of the opportunities to acquire and develop learning skills
- understand sound academic practice and behave with integrity
- contextualise and apply their developing knowledge and skills to their wider experience and plans for the future
- work together in an informal environment as well as in formal learning sessions
- act responsibly in planning their use of the resources available to enable learning, including the effective use of their own time in independent study

- give constructive feedback on their perception of the quality of their learning opportunities
- engage in monitoring and influencing the curriculum
- show commitment to attaining the academic standards that have been defined for their programme of study.

Students are uniquely positioned to comment on how the strategic approach to learning and teaching adopted by the higher education provider enables student learning, and how enhancement of the opportunities provided can benefit their learning. Consequently, higher education providers involve students in developing, implementing and monitoring the strategic approach (see *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*).[12]

Themes that cross subject boundaries

In addition to subject-specific content, higher education providers consider the way their strategic approach reflects themes that cross subject boundaries. These themes reflect topics which may be considered to have a broad relevance to the purposes of higher education and its wider context in society. Where the themes are embedded within the curriculum and form an integral part of a programme of study, learning and teaching activities are designed to take them into account.

These themes may include:

- academic and digital literacies appropriate to the academic level of the student
- education for sustainability
- citizenship
- enterprise and entrepreneurship
- internationalisation
- ethical behaviour.

The design and approval of programmes is addressed in *Chapter B1: Programme Design, Development and Approval.*[13]

Further guidelines, references and resources

QAA (2011) *Outcomes from Institutional Audit: 2007-09: Managing Learning Opportunities*
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=135

QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes: Graduates for the 21st Century
www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/completed-enhancement-themes/graduates-for-the-21st-century

QAA (2012) *Enterprise and Entrepreneurship Education: Guidance for UK Higher Education Providers*
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=70

QAA (2008) *Outcomes from Institutional Audit, Second Series: Work-Based and Placement Learning, and Employability*
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=150

NUS (2012) *Student Experience Research Part 1: Teaching and Learning*
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=225

NUS (2012) *Student Experience Research Part 3: Subject Differences*
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=231

QAA / Higher Education Academy (2014) *Education for Sustainable Development: Guidance for UK Higher Education Providers*
www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/Education-sustainable-development-Guidance-June-14.pdf

Higher Education Academy: Education for Sustainable Development
www.heacademy.ac.uk/node/3213

Higher Education Academy (2014) *Internationalisation Framework*
www.heacademy.ac.uk/internationalising-higher-education-framework

Higher Education Academy (2014) *The Pedagogy of the Massive Open Online Course (MOOC): The UK View*
www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/elt/the_pedagogy_of_the_MOOC_UK_view

Indicator 2

Learning and teaching activities and associated resources provide every student with an equal and effective opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Learning and teaching activities, practices that enable learning, and resources together enable every student who engages appropriately to achieve the learning outcomes. The learning opportunities support students to make the transition into higher education and to progress academically and intellectually through their programme of study, whatever its level.

Learning outcomes

Opportunities for learning in higher education may be formal or informal. The term 'learning outcomes' recognises that learning will generate a range of outcomes, including the intended learning defined in the programme of study and learning which is generated by or as experience or which is the by-product of other learning activities. The learning experience may therefore involve informal learning over and above the structured formal learning focused on the defined learning outcomes.

The concept of learning outcomes is applicable at all academic levels and to every subject of study (see *Chapter A1: UK and European Reference Points for Academic Standards*).[14] For postgraduate research students more details are given in *Chapter B11: Research Degrees*.[15]

Once determined, the learning outcomes for the programme of study map directly to the summative assessment, with the assessment methods being appropriate to offer every student an equal opportunity to demonstrate their achievement of the intended learning outcomes irrespective of how and where the student has studied (see *Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning*).[16]

Providing an effective opportunity to achieve learning outcomes

The planning and design of learning and teaching activities and associated resources:

- provides breadth, depth, pace and challenge appropriate for the learning outcomes, subject and level of study
- takes an inclusive approach
- develops appropriate knowledge, skills and understanding.

Achievement of learning outcomes may depend on fieldwork, placement or work-based learning and may need to satisfy the requirements of a professional, statutory and regulatory body or other external framework. In these situations the learning outcomes encapsulate the academic and professional competence standards essential to the programme of study and, at the same time, are achievable by every student undertaking that programme of study. Where optional or compulsory fieldwork, practical work, or work placement is part of a programme, prior consideration of reasonable adjustments enables the participation of disabled students. Higher education providers engage students and external delivery organisations and support providers providing fieldwork, placement or work-based learning opportunities in their internal quality processes to assure themselves that the learning outcomes are relevant and achievable (see *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*[17] and *Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review*).[18]

Providing an equal opportunity to achieve learning outcomes

The nature of students' particular learning experiences may vary according to location of study, mode of study, or academic subject, as well as whether they have any protected characteristics, but every student experiences parity in the quality of learning opportunities.

All methods of learning and teaching including group work, seminars, lectures, placements and practical classes, create a variety of challenges for students. Providing each student with an equal opportunity involves enabling access for people who have differing individual requirements as well as eliminating arbitrary and unnecessary barriers to learning. A flexible and inclusive approach to learning and teaching enables and empowers every student to fulfil their individual potential and minimises the need for individual alterations or adjustments. Through adopting inclusive learning and teaching practices higher education providers enhance the learning opportunities for every student.

Diversity of staff and students brings with it different ideas, knowledge and experiences that contribute to an enriched learning environment. Higher education providers recognise that students have differing learning styles and come from diverse educational, linguistic and cultural backgrounds, and they consider whether examples and resources used in learning and teaching are drawn from a sufficiently broad range of sources, cultures and viewpoints. Higher education providers, their staff, and staff of external delivery organisations and support providers involved in facilitating student learning create a positive environment by aiming to eliminate harassment or discriminatory behaviour from among the peer group of students.

Higher education providers have a specific responsibility under equality legislation to ensure that disabled people are not put at a disadvantage. Providers offer disabled students learning opportunities which are accessible to them, by means of inclusive design wherever possible and by means of reasonable individual adjustments wherever necessary. Staff work in partnership with individual students to understand the implication of any specific requirements or reasonable adjustments for their teaching practices.

Where a programme includes learning that takes place in a virtual learning environment, providers ensure that it can be accessed fully by every student, or that reasonable adjustments can be made so that every student has an equal learning opportunity.

Further guidelines, references and resources

Equality Act 2010
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/contents

The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011
www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2011/2260/contents/made

Equality Challenge Unit (2011) *Public Sector Equality Duty: Specific Duties for England*
www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/public-sector-equality-duty-specific-duties-for-england/

Equality Challenge Unit (2011) *The Public Sector Equality Duty: Specific Duties for Wales*
www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/the-public-sector-equality-duty-specific-duties-for-wales/

Equality Challenge Unit (2010) *Anti-Discrimination Law in Northern Ireland*
www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/anti-discrimination-law-in-northern-ireland/

Higher Education Academy (2010) *Inclusive Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*
www.heacademy.ac.uk/node/3710

Higher Education Academy and Equality Challenge Unit: Ethnicity, Gender and Degree Attainment
www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/resources/detail/inclusion/ethnicity_gender_and_degree_attainment_project

Higher Education Academy and UK Council for International Student Affairs: Teaching International Students Project
www.heacademy.ac.uk/node/3643

Higher Education Academy (2014) *Conditions of Flexibility: Securing a More Responsive Higher Education System*
www.heacademy.ac.uk/conditions-flexibility-securing-more-responsive-higher-education-system

JISC TechDis: Teaching Inclusively Using Technology
www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/pages/detail/online_resources/Teaching_Inclusively_Using_Technology

ASET (2009) *A Good Practice Guide for Placement and Other Work-Based Learning Opportunities in Higher Education (2nd edition)*
www.agcas.org.uk/assets/download?file=946&parent=384

Indicator 3

Learning and teaching practices are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship.

Effective teaching and support for learning occurs when staff display a sound understanding and up-to-date knowledge of their subject and/or professional practice and they bring this to a variety of appropriately designed learning and teaching activities and assessment methods. They communicate enthusiasm, and draw on scholarship, research and professional activity to facilitate student learning. Staff create opportunities for learning which are effective by recognising the value of both individual and collaborative learning activities, the value of learning how to learn and that learning is about interpretation, analysis and synthesis underpinned by reflection, not just the repetition of facts.

Reflective practice

In order that teaching and support for learning remains effective, staff reflect on their practice and consider how it might be changed and improved. They draw on a variety of sources to inform this, including feedback from: students gathered at different organisational levels from the individual teaching session and module upwards; examination boards and external examiners; and recent alumni and employers.

Effective reflective practice retains a practical focus. It may involve different organisational levels, from the individual teacher or programme teaching team, to a whole department, faculty or higher education provider. Successful reflective practice depends on self-awareness, critical analysis, synthesis and evaluation leading to new perspectives.

Scholarship and professional practice

Scholarship and research lie at the heart of higher education, but their nature will depend on the academic level of the programme, the subject area and the provider or providers of the programme. Scholarship may include conventional research (discovery of new knowledge), innovative application or integration of existing knowledge, for example in professional practice, or the study of learning and teaching processes and practices.

In subject areas such as clinical medicine, music or performing arts among others, or where learning is taking place in the workplace, evaluation of professional practice directly informs student learning. The requirements of professional, regulatory or statutory bodies are also taken into account where applicable.

Further guidelines, references and resources

QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes: Research-Teaching Linkages
www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/completed-enhancement-themes/research-teaching-linkages

Higher Education Academy: Resource centre
www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources

Higher Education Academy (2006) *Scholarly Activity in the Context of HE in FE*
www.heacademy.ac.uk/node/4402

Higher Education Academy (2007) *Linking Teaching and Research in Disciplines and Departments*
www.heacademy.ac.uk/assets/documents/teachingandresearch/LinkingTeachingAndResearch_April07.pdf

Higher Education Academy: Becoming a reflective practitioner
www.heacademy.ac.uk/resources/detail/subjects/medev/Focus-_Becoming_a_reflective_practitioner

Higher Education Academy (2013) *Engaging Home and International Students: a Guide for New Lecturers*
www.heacademy.ac.uk/node/3302

National HE STEM programme Curriculum Innovation Projects
A Guide to Practice: Evaluating your Teaching Innovation
www.hestem.ac.uk/sites/default/files/evaluating_your_teaching_innovation.pdf

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Indicator 4

Higher education providers assure themselves that everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning is appropriately qualified, supported and developed.

Effective student learning is facilitated by interaction with appropriately qualified, supported and developed teaching and support staff. Staff may be employed by the degree-awarding body, by a delivery organisation or support provider such as a work-based learning or placement provider, or may be a member of visiting staff; where responsibility sits for staff appointment, support and development is defined by the terms of the relevant arrangement for working together (see *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others*).[19]

Appointment, support, and continuing development of staff

Higher education providers determine what is necessary to demonstrate that a member of staff is qualified to fulfil their role in teaching or supporting learning; whether this means the individual holds a relevant formal qualification will depend on the circumstances. Staff recruitment and appointment procedures include a means of ensuring new staff have an appropriate level of competence for the teaching and/or enabling student learning role to which they are being appointed. In particular the provider considers the extent to members of staff have:

- appropriate and current practitioner knowledge and an understanding of the subject they teach (which may be demonstrated by a qualification) and an understanding of the disciplinary scholarship appropriate to the academic level of the students they are teaching
- the necessary skills and experience to facilitate learning in the students they are interacting with, and to use approaches grounded in sound learning and teaching scholarship and practice.

Members of staff new to their teaching or enabling student learning role are encouraged to engage in appropriate induction and mentoring opportunities made available by the higher education provider.

Once appointed, and throughout their career, staff engage with opportunities to develop and extend their teaching capabilities and to reflect upon their teaching practice. Staff are encouraged to value their own and others' skills, to recognise that they have a responsibility to identify their own development needs, and to engage in initial and continuing professional development activities. Higher education providers make opportunities available for all those involved in teaching and supporting student learning to inform each other's practice and professional development.

Continuing professional development activities made available by the higher education provider are planned strategically, including the allocation of sufficient resources to cover the needs of both research, and learning and teaching development. Protected staff time to engage in continuing professional development is identified and factored into workload considerations.

Higher education providers assure themselves of the effectiveness of their approach to staff development and support. Aspects considered may include any or all of the following: working with staff development teams; having online continuing professional development resources and modules for staff; and ensuring the availability of sufficient administrative support.

Higher education providers also have agreed procedures to identify staff in need of additional support to ensure their effectiveness, and provide them with opportunities (which the provider expects them to take up), support and mentoring to enable improvement of their skills and competency to an agreed level.

Individual staff members are able to access appropriate and timely support to develop inclusive forms of learning, teaching and assessment which are supported by technology. They are provided with guidance and support to understand the impact of considerations of equality and diversity   on their roles, and have free access to information on creating an inclusive learning culture for which they have a shared responsibility with the higher education provider. Higher education providers also recognise the importance of digital literacy for staff and make available suitable development opportunities.

Higher education providers have in place transparent staff recognition and reward processes, and promotion opportunities for all career paths.

The UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education

The UK higher education sector (including the four funding bodies, the National Union of Students, Universities UK and GuildHE) has endorsed the UK Professional Standards Framework for teaching and supporting learning in higher education (UKPSF), which is managed by the Higher Education Academy (HEA). The purpose of the framework is to provide threshold standards against which higher education teachers and facilitators of learning may benchmark their practice. The framework supports the recognition and reward of higher education professionals involved in learning and teaching as they develop through their career path. The aim of such benchmarking is to help individuals and higher education providers enhance the learning opportunities of their students, by improving the quality of their teaching and learning support. The UKPSF has two components. The descriptors are a set of statements outlining the key characteristics of someone performing four broad categories of typical teaching and facilitating student learning roles within higher education. The dimensions of practice are a set of statements outlining: the **areas of activity** undertaken by teachers and facilitators of learning within higher education; the **core knowledge** needed to carry out those activities at the appropriate level; and, the **professional values** that someone performing these activities embraces and exemplifies.

The UKPSF provides a UK-wide benchmark by which higher education providers can demonstrate how they support staff and assure themselves that they are qualified to teach and facilitate learning. It also enables higher education providers to demonstrate that their professional development programmes and activities meet expected national professional standards.

Further guidelines, references and resources

ENQA (2009) *Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance within the European Higher Education Area (3rd edition)*
www.enqa.eu/pubs_esg.lasso

UK Professional Standards Framework
www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf

Staff and Educational Development Association (SEDA)
www.seda.ac.uk

Association for Learning Development in Higher Education (ALDinHE)
www.aldinhe.ac.uk

JISC: Learning Literacies in a Digital Age
www.jisc.ac.uk/whatwedo/projects/elearningllida.aspx

JISC TechDis
www.jisctechdis.ac.uk

ASET (The Placement and Employability Professionals' Body)
www.asetonline.org

QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes: Staff enhancing teaching
www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/development-pages/staff-enhancing-teaching

QAA Scotland (2014) *Staff: Enhancing Teaching: Final Project Report*
www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/docs/publications/staff-enhancing-teaching-final-project-report.pdf

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Indicator 5

Higher education providers collect and analyse appropriate information to ensure the continued effectiveness of their strategic approach to, and the enhancement of, learning opportunities and teaching practices.

Higher education providers use a range of internal and external information and feedback from diverse sources along with examples of sound practice and innovation to enable them to keep their strategic approach to learning and teaching under review, to modify it as appropriate and to facilitate the continuous improvement of the learning opportunities they provide.

Data sources on which they draw may include:

- feedback from students on their learning opportunities collected through internal mechanisms
- feedback from students through external instruments like the National Student Survey (NSS), the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)
- routine evaluations of modules and programmes incorporating feedback from staff and external examiners
- feedback from alumni and employers and placement providers
- retention statistics
- mark profiles for students, modules and programmes
- availability and quality of teaching and learning spaces for formal and informal learning
- uptake and utilisation of any virtual learning environment and assistive technology
- student academic appeals and complaints
- feedback from external reviews and accreditations, such as those of professional, regulatory and statutory bodies
- data on the professional qualifications of staff involved in teaching or supporting learning.

Evaluation takes place at different levels from the module, by the individual teacher or module team, through to senior management level and is appropriate to the mode and level of the provision.
The use of information for assurance and enhancement at programme and award level is addressed in *Chapter B8: Programme Monitoring and Review.*[20]

The involvement of students in processes to assure and enhance providers' approaches is covered in *Chapter B5: Student Engagement.*[21]

Further guidelines, references and resources

HEFCE (2010) *Enhancing and Developing the National Student Survey*
www.hefce.ac.uk/media/hefce/content/pubs/2010/rd1210/rd12_10a.pdf

EFQM Excellence Model Higher Education Version (2003)
www.osti.gov/eprints/topicpages/documents/record/884/1265593.html

Higher Education Academy (2012) *Using PRES to Enhance the Experience of Postgraduate Researchers*
www.heacademy.ac.uk/node/4730

Higher Education Academy (2012) *"Making it Count": Reflecting on the National Student Survey (NSS) in the Process of Enhancement*
www.heacademy.ac.uk/making-it-count-reflections-national-student-survey-nss-process-enhancement

The learning environment

The learning environment

The learning and teaching activities made available by a higher education provider take place within a broad learning environment which comprises both physical and virtual facilities and the culture and ethos of learning promoted by the provider and its staff working with students and other stakeholders. This learning environment also encompasses learning opportunities provided, for example, through fieldwork or workplace or placement settings.

Physical learning environments

Higher education providers make available physical environments which are applicable and appropriate to each mode and location of learning, and which are safe and accessible to students. Learning spaces are suitable for the nature of the learning activities being provided such as seating arrangements, lighting and acoustics, and availability of technology for planned activities. Where appropriate, learning spaces enable informal as well as formal learning.

Higher education providers decide how to access specialist advice on accessible and inclusive learning space design that best meets their requirements and suits their context. Providers involve students in the process for developing a fully accessible environment, especially students with specific requirements, such as disabled or part-time students. Higher education providers have a systematic approach, for example to the refurbishment of learning spaces, rather than relying on making adjustments on an ad hoc basis.

Virtual learning environments

The use of technology to enhance learning can be an important means to enable students to engage fully in their programme of study. Higher education providers develop technological facilities and services (including virtual learning environments and library systems) that are accessible, inclusive and cater for a wide range of potential student requirements. Systematic consultation with students and staff about the accessibility of technological facilities enhances standards of usability.

Assistive technology can make methods of learning and teaching more accessible to a wide range of students. Wherever possible, assistive technologies are made available to all students through integrated organisation-wide systems, rather than through distributed facilities or those targeted at a subset of students.

Social learning environments

All interactions among students and staff (including staff who contribute to learning through fieldwork, placements and work-based learning), whether in person or through electronic means, reflect the following characteristics:

- dialogue based on mutual dignity and respect
- a safe environment for exploring new ideas and for providing feedback even when that is negative.

Further guidelines, references and resources

Equality Challenge Unit (2010) *Disability Legislation: Practical Guidance for Academic Staff (Revised)*
www.ecu.ac.uk/publications/disability-legislation-practical-guidance-for-academic-staff-revised/

QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes: Flexible Learning
www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/completed-enhancement-themes/flexible-delivery

Equality and Human Rights Commission: Guidance for providers of further and higher education
www.equalityhumanrights.com/advice-and-guidance/further-and-higher-education-providers-guidance/

Higher Education Academy: Flexible learning
www.heacademy.ac.uk/flexible-learning

JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee)
www.jisc.ac.uk

JISC TechDis
www.jisctechdis.ac.uk

Universities and Colleges Employers Association (2009) *Health and Safety Guidance for the Placement of HE Students*
www.ucea.ac.uk/en/publications/index.cfm/HSplace

Association of Learning Technologists (ALT): What research has to say for practice
http://wiki.alt.ac.uk/index.php/What_research_has_to_say_for_practice

Student engagement in learning

Indicator 7

Every student is provided with clear and current information that specifies the learning opportunities and support available to them.

Higher education providers make clear to students the learning opportunities, and learning and teaching support available to them and how they can access these. Care is taken to ensure coherence in information which relates to different organisational levels of the provider or elements of study (for example department, programme or module) and which is given at different times.

The information provided to every student reflects the specific nature of the learning opportunities available, including the activities and resources available to enable learning. Information covers any study undertaken at a location that is not at the campus of the provider (for example in a fieldwork, work-based or placement environment) or through a virtual learning environment. It also indicates whether the learning opportunities and other activities and resources are made available by the provider or by an external stakeholder such as a delivery organisation or support provider or employer.

Higher education providers actively engage students to monitor, review and evaluate this information, to ensure that it meets the requirements of different groups of students. The involvement of students in quality assurance and enhancement is addressed in *Chapter B5: Student Engagement*.

The provision of information for prospective and current students is addressed in Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision.[22]

Further guidelines, references and resources

QAA (2011) *Contact Hours: a Guide for Students*
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=44

Teachability project: Creating accessible information about courses or programmes of study for disabled students
www.teachability.strath.ac.uk/chapter_1/tableofcontents1.html

Higher Education Academy (2012) *Building Student Engagement and Belonging in Higher Education at a Time of Change: Final Report from the What Works? Student Retention and Success Programme*
www.heacademy.ac.uk/node/2932

NUS (2012) *Student Experience Research Part 2: Independent Learning and Contact Hours*
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=226

Indicator 8

Higher education providers take deliberate steps to assist every student to understand their responsibility to engage with the learning opportunities provided and to shape their learning experience.

A key characteristic of UK higher education is the emphasis placed on students to engage in independent learning, working in partnership with staff and displaying academic behaviour and integrity appropriate to the level of study. Consequently, providers explain what they expect of students and how they will assist them to make the transition into and through their studies.

Students undertaking fieldwork, work-based or placement learning may have additional responsibilities towards the delivery organisation or support provider and to others such as customers, clients, service users, other employees and the general public they may encounter. This includes the responsibility to meet the norms and expectations for professional conduct in the particular field of work or study that they are undertaking. For students using their existing workplace for their work-based learning, such norms, expectations and responsibilities are often covered in an employment contract and may be more obvious than for students joining a workplace to undertake a placement.

 As active members of a learning community, students depend on interaction with staff and with their peers to support their learning. Achieving independence in learning means that there are always some opportunities for students to shape their learning experience. For some students this may not extend beyond selecting optional modules, undertaking additional reading or practice of relevant skills. For others it may extend to the negotiation of assessment titles or engagement in self-selected research for a dissertation or equivalent practice-based module.

Further guidelines, references and resources

NUS (2012) *Student Experience Research Part 4: First Year Student Experience*
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=228

QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes: First Year: Engagement and Empowerment
www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/completed-enhancement-themes/first-year

Higher Education Academy: Academic integrity service
www.heacademy.ac.uk/academic-integrity

Higher Education Academy (2014) *Engagement Through Partnership: Students as Partners in Learning and Teaching in Higher Education*
www.heacademy.ac.uk/engagement-through-partnership-students-partners-learning-and-teaching-higher-education

Indicator 9

Every student is enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development through the provision of regular opportunities to reflect on feedback and engage in dialogue with staff.

Assessment for learning

The design and delivery of learning and teaching activities, including assessment, provides opportunities for feedback that promotes learning. The activities are informed by an understanding that, while the purpose of formative assessment is to facilitate learning, summative assessment also has a formative element which may relate to the development of transferable knowledge and skills beyond the specific subject matter of the assessment task itself. The engagement of students in learning is stimulated by their understanding of the value of feedback obtained through those activities, provided by staff and peers, and the opportunity to reflect on that feedback to inform further development. Effective dialogue with staff builds on that feedback and reflection.

The assessment schedule of a programme, module or session considers the dual needs of assessment **for** learning and assessment **of** learning. It facilitates feedback, reflection and dialogue, taking into account the value of students having time to put their learning into practice, including in the next applicable summative assessment.

Reflection and personal development planning

Students are encouraged to reflect on the formal and informal feedback they receive and use it to engage in a dialogue with staff to help plan their future learning. Many higher education providers factor into the student learning opportunities offered a process based on personal development planning (PDP). PDP is a structured and supported process undertaken by a learner to reflect upon their own learning, performance and/or achievement and to plan for their personal, educational and career development. It is an inclusive process, open to all learners, in all higher education provision settings, and at all levels.

Further guidelines, references and resources

QAA (2012) *Understanding Assessment: Its Role in Safeguarding Academic Standards and Quality in Higher Education (2nd edition)*
www.qaa.ac.uk/en/Publications/Documents/understanding-assessment.pdf

QAA (2009) *Personal Development Planning: Guidelines for Institutional Policy and Practice in Higher Education*
www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication/?PubID=154

QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes: Integrative Assessment
www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/completed-enhancement-themes/integrative-assessment

QAA Scotland Enhancement Themes: Assessment
www.enhancementthemes.ac.uk/enhancement-themes/completed-enhancement-themes/assessment

QAA Scotland Personal development planning toolkit
www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/scotland/development-and-enhancement/personal-development-planning

Centre for Recording Achievement (CRA)
www.recordingachievement.org

Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR)
www.hear.ac.uk

Higher Education Academy: Assessment and feedback
www.heacademy.ac.uk/assessment

NUS: Ten Principles of good feedback
www.nus.org.uk/en/advice/course-reps/feedback-what-you-can-expect-/

Appendix 1 - The Expectation and Indicators Learning and Teaching

The Expectation

The Quality Code sets out the following Expectation about learning and teaching, which higher education providers are required to meet:

Higher education providers, working with their staff, students and other stakeholders, articulate and systematically review and enhance the provision of learning opportunities and teaching practices, so that every student is enabled to develop as an independent learner, study their chosen subject(s) in depth and enhance their capacity for analytical, critical and creative thinking.

The Indicators of sound practice

Indicator 1
Higher education providers articulate and implement a strategic approach to learning and teaching and promote a shared understanding of this approach among their staff, students and other stakeholders.

Indicator 2
Learning and teaching activities and associated resources provide every student with an equal and effective opportunity to achieve the intended learning outcomes.

Indicator 3
Learning and teaching practices are informed by reflection, evaluation of professional practice, and subject-specific and educational scholarship.

Indicator 4
Higher education providers assure themselves that everyone involved in teaching or supporting student learning is appropriately qualified, supported and developed.

Indicator 5
Higher education providers collect and analyse appropriate information to ensure the continued effectiveness of their strategic approach to, and the enhancement of, learning opportunities and teaching practices.

Indicator 6
Higher education providers maintain physical, virtual and social learning environments that are safe, accessible and reliable for every student, promoting dignity, courtesy and respect in their use.

Indicator 7
Every student is provided with clear and current information that specifies the learning opportunities and support available to them.

Indicator 8
Higher education providers take deliberate steps to assist every student to understand their responsibility to engage with the learning opportunities provided and shape their learning experience.

Indicator 9
Every student is enabled to monitor their progress and further their academic development through the provision of regular opportunities to reflect on feedback and engage in dialogue with staff.

Appendix 2 - Membership of the Advisory Group for this Chapter

Name	Position	Affiliation
Dr Mark Atlay	Director of Teaching and Learning	University of Bedfordshire
Harriet Barnes	Development Officer	QAA
Dr Tim Burton	Assistant Director	QAA (Chair)
Professor Alan Davidson	Dean for the Enhancement of Learning, Teaching and Assessment	Robert Gordon University
Dr Ian Giles	Emeritus Fellow, formerly Director of Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit	University of Southampton (specialist writer)
Julie Hall	Director of Learning and Teaching Enhancement Unit	Roehampton University
Katya Hosking	Inclusive Curriculum Officer	Cardiff University
Professor Sharon Huttly	Dean of Studies	London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine
Alan M Jones	Director of Education (Architecture)	Queen's University Belfast
Matthew Kitching	Representation and Development Manager	Buckinghamshire New University
Professor Rose Luckin	Professor of Learner Centred Design	Institute of Education

Sarah MacDonald	Director of Standards and Quality Assurance	Pearson Higher Education Awards
Dorothy McElwee	Head of Higher Education and Training Programmes	North West Regional College
Dr Christine Macpherson	Assistant Director	QAA Scotland
Dr Jenny Naish	Assistant Dean (Learning, Teaching and Quality), Teesside University Business School	Teesside University
Dr Kathleen M Quinlan	Head of Educational Development (Oxford Learning Institute)	University of Oxford
Dr Simon Rouse	Principal Lecturer, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences	York St John University
Dr Jon Scott	Academic Director, College of Medicine, Biological Sciences and Psychology	University of Leicester
Dr Jo Smedley	Director, Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching	University of Wales, Newport
Ellen Thinnesen	Dean of Higher Education	Grimsby Institute of Further and Higher Education
Helen Thomas	Independent, Formerly Head of Teacher Excellence	Higher Education Academy
Professor Mary Thorpe	Professor of Educational Technology	Open University
Kate Wicklow	Head of Quality and Student Engagement	National Union of Students

References

1 www.qaa.ac.uk/qualitycode

2 www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education

3 www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=181

4 www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary

5 www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=182

6 www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2899

7 www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2901

8 www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2900

9 www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2898

10 www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=176

11 www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2899

12 www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2900

13 www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=168

14 www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=182

15 www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/information-and-guidance/publication?PubID=2901

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