UK Quality Code for Higher Education

Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision
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.

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 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.

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 Part C

This publication, Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision, draws on aspects of the former Code of Practice for the Assurance of Academic Quality and Standards in Higher Education (Code of Practice) and makes reference throughout to Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards and Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality of the Quality Code as appropriate. It was subject to public consultation between December 2011 and February 2012 and was published in March 2012. It became a reference point for the purposes of reviews carried out by QAA from September 2012.
Introduction: Information about higher education provision

It is of benefit to everyone with an interest in higher education that the debate about its purposes and value should be conducted in a transparent and inclusive way. Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision reflects the higher education community’s shared view that it is important to maintain public confidence in the value of higher education. One of the ways in which such confidence can be promoted is by higher education providers producing appropriate information, focused on their intended audiences, about the higher education learning opportunities they offer. Some of this information is of direct interest to the public at large and should be accessible to and retrievable by anyone. Other information may be of a more specialist, detailed nature and relevant to more limited audiences, such as prospective or current students or those who have completed their studies. Further assurance to the public is provided when QAA reports on its scrutiny of the way higher education providers use internal management information, which is not normally in the public domain, to safeguard academic standards and to assure and enhance academic quality.

The Indicators and explanatory notes in Part C illustrate ways in which the Expectation can be met by all higher education providers, regardless of the legislation and regulation to which they are subject, either on the basis of their legal status as organisations or by virtue of where they are operating within the UK.

Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision respects the autonomy of higher education providers, while recognising that this may be curtailed by various legislative and regulatory requirements to which they are subject. It recognises that differences in mission, size, organisational structure, range of provision and the nature of the student body will determine a provider’s intended audiences and the preferred means of communicating information. Therefore, Part C is concerned not with the mechanisms used to produce information, nor the media chosen to communicate it, but with the quality of the information in terms of whether it is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

Higher education providers' responsibilities

Higher education providers produce information about their UK higher education provision for a variety of audiences and purposes. In the case of higher education delivered with other organisations, the operational functions of delivery organisations and support providers concerning information about their provision will be set out in agreements with their degree-awarding body. Confidence in academic standards and quality hinges upon the trustworthiness of such information. Higher education providers target their intended audiences, who use information for their own specific purposes and set their own priorities concerning where to seek, how to choose and use, and when to look for the information they require.

Part C: Information about Higher Education Provision is structured around the following purposes for which higher education providers produce information:

- to communicate the purposes and value of higher education to the public at large
- to help prospective students make informed decisions about where, what, when and how they will study
- to enable current students to make the most of their higher education learning opportunities
- to confirm the achievements of students on completion of their studies
- to safeguard academic standards and assure and enhance academic quality.

Given these purposes, it is proper that not all information about higher education provision is in the public domain, but that certain information is signposted in a targeted fashion.

Higher education providers' responsibilities for making sure that their intended audiences have access to appropriate information are addressed in detail in relevant chapters of Part B: Assuring and Enhancing Academic Quality.
General principles

The following general principles apply to giving information about higher education provision.

**Principle 1**: Information that higher education providers produce about themselves and the learning opportunities they offer should be timely, current, transparent, and focused on the needs of the intended audiences.

**Principle 2**: Higher education providers are responsible and accountable for the information they produce about the higher education learning opportunities they offer. At the same time, providers have autonomy regarding the mechanisms and media they choose to communicate this information.

**Principle 3**: Information should be available and retrievable where intended audiences and information users can reasonably expect to find it. The format and delivery of information should take account of the access requirements of a diverse audience.

**Principle 4**: Information produced by higher education providers should offer a fair and accurate reflection of the higher education learning opportunities they offer.

The above principles are embodied in the Expectation set out below.

External links

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

The Quality Code sets out the following Expectation concerning information about higher education provision, which providers of higher education are required to meet.

Higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the learning opportunities they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.
Indicators of sound practice

Information for the public about the higher education provider

The first Indicator concerns the higher level information that is of interest to the public at large. Prospective and current students, their advisers and supporters, employers and members of the general public may all wish to access information that describes the nature of the higher education provider and locates it within an increasingly diverse sector. The Indicator is intended to cover all higher education providers and to apply to any mechanisms or media they may use to publish information about themselves. The Indicator recognises that higher education providers are subject to a range of different legal and regulatory requirements concerning the provision of information.

Indicator 1

Higher education providers publish information that describes their mission, values and overall strategy.

The information referred to in Indicator 1 enables the higher education provider's intended audiences and users to develop an understanding of its profile. Higher education providers locate themselves within the broader contexts of UK and international higher education. Information is published about organisational structure, the composition of the student population, the different modes of study that are supported, and the programmes and qualifications offered. Information may include governance arrangements, corporate and strategic plans, and annual reports.

Providers publish their policies concerning information and data, signposting the information they make publicly available.

Information is published in formats that suit both the provider's and the intended audiences' needs and purposes.
Further guidelines, references and resources

UK (general)

*Freedom of Information Act 2000*

*Data Protection Act 1998*

*Equality Act 2010*

*The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) Regulations 2011*

*CUC (2004) CUC Guide for Members of Higher Education Governing Bodies in the UK*
www2.bcu.ac.uk/docs/cuc/pubs/CUC-Guide-FINAL.pdf.

*CUC (2004) CUC Governance Code of Practice and General Principles*
www2.bcu.ac.uk/docs/cuc/pubs/CUC-Summary-Guide-HEFCEFInal.pdf

The Information Commissioner's Office
www.ico.org.uk.

The Information Commissioner's Office, guidance for the education sector
https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/education/.

England

ECU (2011) *Public Sector Equality Duty: Specific duties for England*

Wales

*Welsh Language Act 1993*

*Welsh Language (Wales) Measure 2011*

ECU (2011) *The Public Sector Equality Duty: Specific Duties for Wales*

Northern Ireland

*Northern Ireland Act 1998, Section 75*

Scotland

*Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002*

Scottish Information Commissioner, guidance for Scottish public authorities
www.itstopublicknowledge.info/ScottishPublicAuthorities/ScottishPublicAuthorities.asp
The term 'prospective student' covers anyone who is exploring the possibility of studying with a particular higher education provider, from showing an initial interest, through the applications and admissions process, up to the point where they register/enrol and become a 'current student' of the provider. Not only prospective students but also their parents, advisers, sponsors or supporters require access to information about the provider and its processes.

Some of the information that is relevant for the public at large will also be of interest to prospective students. More detailed information is necessary to help prospective students make informed decisions about the location of study; the programme of study and qualification; the mode of study; and the support they will need. Information is published for all categories of prospective students, including full-time and part-time students, UK and international students, undergraduates and postgraduates, and students studying on both taught and research programmes. Prospective students may also wish to access information that is primarily targeted at current students.

Indicator 2

Higher education providers describe the process for application and admission to the programme of study.

Higher education providers direct prospective students to the relevant application, selection, admission and registration/enrolment process, whether internal or external, and signpost other relevant sources of information. Entry requirements are specified along with details of other required prior experience where appropriate. The provider's processes for the recognition of prior learning for the purpose of meeting entry requirements or for other non-standard entry considerations are described, together with information about how to use them. International students are directed to any additional documentation or other requirements (such as English language requirements) where appropriate. Indications of the costs of study are provided, including full details of fees payable for the programme of study, additional costs associated with it (for example for field trips or specialist equipment), general living expenses, and any bursaries or scholarships that may be available (see Chapter B2: Recruitment, Selection and Admission to Higher Education).

Indicator 3

Higher education providers publish information to help prospective students select their programme with an understanding of the academic environment in which they will be studying and the provision that will be made to enable their development and achievement.

Prospective students need to arrive at an informed decision about the programme they select, feeling confident that they are choosing a higher education provider that will give them the environment they need to learn effectively. In this context, providers outline to prospective students what will be expected of them if and when they enrol as current students, and what they will then be able to expect of the higher education provider.

Higher education providers therefore give prospective students indicative information about the nature and design of the curriculum. This provides an overview of likely opportunities to develop transferable skills; of the teaching, supervision, learning and assessment methods students can expect on their programmes; and of the resources and facilities available to enable and enhance their learning. Providers also indicate the ways in which an inclusive learning environment is provided for students to ensure equality of opportunity, and how they anticipate and respond to the diverse needs of students.
They also give indicative information about teaching/research/supervisory staff; professional services staff; learning and teaching spaces; libraries; specialist learning environments such as laboratories and studios; and communication and information technologies, including Virtual Learning Environments (see Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement).

Providers include information about their connections with industry, business and the professions, including links with professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) and employers. Providers specify which programmes are accredited by PSRBs. Opportunities for work-based learning are described. Information is provided about opportunities for study abroad and other international learning experiences.

Higher education providers give prospective students indicative information about how well their programme is performing. This may include information about graduate destinations including employment and further study; and how satisfied students are with the programme, if such data are available.

Providers inform prospective students about advisory services; student participation in the student representative body where applicable (see Chapter B5: Student Engagement); arrangements for pastoral care; living accommodation available to students; and social and leisure facilities. Where a higher education provider operates across several sites, works with others to offer higher education, or operates through virtual learning environments, information about the various study modes and options is provided (see Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching and Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others).

Higher education providers decide on the style and format of their communication to their prospective students. This may include prospectuses, definitive information about programmes, open days, and websites.
Further guidelines, references and resources

UK (general)


England and Northern Ireland

HEFCE, Providing information about higher education
www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/lt/.

www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2011/11_18/.

HEFCE, Wider Information Set
www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/lt/publicinfo/widerinfo/.

HEFCE, Key Information Set (KIS)
www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/lt/publicinfo/kis/.

www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/circlets/2011/cl23_11/.

www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/circles/2010/cl12_10/.

HESA (2011) KIS, Technical guidance

Wales


HESA (2011) KIS, Technical guidance
Information for current students

Prospective students become current students at the point of registration/enrolment. Information that higher education providers give to prospective students is in large part also relevant for current students. However, current students need information at a greater level of detail in order to make the most of their higher education experience. Providers therefore ensure that all such information is up to date and brought to the attention of current students at the appropriate time.

Indicator 4

Information on the programme of study is issued to current students at the start of their programme and throughout their studies.

Higher education providers equip current students with programme-level and/or module-level guides or handbooks or the equivalent, either electronically or in hard copy. Information may be provided about:

- learning outcomes at programme and module level
- curriculum details, including options to be selected during the programme of study (for example options for specialisation or options to fulfil the requirements of a PSRB)
- reading lists
- the balance between scheduled learning and teaching activities; guided independent study; time spent on placement/study abroad; or other learning activities
- the environment for postgraduate study and research, including the structural and administrative arrangements for postgraduates (for example graduate school, doctoral training centre, department, research centre, research institute)
- supervision arrangements for postgraduate students
- assessment details, including content, timing, deadlines for submission, marking criteria, and arrangements for returning marked work and giving feedback (see Chapter B6: Assessment of Students and the Recognition of Prior Learning)
- opportunities for study abroad and other international learning experiences
- opportunities for work-based learning
- the administration of learning, teaching and assessment (for example arrangements for the submission and return of work)
- where to find the full set of relevant and applicable academic frameworks and regulations
- alumni services, if they are available, including careers advice, licence to practise information and opportunities for further study.

See Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching and Chapter B11: Research Degrees.

Indicator 5

Higher education providers set out what they expect of current students and what current students can expect of the higher education provider.

Providers draw the attention of current students to information about the responsibilities of students, and what they are entitled to expect from their higher education provider.

Information is made available about the resources and facilities provided to enable student learning and achievement. This includes information about how the provider offers an inclusive learning experience,
to ensure equality of opportunity, and anticipates and responds to the diverse needs of students. Information is provided about for example; the facilities provided to support learning; work placement and work-based learning opportunities; opportunities for international learning experiences; and any other opportunities associated with the programme (see Chapter B3: Learning and Teaching and Chapter B4: Enabling Student Development and Achievement).

Higher education providers set out how they engage with students (for example by consulting with student representatives, including how such representatives are elected or selected; see Chapter B5: Student Engagement). They describe their arrangements for gathering and responding to student feedback; this may include how they respond to the results of internal student surveys. Providers routinely make external examiners’ reports available to relevant current students (see Chapter B7: External Examining), as well as pertinent documentation of committees or groups at organisation or qualification level that have student representation.

Providers signpost current students to the academic frameworks and regulations in which their programme of study is located. Information about deferral of study or assessment, and about regulations and procedures for the interruption of study, is provided.

Higher education providers draw to the attention of current students regulations and procedures relevant to their studies, such as those pertaining to good academic practice (see Chapter B6: Assessment and the Recognition of Prior Learning); research ethics (see Chapter B11: Research Degrees); extenuating/mitigating circumstances in the case of underperformance in assessment; academic appeals and student complaints; student conduct; and professional conduct and fitness to practise (see Chapter B9: Academic Appeals and Student Complaints). Providers may also signpost other statements about the rights and responsibilities of students, especially in the area of communications and information technology.

**Information for students on completion of their studies**

Current students become alumni after leaving on the completion of their studies. The relationship between higher education providers and their students may extend beyond this point.

**Indicator 6**

*When students leave their programme of study, higher education providers issue to them a detailed record of their studies, which gives evidence to others of the students' achievement in their academic programme.*

Higher education providers have rigorous mechanisms in place to safeguard the integrity of records of students' academic achievements. Detailed records of study are produced not only for students who complete their programme of study but also for those who exit the programme before completion.

Students are provided with a record of their academic achievement within a reasonable time of completion or termination of their studies. Higher education providers specify the length of time for which they will archive records of student achievements and communicate clearly their policies for archiving and retrieving such records. Procedures for the issue of replacement records are subject to appropriate checks on the validity of the request.

Where providers choose to make available information on their students' non-academic achievements, they ensure that these are a fair and accurate reflection of those achievements.
Further guidelines, references and resources

UUK and GuildHE (2012) Bringing it All Together: Introducing the HEAR
http://www.hear.ac.uk/home.

Higher Education Achievement Report (HEAR) website with access to further information
www.hear.ac.uk

European Commission, Outline Structure of the Diploma Supplement

Information for those with responsibility for academic standards and quality

Higher education providers produce information to enable those with responsibility for setting and maintaining academic standards and assuring and enhancing academic quality, both internally and externally, to discharge their duties effectively. This information, which is not necessarily in the public domain and may be commercially sensitive, is, nevertheless, subject to scrutiny by QAA when it conducts periodic external reviews. Through its published reports, QAA provides assurance to the public that the provider’s management of academic standards and quality is sound and meets the Expectations of the Quality Code.

Indicator 7

Higher education providers:

- set out their framework for managing academic standards and quality assurance and enhancement and describe the data and information used to support its implementation
- maintain records (by type and category) of all arrangements for delivering higher education with others that are subject to a formal agreement.

Higher education providers ensure that information about their arrangements for the management of academic standards, quality assurance and enhancement is transparently and consistently documented and that all those with responsibility for academic standards and quality, internally and externally, are fully informed about what is expected of them. This information may take the form of a code of practice, quality handbook, strategy, or equivalent, produced in hard or electronic copy. Where appropriate, reference is made to external reference points including the Quality Code. This information is supplemented by categories of data and management information determined and used by the provider in implementing processes and procedures for the management of academic standards and quality.

Where learning opportunities are delivered with others, responsibility for academic standards and quality rests with the degree-awarding body, which documents clearly the procedures that it has developed to assure itself that the delegation of operational aspects of the management of standards and quality to the partner, delivery organisation or support provider is effective. This information specifies the respective roles and responsibilities of the degree-awarding body, partners, delivery organisations and support providers in relation to the management of academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities. These may include promotion and publicity; recruitment, selection and admission; learning, teaching and assessment; management of student records; and quality assurance (see Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others).
Data and management information are used to promote effective management of academic standards and quality across the organisation. Providers determine the precise nature of this information according to their prevailing management style and culture.

Further guidelines, references and resources

www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/hefce/2011/11_18/.

HEFCE, Wider Information Set
www.hefce.ac.uk/whatwedo/lt/publicinfo/widerinfo/.
Appendix 1 - The Expectation and Indicators

Information about higher education provision

The Expectation

The Quality Code sets out the following Expectation concerning information about higher education provision, which providers of higher education are required to meet.

Higher education providers produce information for their intended audiences about the learning opportunities they offer that is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.

The Indicators of sound practice

Indicator 1

Higher education providers publish information that describes their mission, values and overall strategy.

Indicator 2

Higher education providers describe the process for application and admission to the programme of study.

Indicator 3

Higher education providers publish information to help prospective students select their programme with an understanding of the academic environment in which they will be studying and the provision that will be made to enable their development and achievement.

Indicator 4

Information on the programme of study is issued to current students at the start of their programme and throughout their studies.

Indicator 5

Higher education providers set out what they expect of current students and what current students can expect of the higher education provider.

Indicator 6

When students leave their programme of study, higher education providers issue to them a detailed record of their studies, which gives evidence to others of the students’ achievement in their academic programme.

Indicator 7

Higher education providers:

- set out their arrangements for managing academic standards and quality assurance and enhancement and describe the data and information used to support its implementation
- maintain records (by type and category) of all arrangements for delivering higher education with others that are subject to a formal agreement.
## Appendix 2 - Membership of the Advisory Group for Part C

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ros Boyne</td>
<td>Academic Registrar</td>
<td>Birmingham City University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor Chris Clare</td>
<td>Director of Quality, Policy and Regulation</td>
<td>ifs School of Finance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leslie Currie</td>
<td>Senior Project Officer</td>
<td>Supporting Professionalism in Admissions (SPA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Robert Dowling</td>
<td>Director of Academic Services</td>
<td>University of Nottingham</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melinda Drowley</td>
<td>Head of Standards, Quality and Enhancement</td>
<td>QAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth Drysdale</td>
<td>Programme Manager, e-Learning</td>
<td>JISC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dr Harriet Dunbar-Morris</td>
<td>Executive Assistant (Learning and Teaching)</td>
<td>University of Bath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Position/Role</td>
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<tr>
<td>Katharine Lewis</td>
<td>Head of Registry Services and Quality Assurance &amp; Enhancement</td>
<td>Guildhall School of Music and Drama</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Anett Loescher</td>
<td>Development Officer, Standards, Quality and Enhancement</td>
<td>QAA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Donna McMillan</td>
<td>University Registrar &amp; Secretary to Court</td>
<td>University of the West of Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor Clive Mulholland</td>
<td>Pro Vice Chancellor (Learning and Student Support)</td>
<td>University of Glamorgan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dr Anthony Vickers</td>
<td>Reader</td>
<td>University of Essex</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kate Wicklow</td>
<td>Student Feedback Officer</td>
<td>NUS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andy Youell</td>
<td>Director of Standards and Development</td>
<td>HESA</td>
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<tr>
<td>Keith Zimmerman</td>
<td>Director of Student Administration</td>
<td>University of Oxford</td>
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References

1. www.qaa.ac.uk/qualitycode
2. www.qaa.ac.uk/reviews-and-reports/how-we-review-higher-education
4. www.qaa.ac.uk/about-us/glossary