



# The UK Quality Code for Higher Education

## Consultation document

### Consultation document, April 2024

This document provides further information about the current sector consultation on a redeveloped UK Quality Code that is set to be published in June 2024. QAA is collecting stakeholders' feedback through an online survey, which will run between 8 April and 17 May 2024, building on engagement activities undertaken with the sector since October 2022.

The [redeveloped Quality Code and details about how to respond](#) to the consultation can be found on our website.

If you have any queries about the redevelopment of the Quality Code, please contact: [membership@qaa.ac.uk](mailto:membership@qaa.ac.uk)

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### About QAA

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is the UK's independent, expert quality body for tertiary education. We are trusted by providers and regulatory bodies to maintain and enhance quality and standards. We ensure that students are involved in all aspects of our work.

We work closely with our members and sector bodies to ensure that nationally agreed reference points for quality and academic standards are current, relevant and effective.

## About the UK Quality Code for Higher Education

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) has been a cornerstone of the UK higher education system since its inception as the 'academic infrastructure' in the 1990s. Its format has changed over time, but it has always articulated the sector-agreed fundamental principles for the academic standards and quality of higher education across the UK. In the current redevelopment process, our intention has been to create a Quality Code that is capable of being used in tertiary settings. It will continue to act as a basis for the assurance of standards and quality, regardless of the size of the provider or the context in which they operate.

### The value of the Quality Code

The Quality Code protects the public and student interest, and champions UK higher education's world-leading reputation for quality. It is sector-led, future-facing and accessible to the full breadth of the diverse UK higher education sector and, increasingly, it should be able to be used in tertiary settings. It emphasises the role of providers in assuring the quality of the experience they offer to students, supporting student engagement, and ensuring external referencing is used to support the integrity of awards and the quality of provision. The Quality Code enables providers to understand what is expected of them and what they can expect of each other.

As a sector-led reference document, the Quality Code embodies the cooperative approach that underpins UK tertiary education. Engagement from the sector has been invaluable in drafting this edition of the Quality Code and will continue in the development of the underpinning Advice and Guidance.

### The current edition of the Quality Code

The current edition (first published in 2018) comprises four Expectations and a series of Core and Common practices. The practical detail of how providers might meet those Expectations and Practices appears in 12 supporting Advice and Guidance documents, which are not formally part of the Quality Code.



## Redevelopment of the Quality Code

QAA is committed to the Quality Code continuing to be a sector-led document and has followed a consultative approach to its redevelopment.

In July 2022, QAA agreed with the [Quality Council for UK HE](#) ('the Quality Council', formerly known as the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment, who had joint copyright of the 2018 Quality Code) to hold a [UK sector-wide conversation](#) about the future scope and structure of the Quality Code.

This was needed because of changes to the regulatory structures of higher education across the UK and the introduction of tertiary approaches in Wales and Scotland. It also offered the opportunity to review and consider the direction, structure, content and presentation of the Quality Code to ensure it remains valued and useful across the UK, as well as supporting the international reputation of UK higher education.

## Feedback from previous engagement activities

### Phase 1: Establishing the scope for redevelopment and the structure

Engagement with the sector began in Autumn 2022 through conversations with our members and other sector bodies to understand the need for the Quality Code to evolve in terms of scope, structure and content.

A series of roundtable discussions took place in January, February and March 2023, through existing networks and events and directly with other sector bodies and groupings. A full analysis is available on our website - [UK Quality Code Review 2023-24 - summary of feedback to date](#) - and the key points are summarised below.

#### General points

- Enhancement ethos - where does enhancement sit and how is it articulated?
- Needs to be applicable across the UK.
- A succinct Core/Introductory element is useful.
- Advice and Guidance is used more often than the Core/Introductory section across more established providers.

#### Gaps in the current Quality Code/Advice and Guidance

- Dual responsibilities of partners in partnership arrangements.
- The importance of working with students as partners.
- Student transitions.
- Academic integrity.
- Generative Artificial Intelligence.

## Structure and content

- A succinct Core/Introductory element is useful.
- Navigation between the sections of the Quality Code is currently difficult.
- Current expectations are too broad – ‘vanilla’.
- There is no need to separate Core and Common practices.
- Student engagement should be woven throughout.

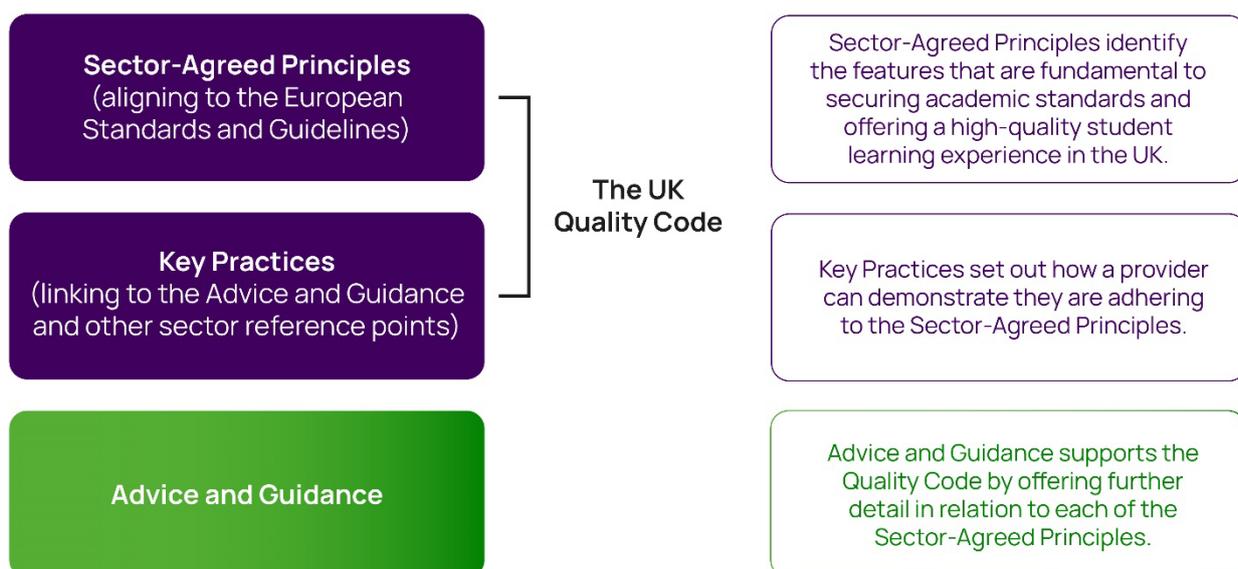
## Conceptual models

- Little appetite for no change, but caution advised over the scale of change.
- Clear yet implicit alignment to the ESG welcomed as an overarching framework that is widely understood in the UK and beyond.
- The concept of sector-led/agreed principles - a shared expression of quality and standards.
- The importance of being explicit about the value and relevance of the Quality Code across the UK
- Models offer clearer advice and navigation.

## Establishing a structure

Building on the feedback received during the scoping sessions, a dedicated half-day workshop at the QAA Member Network event in April 2023 and an online version of the workshop held in May 2023 sought feedback on a revised structure for the Quality Code, with three models presented. We also invited commentary on the development of the underpinning Advice and Guidance (which will be covered in a future consultation).

These workshops resulted in the following model being developed:



The Sector-Agreed Principles and the Key Practices that sit under them were divided into three core areas: Strategic approach, Evaluating quality and standards, and Implementing the approach to quality enhancement and standards.

## Phase 2: Developing content

### Summer series: 'Getting it Right' discussion events

Having an agreed model enabled us to move forward with developing content for the Quality Code. Using the feedback gathered to this point, we developed the Sector-Agreed Principles and Key Practices and shared them with the sector for discussion in a series of events in August and September 2023.

These events were well attended by sector colleagues from across the four UK nations (see below). The sessions focused on specific Principles as well as offering the opportunity to comment on the draft Quality Code as a whole.

England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland	Sector bodies
334 participants	46 participants	16 participants	10 participants	28 participants

### Summer series - key areas of feedback

This series of events provided detailed feedback on the first draft of the Sector-Agreed Principles and Key Practices. Key elements of feedback were:

#### Alignment to European Standards and Guidelines (ESG)

Participants generally felt the proposal aligned well to the ESG.

#### Individual Principles

Participants thought the Principles represented what was important to UK higher education. There was a call across most Principles to simplify the wording and ensure clarity to enable institutions to understand what was expected of them. Participants supported:

- the increased emphasis on student engagement and partnership
- the new principles on strategic leadership, resourcing and the use of data
- including a glossary of key terms
- the proposed structure of the revised Quality Code.

#### Enhancement

Most participants believed that the Principles and Key Practices included a focus on enhancement which could then be addressed in more detail in the underpinning Advice and Guidance.

Opinion was divided over whether the Principles as drafted offered enough stretch for the sector. Many thought that it was for providers individually to build on the Principles and identify enhancement based on their context and stage of development. Other providers considered the Principles presented a challenge.

#### Tertiary and transitions

Mixed views were expressed on how the Quality Code could be extended to include a tertiary focus.

There was support for a tertiary focus that promoted student transitions, but less clarity on the value of the Quality Code applying to levels of study other than higher education. It was acknowledged there were likely to be different views across the UK nations.

### **Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)**

It was considered that EDI should have greater prominence in the Principles and potentially in the introductory text.

### **Teaching, learning and assessment**

There was a strong request to include a Principle directly addressing teaching, learning and assessment.

In response to the feedback from the Summer series of workshops, QAA made amendments to the draft Quality Code including adding an explicit Principle focusing on teaching, learning and assessment. Once again, a revised proposed Quality Code was presented to the sector for discussion in five online events in November and December 2023. In addition, smaller sessions were held with a number of bodies and groups including GuildHE Admissions Network, QAA Student Quality Network, Quality Strategy Network, Colleges Development Network, Quality Arrangements for Scottish Higher Education, Universities Scotland Learning and Teaching Committee, Universities Wales, and the Welsh Strategy Network.

### **Feedback events - November and December 2023**

Over 250 people from across the UK participated in the feedback events.

<b>England</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>Sector bodies</b>
159 participants	34 participants	14 participants	4 participants	16 participants

### **Survey - December 2023 to January 2024**

In addition to the events and discussions, we ran an online survey to gather written feedback. We received 30 individual responses from 28 providers.

<b>England</b>	<b>Scotland</b>	<b>Wales</b>	<b>Northern Ireland</b>	<b>UK-based</b>
13 providers	6 providers	2 providers	4 providers	3 providers

Respondents told us how they typically engage with the Quality Code and this feedback informed the changes we set out in the '**How the Quality Code is used**' section.

The feedback from the winter events, discussions and the survey is summarised thematically in the following table:

## **Feedback on the Sector-Agreed Principles**

Overall, the Principles were seen as clearly reflecting what is important in UK higher education and were regarded as being expressed at a high enough level to suit the operational needs of different providers.

Clarification was requested by some regarding what it means to work with students as partners. Others expressed a need to be realistic about inherent tensions in this level of engagement.

Principle 11 - relating to learning, teaching and assessment - required more significant amendment. Overall, commentary was positive, indicating the Principle was representative of the quality considerations to be made in this area.

Wider commentary included a request for greater emphasis on the role and contribution of external experts, such as external examiners, and clarification of 'flexible modes of delivery' to ensure that students would not interpret this as a requirement to offer hybrid delivery in all circumstances.

Additional comments called for the simplification and clarification of the wording of the Principles.

### **Key Practices**

The Key Practices were seen as providing a clear framework and a welcome emphasis on enhancement. Some comments favoured a more comprehensive explanation of 'baselines'.

The purpose of the Key Practices appeared to be well understood and respondents recognised that the redesigned Advice and Guidance, when available, would support operationalising the Principles in practice.

### **Tertiary**

There was a request for the term 'tertiary' to be clarified and referred to more widely in the document (beyond the glossary) given the implementation of tertiary frameworks in some UK nations.

It was noted there was a challenge with including a 'scope' section in the document given the diverging regulatory frameworks across the UK. However, the usefulness of such a section (which had been included in the 2012 edition of the Quality Code) was well recognised.

### **Research**

Some respondents requested a greater emphasis on research, both in terms of research degrees and articulating how research informs teaching, learning and assessment.

### **Enhancement**

There were mixed views on whether enhancement was articulated sufficiently in the proposed Quality Code.

There was support for making it more prominent, and for it to be specifically included in the glossary. A similar request was made for defining 'quality' in the glossary.

## Advice and Guidance

It was recognised that the practical help in meeting the Principles and Key Practices would be provided in the revised Advice and Guidance.

Aligning the Advice and Guidance directly to the Principles was widely welcomed.

## Phase 3: Consultation and publication

The feedback offered across the Phase 2 activities was constructive and helpful and used to refine the content of the current consultation draft. The feedback has been summarised in this document thematically and is also available on the [Redeveloping the Quality Code](#) page of our website. Comments relating to fine points of detail have not been reproduced here but have been taken into account.

As we have emphasised, our approach has been to work collaboratively with the sector. This consultation represents the final opportunity to engage with the development of the Quality Code before publication of the 2024 edition. We will consider all responses to this consultation carefully and plan to publish the final Quality Code on 27 June 2024.

In addition, during this phase we will create a schedule for the redevelopment of the Advice and Guidance that supports the Quality Code. We will be opening a call to our members for volunteers for the first sections of the Advice and Guidance to be redeveloped with work starting in September 2024. To improve navigation across the Quality Code, the Advice and Guidance will align directly to the Sector-Agreed Principles.

## The differences between the current Quality Code and the proposed version

The [current Quality Code](#), originally published in 2018 with an updated version in 2023, comprises four high level Expectations for Standards and Quality, underpinned by Core and Common practices. This approach represented a significant change from the version it replaced, where the Quality Code comprised a series of Chapters, with substantial guidance contained within each. The 2018 Quality Code fitted into a table on a single A4 page.

### The current UK Quality Code

The UK Quality Code			
Expectations for standards		Expectations for quality	
<p>The academic standards of courses meet the requirements of the relevant national qualifications framework.</p> <p>The value of qualifications awarded to students at the point of qualification and over time is in line with sector-recognised standards.</p>		<p>Courses are well-designed, provide a high-quality academic experience for all students and enable a student's achievement to be reliably assessed.</p> <p>From admission through to completion, all students are provided with the support that they need to succeed in and benefit from higher education.</p>	
<p><b>Core practices</b></p> <p>The provider ensures that the threshold standards for its qualifications are consistent with the relevant national qualifications frameworks.</p> <p>The provider ensures that students who are awarded qualifications have the opportunity to achieve standards beyond the threshold level that are reasonably comparable with those achieved in other UK providers.</p> <p>Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the standards of its awards are credible and secure irrespective of where or how courses are delivered or who delivers them.</p> <p>The provider uses external expertise, assessment and classification processes that are reliable, fair and transparent.</p>	<p><b>Common practices</b></p> <p>The provider reviews its Core practices for standards regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.</p>	<p><b>Core practices</b></p> <p>The provider has a reliable, fair and inclusive admissions system.</p> <p>The provider designs and/or delivers high-quality courses.</p> <p>The provider has sufficient appropriately qualified and skilled staff to deliver a high-quality academic experience.</p> <p>The provider has sufficient and appropriate facilities, learning resources and student support services to deliver a high-quality academic experience.</p> <p>The provider actively engages students, individually and collectively, in the quality of their educational experience.</p> <p>The provider has fair and transparent procedures for handling complaints and appeals which are accessible to all students.</p> <p>Where the provider offers research degrees, it delivers these in appropriate and supportive research environments.</p> <p>Where a provider works in partnership with other organisations, it has in place effective arrangements to ensure that the academic experience is high-quality irrespective of where or how courses are delivered and who delivers them.</p> <p>The provider supports all students to achieve successful academic and professional outcomes.</p>	<p><b>Common practices</b></p> <p>The provider reviews its Core practices for quality regularly and uses the outcomes to drive improvement and enhancement.</p> <p>The provider's approach to managing quality takes account of external expertise.</p> <p>The provider engages students individually and collectively in the development, assurance and enhancement of the quality of their educational experience.</p>

The draft 2024 edition of the Quality Code, first shown to the sector in [November 2023](#), comprises 12 Sector-Agreed Principles identifying the features that are fundamental to securing academic standards and offering a high-quality student learning experience in UK tertiary education. The Principles are arranged into three overall areas, as expressed in the following table:

Strategic approach	Evaluating quality and standards	Implementing the approach to quality enhancement and standards
Principle 1: Taking a strategic approach to managing quality and standards	Principle 4: Using data to inform and evaluate quality	Principle 7: Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes
Principle 2: Engaging students as partners	Principle 5: Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision	Principle 8: Operating partnerships with other organisations
Principle 3: Resourcing the delivery of a high-quality learning experience	Principle 6: Engaging in external quality and standards review and accreditation	Principle 9: Recruiting, selecting and admitting students
		Principle 10: Supporting students to achieve their potential
		Principle 11: Teaching, learning and assessment
		Principle 12: Operating concerns, complaints and appeals processes

These Principles are supported by Key Practices that set out the ways in which a provider can demonstrate they are adhering to the Sector-Agreed Principles. The Principles and Key Practices will be accompanied by underpinning Advice and Guidance. This extract from the Quality Code shows one such Principle, with its Key Practices below:

**Principle 1 - Taking a strategic approach to managing quality and standards**

Providers demonstrate they have a strategic approach to securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality that is embedded across the organisation.

**Key Practices**

- a Academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience are the responsibility of each provider. Degree-awarding bodies have particular responsibilities for the qualifications offered in their name.
- b The strategic approach is employed wherever and however provision is delivered and is embedded in the culture and practices of providers.
- c The strategic approach aligns with providers' policies and practices on equity, equality, diversity and inclusion for students and staff.
- d The strategic approach is published and supported by a comprehensive and transparent governance framework that is communicated clearly and is accessible to staff, students and external stakeholders.
- e The strategic approach is monitored, evaluated and enhanced on a regular basis.
- f External expertise is a key element of the strategic approach to managing quality and standards.

Full details of the process taken to [redeveloping the Quality Code](#) are on our website.

## About this consultation

As the Quality Code has regulatory status in many parts of the UK, we believe a formal consultation is an appropriate final step before finalisation and publication.

We are seeking feedback from all stakeholders - in particular higher and further education providers, sector bodies, quality practitioners, academic staff, professional services staff, students' unions/associations or guilds, and students.

We have had good engagement with stakeholders throughout the redevelopment process. As a result, this consultation may cover ground that some have already commented on. However, as a final point of contact before implementation we have presented both an overall picture of changes from the last version we released for consultation (in November 2023) and an opportunity for those who may not have responded previously to give their views.

Sections 3, 4 and 5 ask for feedback on sections of the Quality Code that have been amended in response to feedback received during the November/December 2023 discussions and survey.

## How to respond to this consultation

The consultation comprises three documents - this consultation document, the draft Quality Code, and an online survey. We advise you to read the Quality Code and this consultation document before completing the survey.

These documents and a link to the online survey are available on the [Quality Code consultation web page](#).

The online survey consists of five sections:

- Section 1: asks for your details
- Section 2: confirms the approach taken to redeveloping the Quality Code
- Section 3: seeks overarching commentary on this new version of the Quality Code
- Section 4: invites your views on the Sector-Agreed Principles and Key Practices
- Section 5: focuses on new terms added to the draft Glossary in response to feedback

See pages 11-26 of this document for more information about the online survey.

## Next steps

The survey opens on Monday 8 April 2024 and closes at 5pm on Friday 17 May 2024.

We aim to publish the finalised Quality Code on 27 June 2024.

## Implementation

The Quality Code is used as a key reference in several review methods managed by QAA and operating in different parts of the UK. Details of how the 2024 edition of the Quality Code will be implemented in those methods will be addressed within the handbooks and other communications, and to providers engaging with them.

## The online consultation survey

The online survey consists of five sections, as follows:

### Section 1: Respondent details

This section captures respondents' details. All answers provided will be treated confidentially and will not be attributed to any individual or organisation in any published analysis report. No personal data will be shared with third parties. Any results reported after the survey will only be in aggregate form, and individual responses will not be identifiable. Further details are available in our [privacy notice](#).

### Section 2: Approach to development

**Question 1 - Have you participated in any of the UK Quality Code redevelopment activities?**

- a) Online events
- b) Responded to the Winter 2023-24 online survey
- c) No, I am coming to this consultation afresh

### Section 3: Overarching commentary on the Quality Code

#### Sector-Agreed Principles

One of the main aims of the Quality Code is to articulate the principles of UK tertiary education for securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality.

The Sector-Agreed Principles articulate the features that are fundamental to securing academic standards and offering a high-quality student learning experience. The Key Practices identify ways in which a provider can demonstrate how they are meeting the Principles. In this way, the Quality Code offers a framework on which providers can build their internal practices and which satisfies external requirements.

**Question 2 - Do the Principles and Key Practices offer a useful framework for developing, supporting and enhancing your internal quality practices and satisfying external requirements?**

#### Tertiary education

We have asked the sector throughout the development process about extending the scope of the Quality Code beyond higher education to include tertiary education. This recognises changes taking place across the UK, notably in Scotland and Wales.

As a result of this feedback, we have stated in the introduction to the 2024 Quality Code that it is applicable to providers working in a tertiary setting: *'This edition of the Quality Code is intended to have application beyond higher education in recognition that many parts of the UK are seeking to develop tertiary approaches to education.'*

We recognise that the establishment of tertiary frameworks and a tertiary focus more widely are evolving areas, and we will continue to develop our approach as we redevelop the Advice and Guidance that will underpin this edition of the Quality Code.

April 2024 consultation draft:

## Introduction

### The UK Quality Code for Higher Education

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) articulates the principles of UK higher education for securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality. This is the fourth version of the Quality Code since it was first developed in the late 1990s. The Quality Code was originally developed by and for the UK higher education sector. This edition is intended to have application beyond higher education in recognition that many parts of the UK are seeking to develop tertiary approaches to education.

**Question 3 - Do you consider that the Quality Code can be applied across tertiary education?**

**Question 4 - In recognition of the fact that the Quality Code will be used in a wider range of settings beyond higher education, what is your view of renaming it as 'The UK Quality Code for Tertiary Education'?**

## Section 4: The Sector-Agreed Principles and Key Practices

### Clarity on what constitutes a Principle

Some stakeholders in the engagement events and survey at the end of 2023 requested greater clarity in the way the Sector-Agreed Principles were set out in the [November 2023 draft](#). Specifically, we were asked to clarify the distinction between the introductory title and the content of each Principle.

To address this, we have grouped the title and description into a box with the aim of making it clearer that the principle number, title and description collectively make up 'the Principle'. We have removed the wording 'Sector-Agreed' from the start of each Principle, to reduce repetition. We have also taken a more condensed approach to the title of the Principle, as in this example:

**Principle 1 - Taking a strategic approach to managing quality and standards**

Providers demonstrate they have a strategic approach to securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality that is embedded across the organisation.

**Question 5 - Is this a clear format for expressing the Sector-Agreed Principles?**

## Principle 1

Changes made from the [November 2023 draft](#):

- The practice relating to equity, equality, diversity and inclusion has been moved more centrally into the list of Key Practices in response to feedback stating it could be perceived as an 'add on' when appearing at the end of the list. It is worth stating that there is not a hierarchy in the way the Key Practices are presented. The precise wording has also been adjusted to align more clearly with the intention of the Principle.
- An additional Key Practice on engaging external expertise has been included.

**April 2024 consultation draft:**

### Principle 1 - Taking a strategic approach to managing quality and standards

Providers demonstrate they have a strategic approach to securing academic standards and assuring and enhancing quality that is embedded across the organisation.

#### Key Practices

- a Academic standards and the quality of the student learning experience are the responsibility of each provider. Degree-awarding bodies have particular responsibilities for the qualifications offered in their name.
- b The strategic approach is employed wherever and however provision is delivered and is embedded in the culture and practices of providers.
- c The strategic approach aligns with providers' policies and practices on equity, equality, diversity and inclusion for students and staff.
- d The strategic approach is published and supported by a comprehensive and transparent governance framework that is communicated clearly and is accessible to staff, students and external stakeholders.
- e The strategic approach is monitored, evaluated and enhanced on a regular basis.
- f External expertise is a key element of the strategic approach to managing quality and standards.

**Question 6 - Does Principle 1 make it clear what is expected of a provider?**

**Question 7 - Do the Key Practices under Principle 1 make it clear how a provider can demonstrate alignment to the Principle?**

## Principle 2

Changes made from the [November 2023 draft](#):

- Principle wording simplified.
- Practice c amended to highlight the need to engage with the full diversity of the student body and reflect the importance of recognising the student voice.
- Practices d and e slightly amended to recognise that not all providers using the Quality Code have a formal student representative body.
- Practice f simplified to reflect current terminology around activities beyond the formal curriculum.

**April 2024 consultation draft:**

### Principle 2 - Engaging students as partners

Providers take deliberate steps to engage students as active partners, individually and collectively, in the design, development, assurance and enhancement of the student learning experience at all levels of study and across the governance framework.

#### Key Practices

- a Student engagement through partnership working is strategically-led, student-centred and integral to the culture of providers.
- b Student engagement and representation activities are clearly defined, communicated, resourced and supported. Transparent arrangements are in place for the collective student voice to be heard and responded to.
- c Providers demonstrate effective engagement with students, including those who represent the diversity of the student body. Students understand that their voice has been listened to and are aware of how their views have impacted the assurance and enhancement of the student experience.
- d Student engagement opportunities and processes are inclusive of students' characteristics and responsive to the diversity of each provider's student population. They involve student representative bodies, where applicable.
- e Providers and student representative bodies, where such bodies are in place, recognise and celebrate the contribution of students to the enhancement of teaching and learning and the wider student experience.
- f Students are enabled and encouraged to engage actively in the academic governance and enhancement of the wider student experience beyond the formal curriculum.

**Question 8 - Does Principle 2 make it clear what is expected of a provider?**

**Question 9 - Do the Key Practices under Principle 2 make it clear how a provider can demonstrate alignment to the Principle?**

### Principle 3

Changes made from the [November 2023 draft](#):

- Principle reworded to emphasise the link between resourcing, strategy and the composition of the student body.
- Practice a amended for clarity.
- Practice c simplified to align it more closely to the Principle.
- Practice e reworded for clarity.
- Practice f enhanced to emphasise the importance of learning environments helping to facilitate a sense of belonging.

**April 2024 consultation draft:**

#### **Principle 3 - Resourcing delivery of a high-quality learning experience**

Providers plan, secure and maintain learning, technology, facilities and human resources to enable the delivery and enhancement of an accessible, innovative and high-quality learning experience for students that is in line with the provider's strategy and the composition of the student body.

#### **Key Practices**

- a Strategic and operational plans, along with resources, align with the student journey and are designed and implemented to support a positive student experience and enable student achievement.
- b Providers ensure they have dedicated and accessible human, digital and physical resources to support and enhance the delivery of their programmes and the well-being of students and staff.
- c Resources are reviewed and updated in alignment with strategic and programme developments, as well as staff and student recruitment. This also ensures relevance to the workplace and the wider academic discipline.
- d Resources are allocated to ensure that staff receive ongoing professional development to support and enhance the delivery of a high-quality and innovative student learning experience.
- e Processes and activities to support the management of academic standards and quality enhancement are appropriately resourced to meet strategic, operational and regulatory objectives and requirements.
- f The creation, development and maintenance of accessible learning environments (physical and virtual) offer all students the opportunity to be engaged in their learning experience and facilitates a sense of belonging.

**Question 10 - Does Principle 3 make it clear what is expected of a provider?**

**Question 11 - Do the Key Practices under Principle 3 make it clear how a provider can demonstrate alignment to the Principle?**

## Principle 4

Changes made from the [November 2023 draft](#):

- Practice a amended to include the levels at which data is utilised.
- Practice c simplified for clarity.
- Practice e amended to include clarification around the review of partnership data sharing agreements and reporting requirements.

### April 2024 consultation draft:

#### Principle 4 - Using data to inform and evaluate quality

Providers collect, analyse and utilise qualitative and quantitative data at provider, departmental, programme and module levels to inform decision-making with the aim of enhancing practices and processes relating to teaching, learning and the wider student experience.

#### Key Practices

- a A consistent, coherent and evidence-informed approach to the collection, storage and management of data is employed across the provider. The provider makes explicit the type and level of data utilised (such as departmental, programme, module level) and the policies and processes that underpin its use in the maintenance of academic standards and the assurance and enhancement of quality.
- b Staff and students are aware of the types of data gathered and how it is stored and used in the management of quality and standards.
- c When designing and implementing monitoring and evaluation arrangements, staff and students take account of ethical and data protection requirements relating to gathering and submitting data for national data sets, regulatory purposes, and internal monitoring and evaluation.
- d Staff who are required to collect, manipulate and analyse data for reporting and quality enhancement purposes receive training that enables them to undertake these activities effectively.
- e Providers in partnership arrangements (including the student representative body, where applicable) ensure data sharing agreements and reporting requirements are clearly stated, understood and reviewed periodically.
- f Data is collected and analysed in ways that enable providers to understand and respond to the needs of their student populations, promoting equality, diversity and inclusion.

**Question 12 - Does Principle 4 make it clear what is expected of a provider?**

**Question 13 - Do the Key Practices under Principle 4 make it clear how a provider can demonstrate alignment to the Principle?**

## Principle 5

Changes made from the [November 2023 draft](#):

- Wording of Principle edited for clarity.
- Practice b amended for clarification.
- Practice d amended to emphasise the need for accessibility in communicating outcomes of monitoring and evaluation.
- Practice e simplified for clarity.

**April 2024 consultation draft:**

### Principle 5 - Monitoring, evaluating and enhancing provision

Providers regularly monitor and review their provision and the underpinning policies, processes and practices to secure academic standards and enhance quality. Deliberate steps are taken to engage and involve students, staff and external expertise in monitoring and evaluation activity. The outcomes and impact of these activities are considered at provider level and conveyed to the governing body to drive reflection and enhancement across the provider.

#### Key Practices

- a Providers agree strategic principles for monitoring and evaluation to ensure processes are applied systematically and operated consistently.
- b The methods for monitoring and evaluation activity are documented to clarify their aims, objectives, intended actions and targets. They are explicit about how they will be conducted, the nature of evidence (data) to be considered and the form of reporting, along with key indicators of success.
- c Staff and students are engaged in monitoring and evaluation activities and receive appropriate training and support to undertake them.
- d The actions and outcomes from monitoring and evaluation activities are communicated in an accessible manner to staff, students, the governing body and external stakeholders.
- e Improvements and enhancements that have been implemented as a result of monitoring and evaluation are, in turn, monitored and evaluated to ensure their impact is positive and remains fit for purpose.
- f Monitoring and evaluation activity facilitates providers' insights and promotion of equality, diversity and inclusion.
- g Programmes are monitored and reviewed regularly by internal and external peers, employers and students, in line with the provider's strategic approach to quality and standards and that of the relevant professional bodies.

**Question 14 - Does Principle 5 make it clear what is expected of a provider?**

**Question 15 - Do the Key Practices under Principle 5 make it clear how a provider can demonstrate alignment to the Principle?**

## Principle 6

Changes made from the [November 2023 draft](#):

- Principle revised for simplicity and clarity and to reflect the differing forms that external review may take, and the different bodies that may require accreditation.
- Practice a amended to reflect the possible different approaches to external review, and to address the status of external review in the regulatory arrangements for providers in England.
- Practice b amended to be less prescriptive and for clarity.
- Practice c amended to reflect the different types of review.
- Practice d amended to reflect that international expertise in external reviews is valued by many providers.

**April 2024 consultation draft:**

### Principle 6 - Engaging in external review and accreditation

Providers engage with external reviews to enable external evaluation of the implementation of their strategic approach to securing standards and assuring and enhancing quality. Reviews and accreditation actively include staff, students and peers. They can be undertaken by representative organisations, agencies or professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs) with recognised sector expertise according to the provision being reviewed.

#### Key Practices

- a External review, whether voluntary or required by national quality frameworks, is built into the provider's strategic approach and aligns to internal quality and standards review activity.
- b Providers recognise that external review and accreditation can act as a catalyst for ongoing improvement and strategic enhancement of the student learning experience. Also, that it promotes reflection and evaluation followed by implementation of the associated actions.
- c Providers acknowledge and support the expertise and resource required to participate in external review and accreditation.
- d Providers who engage in external review understand the UK national regulatory and legislative contexts in which they operate and the different approaches, forms and focus they may take. Providers may engage colleagues with international expertise, in addition to those familiar with UK requirements.
- e Providers understand the requirements and process for external reviews that may be required by regulators in partner delivery locations.

**Question 16 - Does Principle 6 make it clear what is expected of a provider?**

**Question 17 - Do the Key Practices under Principle 6 make it clear how a provider can demonstrate alignment to the Principle?**

## Principle 7

Changes made from the [November 2023 draft](#):

- Principle amended for clarity and simplicity.
- Practice a amended to reflect the applicability of The Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area (QF-EHEA)
- Practice c amended for simplification and clarity.
- Practice e added to reflect the importance of externality in the design, development, approval and modification of programmes of study.

**April 2024 consultation draft:**

### Principle 7 - Designing, developing, approving and modifying programmes

Providers design, develop, approve and modify programmes of study to ensure the quality of provision and the academic standards of awards are consistent with the relevant national qualifications framework. Providers ensure their provision and level of qualifications are comparable to those offered across the UK and, where applicable, The Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area.

#### Key Practices

- a All programmes meet academic standards that are consistent with national frameworks and comparable across the UK, and, where applicable, meet [The Framework of Qualifications for The European Higher Education Area](#).
- b A definitive set of documents are produced from the design, development, approval and modification processes, which are held securely and act as the primary source of information about each programme.
- c The award received, and how outcomes of study are recorded and certificated, is made clear to all stakeholders involved in the teaching, learning and evaluation of the programme.
- d Policies and processes that support the design, development, approval, modification and review of programmes are published on each provider's website and easily accessible to key stakeholders.
- e External engagement and evaluation form a component part of the design, development, approval and modification process.

**Question 18 - Does Principle 7 make it clear what is expected of a provider?**

**Question 19 - Do the Key Practices under Principle 7 make it clear how a provider can demonstrate alignment to the Principle?**

## Principle 8

Changes made from the [November 2023 draft](#):

- Principle title changed to better reflect its purpose, and the detailed wording edited for clarity.
- Practice b amended to promote awareness of the different levels of risk associated with partnerships.
- Practice c added to give greater prominence to the importance of written agreements.

**April 2024 consultation draft:**

### Principle 8 - Operating partnerships with other organisations

Providers and their partners have proportionate arrangements with effective governance to secure the academic standards and enhance the quality of programmes that are delivered in partnership with others. Organisations involved in partnership arrangements agree and communicate the mutual and specific responsibilities in relation to delivering, monitoring, evaluating, assuring and enhancing the learning experience.

#### Key Practices

- a Where academic provision is delivered through partnership, all partners agree, understand, communicate and take responsibility for the maintenance of academic standards and enhancement of quality.
- b Providers are aware that working in partnership with other organisations will involve different levels of risk. Due diligence processes are completed in accordance with each provider's approach to minimising risk, maintaining academic standards and enhancing quality.
- c Written agreements between partners are signed prior to the start of a programme and cover the lifecycle of the partnership, including details about closing a partnership early.
- d Providers and their partners ensure compliance with the regulatory and legislative requirements of the countries in which they work and maintain an awareness of the cultural context in which they operate.
- e Providers maintain accurate, up-to-date records of partnership arrangements that are subject to a formal agreement.
- f Partnerships are subject to ongoing scrutiny that includes regular monitoring, evaluation and periodic review to assure quality and facilitate enhancement.

**Question 20 - Does Principle 8 make it clear what is expected of a provider?**

**Question 21 - Do the Key Practices under Principle 8 make it clear how a provider can demonstrate alignment to the Principle?**

## Principle 9

Changes made from the [November 2023 draft](#):

- Principle amended for accuracy with regard to the purpose of recruitment, selection and admissions processes, and for clarity and simplicity.
- Practice a amended to acknowledge additional processes are required to accommodate the recognition of prior learning.
- Practice e amended to reflect the importance of informed choice.

### April 2024 consultation draft:

#### Principle 9 - Recruiting, selecting and admitting students

Providers operate recruitment, selection and admissions processes that are transparent, fair and inclusive. Providers maintain and publish accurate, relevant and accessible information about their provision, enabling students to make informed choices about their studies and future aspirations.

#### Key Practices

- a Policies and procedures for application, recruitment, selection and admission to programmes are reliable, fair, transparent and accessible, including processes for the recognition of prior learning.
- b Information provided to prospective students and their advisors for recruitment and widening access purposes supports them in making informed decisions.
- c Providers meet their regulatory obligations in relation to the information presented about themselves and their programmes of study.
- d Staff, student representatives and external partners engaged in the delivery of recruitment, selection, admissions and widening access processes are appropriately trained and resourced.
- e All teams involved in the application, selection and admissions processes ensure information about the applicant journey is consistent and clear. Specific elements of the selection process are clearly defined and any programme changes that can impact decision making are communicated swiftly and consistently to enable all parties to exercise informed choice.

**Question 22 - Does Principle 9 make it clear what is expected of a provider?**

**Question 23 - Do the Key Practices under Principle 9 make it clear how a provider can demonstrate alignment to the Principle?**

## Principle 10

Changes made from the [November 2023 draft](#):

- Principle amended for simplicity and to emphasise a high-quality student learning experience in addition to student achievement and progression.
- Practice a amended for clarity.
- Practice b reworked for simplicity and clarity, and to acknowledge the recognition of different pathways into learning.
- Practice d amended to reflect the potential for specific needs and requirements of students.
- Practice e amended to clarify terminology around activities outside the formal curriculum.

**April 2024 consultation draft:**

### Principle 10 - Supporting students to achieve their potential

Providers facilitate a framework of support for students that enables them to have a high-quality learning experience and achieve their potential as they progress in their studies. The support structure scaffolds the academic, personal and professional learning journey, enabling students to recognise and articulate their progress and achievements.

#### Key Practices

- a Accessible, relevant, accurate and timely information is offered to students and other key stakeholders throughout the learning journey about the provider, programme of study, wider opportunities for development and availability of support services.
- b Students are supported at key transition points throughout their journey, with their specific needs and requirements met, and their particular pathways into learning recognised.
- c Students, staff and those supporting student progression are aware of the ongoing academic, professional and pastoral services and activities available, and students are encouraged to access these opportunities and the support throughout their learning journey.
- d Staff are appropriately qualified, trained and supported to deliver high-quality learning and support for all students, including those with specific needs and requirements.
- e Activities offered outside the formal curriculum are recognised as beneficial for promoting students' sense of belonging, as well as providing opportunities for students to broaden their skills and achievements, complementing their formal studies.

**Question 24 - Does Principle 10 make it clear what is expected of a provider?**

**Question 25 - Do the Key Practices under Principle 10 make it clear how a provider can demonstrate alignment to the Principle?**

## Principle 11

Changes made from the [November 2023 draft](#):

- Principle title simplified to better reflect its purpose.
- Principle changed for greater clarity. Further amendments clarify the value of academic integrity in teaching, learning and assessment.
- Practice c amended to specifically mention staff.
- Practice d amended to reflect the importance of ongoing advice around academic integrity.
- Practice e reworked to recognise support requirements are needed for effective transition between academic levels.
- Practice f added to recognise the importance of fair, reliable, accessible and inclusive assessment. In addition, we have also highlighted different options for assessment being made available where it is possible and sustainable to do so.
- Practice g added to emphasise the importance of working in partnership with students to establish coherent approaches to emerging technologies that impact teaching, learning and assessment, with Generative Artificial Intelligence (Gen AI) provided as an example. This was added in response to requests for more emphasis on Gen AI
- Practice h added to acknowledge the specific requirements of research degrees and the importance of research informing teaching, learning and assessment. During the previous phase of consultation, concerns were raised about a perceived lack of emphasis on research degree provision in terms of a specific Principle. We are committed to providing discrete advice for the sector in this area and will consult in the future on the shape this advice will take, but we can confirm the Quality Code covers both taught and research degrees.

**April 2024 consultation draft:**

### Principle 11 - Teaching, learning and assessment

Providers facilitate a collaborative approach to shaping a learning experience that enables students to have a high-quality experience and progress through their studies. All students are supported to develop and demonstrate academic and professional skills and competencies. Assessment employs a variety of methods, embodying the values of academic integrity, producing outcomes that are comparable across the UK and recognised globally.

#### Key Practices

- a Learning and assessment align to ensure students can demonstrate their potential and reflect on and reinforce their prior learning, skills and knowledge.
- b Students are clear about the intended modular and programme learning outcomes and the purpose of assessment, and they are enabled to use feedback/feedforward to support further learning.
- c Staff involved in facilitating learning and supervising research are appropriately qualified, supported and trained to deliver a high-quality learning experience, as well as being actively enabled to enhance their teaching and supervisory practice.

- d Students are enabled and encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning and to take an active role in shaping and enhancing the learning process. Providers offer ongoing advice and guidance about academic integrity to ensure that students and staff understand what is expected of them.
- e As students move through their learning journey they are given the opportunity and support to transition effectively between academic levels, recognising the progression they have made and steps they need to take to achieve their potential.
- f Providers design assessments that are appropriate, fair, reliable, accessible and inclusive. Where possible, and sustainable, students are offered different options for undertaking assessments to promote accessibility and inclusion.
- g Providers work in partnership with staff and students to establish coherent approaches to technology in teaching, learning and assessment (such as Generative Artificial Intelligence).
- h Research degrees are delivered in supportive environments that are conducive to learning and research with effective supervision arrangements. Learning and teaching at all levels is informed by research and/or scholarship.

**Question 26 - Does Principle 11 make it clear what is expected of a provider?**

**Question 27 - Do the Key Practices under Principle 11 make it clear how a provider can demonstrate alignment to the Principle?**

## Principle 12

Changes made from the [November 2023 draft](#):

- Principle title changed to better reflect its purpose.
- Principle amended to reflect that the quality considerations in concerns, complaints and appeals centre on their operation, and it is the provider's responsibility to articulate processes to staff and students.
- Practice b amended to reflect the importance of clarity around the processes as well as the information about them.
- Practice c amended to highlight the need to meet international requirements where applicable.

**April 2024 consultation draft:**

### Principle 12 - Operating concerns, complaints and appeals processes

- Providers operate processes for complaints and appeals that are robust, fair, transparent and accessible, and clearly articulated to staff and students. Policies and processes for concerns, complaints and appeals are regularly reviewed and the outcomes are used to support the enhancement of provision and the student experience.

#### Key Practices

- a Policies and processes for concerns, complaints and appeals are accessible, robust and inclusive, and enable early resolution wherever possible and include information relating to recruitment, selection and admission.
- b Concerns, complaints, appeals policies and procedures, including information about them, are clear and transparent to students, those advising them and those implementing the processes. Formal and informal stages of the processes are clearly articulated.
- c Providers meet the national and (where applicable) international requirements of external bodies with responsibility for hearing or overseeing concerns and complaints.
- d Actions resulting from concerns, complaints and appeals are proportionate and enable cases to be resolved as early as possible.
- e Processes for concerns, complaints and appeals are monitored and reviewed to ensure they promote enhancement throughout the provider and operate as intended, to the benefit of students and staff.
- f Outcomes from concerns, complaints and appeals are used to develop and enhance teaching and learning and the wider student experience.

**Question 28 - Does Principle 12 make it clear what is expected of a provider?**

**Question 29 - Do the Key Practices under Principle 12 make it clear how a provider can demonstrate alignment to the Principle?**

## Section 5: The Glossary and Further Comments

We have amended the glossary in response to feedback received, including from colleges who will be using the Quality Code as part of the tertiary frameworks in Scotland or Wales, or when operating in partnership with degree-awarding bodies. It is recognised that those colleagues may use different terminology currently.

The terms which have been amended or are new to the glossary since the November 2023 draft are shown below - for the full glossary, see the consultation draft.

### April 2024 consultation draft:

**Academic integrity** - a commitment to the fundamental values of honesty, trust, fairness, respect and responsibility. The opposite of academic integrity is unethical practices such as plagiarism, collusion, contract cheating or academic misconduct.

**Enhancement** - the deliberate and systematic improvement in the quality of provision and the ways in which students' learning is supported, involving the active engagement of students and staff. Enhancement has different interpretations across the UK with some UK nations having an 'enhancement-led' regulatory framework.

**Equality** - each individual or group of people is given the same resources or opportunities, but QAA considers that equality should include the concept of 'equity,' which recognises that each person has different needs and therefore resources and opportunities should be allocated to reach an equal outcome.

**Quality** - refers to how well providers support students to consistently achieve positive outcomes in learning, personal development and career advancement, while meeting the reasonable expectations of those students, employers, government and society in general.

**Standards/academic standards** - these are the standards that degree-awarding bodies set and maintain for the award of academic credit or qualifications. Degree-awarding bodies are responsible for defining their own academic standards by setting the pass marks and determining the grading/marking schemes and any criteria for classification of qualifications that differentiate between levels of student achievement above and below the threshold academic standards. These individual standards align to national qualifications and credit frameworks and/or [The Framework of Qualifications for the European Higher Education Area](#).

**Tertiary education** - all post-secondary education encompassing further and higher education including academic, vocational and professional qualifications. How the term is interpreted varies between the UK nations - providers are advised to check their funder/regulator's websites or the relevant external review guidance for further information. When working with overseas partners, providers should also check the definition as understood by their partner as the meaning of 'tertiary' may vary in different countries.

**Question 30: Is the glossary useful in helping you to understand key terms used in the Quality Code?**

### Further comments

**Question 31 - Do you have any further comments to make about the proposed 2024 edition of the Quality Code?**

Published - 8 April 2024

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Southgate House, Southgate Street, Gloucester GL1 1UB  
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786

+44 (0)1452 557 000

[www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)