Appointment of Members to the Access Recognition and Licensing Committee (ARLC)

August 2020
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Welcome from the Chair of the ARLC, Denise McAllister

Dear applicant,

Thank you for your interest in joining the QAA Board’s Access Recognition and Licensing Committee (ARLC). We are currently looking for three new members - one from a HE provider, one student representative, and one other member (see page 4).

QAA is the independent expert body entrusted with safeguarding academic standards and enhancing the quality of UK higher education wherever it is delivered around the world. We work with 600 universities, colleges and specialist providers in the UK to promote high academic standards, quality experiences and excellent outcomes for all students of UK higher education. We have international reach, enhancing the reputation of our world-class HE sector. QAA is also responsible for the recognition and regulation of Access to HE Diploma courses.

In our role as the Designated Quality Body (DQB) for England we have embraced regulatory reform of higher education across the UK and transformed our operations to address the legislative context of the Higher Education Research Act 2017 and support our members.

This is a pivotal and challenging role, bringing new perspectives to our Board in a time of significant challenge. We invite applications from individuals who will engage with our vision, will be strong ambassadors of QAA and Access to HE and will lead the organisation in times of change and opportunity. We are particularly interested in attracting senior professionals with expertise in higher education policy context relating to widening participation, social mobility and fair access. QAA welcomes applications from people in all sections of the community and values diversity.

You will find more information about QAA’s work in Access to HE in this pack and on our website. I do hope you will express an interest in joining the ARLC at this critical and exciting time in the development of QAA.

Yours faithfully,

Denise McAlister
Chair, Access Recognition and Licensing Committee, QAA
About QAA

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is the independent body entrusted with monitoring and advising on academic standards and quality in UK higher education. As the scale, shape, structure and purpose of learning provision are changing in the UK and around the world, QAA safeguards standards and supports the improvement of quality for students - whether they study at a university or college in the UK or in any other location worldwide where courses lead to UK higher education qualifications.

QAA also has a consultative and advisory role, working at government level through to individual organisations. We play a leading role in international development in quality assurance, through membership of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education and of the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education.

QAA is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity. It has offices in Gloucester (main office), Cardiff, Glasgow and London. For further corporate information at a glance, please see our Annual Report and Consolidated Financial Statements.

Our role

We are independent of government and of higher education providers, and act in the public interest, for the benefit of students.

We develop guidance that is accepted by all involved in this important sector of the UK economy, and review higher education providers to check whether they meet agreed UK expectations.

While our review work is done under contract with the public bodies that help fund UK higher education, our guidance is developed through close working with the providers themselves. We act independently of both the funding bodies and the higher education sector.

Our work

Our vision is for world-leading and independently assured higher education.

As the independent body entrusted with monitoring and advising on standards and quality in UK higher education, we are dedicated to checking that the three million students working towards a UK qualification get the higher education experiences they are entitled to expect. We ensure that students are involved all aspects of our work.

We work across all four nations of the UK. We also build international partnerships to enhance and promote the reputation of UK higher education worldwide.

The main areas of our work include:

- publishing and maintaining the UK Quality Code for Higher Education
- conducting evidence-based external reviews and assessments of higher education providers
- conducting research and sharing information about good practice to improve quality
- involving students in our quality assurance work, our governance, and our reviews
- consulting and working with all those who have an interest in the quality of UK higher education
• working internationally with other agencies on common criteria for standards and quality
• providing training and events to help higher education providers develop and improve their own quality assurance processes
• advising governments and regulators on applications for degree awarding powers and the right to be called a university in the UK
• regulating the Access to Higher Education Diploma, which provides an alternative route into higher education for adults.

Our role in relation to Access to HE

The Access to Higher Education Diploma is a nationally recognised level three qualification specifically developed to prepare adults to transition to higher education. QAA has regulated the qualification through the QAA Recognition Scheme for Access to Higher Education in England, Wales and Northern Ireland since 1997.

There are over 1,200 Access to HE Diploma courses, delivered by 344 providers in England Wales and Northern Ireland, 80 per cent of which are further education colleges. Access to HE Diplomas lead to progression to higher education for almost 25,000 students each year.

The QAA Recognition Scheme for Access to HE covers the regulation of the Access to HE Diploma, as well as the regulation of the awarding bodies (Access Validating Agencies - AVAs) and their quality assurance of Access to HE courses. The AVAs (10 in England and one in Wales) are legally and financially independent awarding bodies, although all maintain working relationships with further education and higher education providers of various kinds. We operate processes of AVA monitoring to confirm that AVAs are meeting published criteria. Recognised Access to HE Diplomas are eligible for funding by the Education and Skills Funding Agency or for loans funding from Student Finance in England.

A revised qualification specification for the Access to HE Diploma was implemented in 2014-15. We also gather and publish national statistics about Access to HE courses and students’ achievements and progression, and maintain a publicly searchable database of all recognised courses which, together with other information about Access to HE, is available for potential students and others from the Access to HE website. The ARLC currently maintains two development groups, the Access Qualification Development Group and the Access Data Development Group.

Future priorities are to continue to successfully manage the QAA Recognition Scheme for Access to HE; follow our commitment in supporting Access to Higher Education provision within prisons and the Armed Forces; and ensure the Diploma meets local priorities and links to wider national priorities. In terms of qualification development, QAA sees a clearly defined space for Access to HE Diplomas in preparing our workforce for Degree Apprenticeships and furthering the strong partnerships we already have with HE.

Being custodian of the Diploma has been one of QAA’s most significant achievements. It changes lives. This is a fundamental purpose of higher education, one we are delighted to have supported and developed.

1 Alternate funding streams are available in Wales and Northern Ireland.
Governance

Our structure and funding

We are an independent body, a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. QAA is funded through a number of channels:

- membership fees from higher education providers
- fees paid by providers registered with the Office for Students for our quality assessment activity as the designated quality body in England
- contracts and agreements with the UK funding councils and organisations
- providers of higher education seeking educational oversight for immigration purposes as required by the Home Office pay a fee to be reviewed by a QAA team, as well an annual maintenance charge
- additional private contracts, consultancy and business development work in the UK and internationally.

QAA is governed by our Board. The Board is responsible for policy development, for the conduct of our finances, and for monitoring our performance against agreed targets at a corporate level. Please see our Articles of Association for further information.

More information on the QAA Board and our Board Members is on our website.

The ARLC's responsibilities and membership

The ARLC is a committee of the Board, and as such reports and makes recommendations to the Board of Directors. The Committee receives reports on AVA monitoring activity and makes recommendations to the Board about the award and withdrawal of AVA licences, and advises on major developments in other areas of QAA's Access to HE activities.

Board members
Professor Denise McAlister (Chair)
Deputy Chair (vacant post - Board appointment)

HE members
Dr Elizabeth Mason, Bangor University
Fiona Fisk, University of Suffolk
1 x vacant post

FE members
Claire Foster, Boston College
Dr Mark Nason, Cornwall College
Robin Webber-Jones, Sheffield College

Other members
Ben Rockliffe, Department for Education
1 x vacant post

Co-option
Diane Glautier, University of Staffordshire

Student representative
1 x vacant post
About the role of ARLC member

The Committee has 11 members (with a possible further two by co-option), including two Board members (one of whom is the Committee's Chair); three members from the higher education sector; three members from the further education sector; two other members with appropriate experience (who may come from further education or higher education or who may have other relevant experience).

The Board delegates authority to the Committee to oversee:

- QAA's framework for the recognition of Access to HE courses, and associated arrangements (the QAA Recognition Scheme for Access to Higher Education), and to make recommendations on its development to the QAA Board, or other authority, as appropriate
- the AVA initial licensing process; to receive reports on licence application visits; and to make recommendations to the QAA Board concerning the award of new AVA licences
- AVA monitoring to inform licensing decisions, and to make recommendations to the QAA Board concerning the withdrawal of AVA licences where it is judged an AVA is not meeting or not able to meet the requirements of the licensing criteria
- developments of the Access to HE qualification, with reference to the qualification's principal purpose of providing a preparation for study in higher education.

In carrying out these responsibilities, ARLC members have specific obligation to:

- acquaint themselves with the Recognition Scheme documentation
- read committee papers carefully, and contribute fully to the Committee's discussions.

Members may occasionally be asked to provide expert advice between meetings. Members may also be invited to serve on development groups that are established by the ARLC.

The full responsibilities of company directors and charity trustees, which also apply to ARLC members, are set out in detail in the Code of Best Practice for Members of the QAA Board.
Relevant knowledge and experience for ARLC members

ARLC members jointly hold the knowledge and expertise needed for the Committee to be able to carry out its remit effectively.

ARLC members also need to bring independence of mind and a wider perspective to the Committee’s deliberations, bringing the range of their experience to bear in making impartial judgements. Members are not expected to act as advocates or representatives of particular AVAs or types ofAVA; of individual institutions or institutional types; or of narrowly defined sectoral interests. The regulatory nature of the ARLC’s business requires members to be able to maintain strict standards of confidentiality.

Please note: current AVA officers and permanent employees of AVAs are not eligible to serve as members of the ARLC.

All applicants to a position of ARLC member are expected to demonstrate:

- evidence of committee skills: objectivity, independence of mind, and good judgement; collegiate attitude to decision-making; willingness to share knowledge, skills and expertise to the benefit of the committee and the beneficiaries of its work
- willingness to accept the duties and responsibilities of committee membership and an ability to commit to the demands and requirements of the role.

Essential

- experience of decision-making and policy engagement at senior level
- understanding of the principles of good governance, organisational and financial management
- experience of quality assurance and regulation in further education and/or higher education
- knowledge of higher education and further education cross-sector collaborative arrangements
- knowledge of higher education policy context relating to widening participation, social mobility and fair access
- commitment to the wider purposes of Access to HE provision.

Desirable

- knowledge of the policy and funding context for the delivery of Access to HE courses in further education
- experience of Access to HE Diploma and qualifications development/assessment issues
- experience of common practices and current issues affecting higher education admissions
- knowledge of the operation of AVAs.
Terms and conditions

Time commitment
The ARLC normally meets three times a year; meetings will be held virtually or in our Gloucester or London office.

Remuneration
ARLC members receive no remuneration. Reasonable and properly documented expenses incurred in the performance of ARLC members' duties will be reimbursed in line with QAA's policies.

Term of appointment
ARLC members are appointed by the Board for a term of three years, renewable for one additional term.

How to apply
To apply, please submit a brief statement of what you can bring to the role, and your CV to vacancies@qaa.ac.uk

The recruitment process
We will treat all enquiries, formal and informal, in confidence.

The closing date for applications is noon 4 September 2020.

Interviews will be held on 14 September 2020.

Further information
For a confidential discussion regarding this role, please contact:

Julie Mizon, Access Manager, j.mizon@qaa.ac.uk; or
Ann-Marie Karadia, Access Officer, a.karadia@qaa.ac.uk

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