Appointment of Members to the Student Strategic Advisory Committee

Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education

July 2023
Welcome from the Chair of the QAA Board

Welcome and thank you for your interest in joining QAA's Student Strategic Advisory Committee (SSAC).

QAA is a world-leading, trusted authority on quality and standards in learning and teaching, standing at the forefront of UK higher education.

Reinvigorated with a refreshed strategy, QAA is expanding its operations and capitalising on opportunities to grow. Our changing role in England has allowed us to launch a new suite of services for English providers, while we have also been commissioned to lead key workstreams of Scotland's Tertiary Quality Project. It is an exciting time for QAA.

SSAC acts as an advisory to QAA's Board of Directors, providing objective strategic advice and guidance to inform the Board's decision-making, particularly in relation to the agency's work for students. The Committee also offers strategic direction to QAA in relation to its engagement with students, and their representatives, recommending specific programmes or initiatives to enhance practice within this area.

Members of SSAC are appointed based on their experience and knowledge, and their ability to contribute to the representation of the full range of students across the UK higher education sector. They are expected to bring a student perspective based both on their own experiences and those of others.

Applicants for the role must also have an understanding of the range of stakeholder interests in, and of the challenges and changes facing, higher education in the UK, alongside a demonstrable appreciation of the increasingly diverse contexts (political, social, financial) within which academic standards and quality in higher education are managed.

We are particularly interested in attracting individuals who are committed to the mission and values of QAA, and who bring the skills and experience required to play a full and active part in the Committee's work.

QAA welcomes applications from people in all sections of the community; we value diversity and the contribution it makes to fully-informed debate.

You will find more information about SSAC and QAA in this pack and on our website. I do hope you will apply to join our Committee at this exciting time of change for QAA.

Yours faithfully

Professor Simon Gaskell
Chair of the QAA Board
About QAA

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is an independent charity working to benefit students and higher education, and one of the world's experts in quality assurance. 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.

Our work

Our vision is for world-leading and independently assured higher education. As the independent charity 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 in all aspects of our work.

QAA Membership covers a wide range of activity. This includes UK-wide work to secure standards and quality, as well as enhancement-facing activities co-created with our members. Our global reach and strong network of international partnerships enable us to support members in securing and reinforcing UK higher education's global reputation for excellence and enhancing the student learning experience wherever they are studying.

In addition to QAA Membership, our range of new services offers providers in England valuable guidance and support relating to the quality and standards of higher education, specific to their individual circumstances and needs.

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.
About the Student Strategic Advisory Committee

The Student Strategic Advisory Committee (SSAC) acts as an advisory committee to QAA’s Board of Directors, providing objective strategic advice and guidance to inform the Board’s decision-making, particularly in relation to the Agency’s work for students. The Committee also offers strategic direction to QAA in relation to its engagement with students, and their representatives, recommending specific programmes or initiatives to enhance practice within this area.

QAA is currently looking to appoint up to eight new members of SSAC, including up to three student union / representative body staff members.

QAA recognises the positive benefits of equality, diversity and inclusion. Our aim is to be truly representative of all sections of society, and for all to feel respected, free to be themselves no matter what their identity or background, and able to give their best. We value the differences that a variety of backgrounds, experiences, perspectives and skills brings, and strongly encourage suitably qualified applicants to apply and join us.

Applications are sought from any current student, recent graduate (within two years), or current elected student representative, and student union / representative body staff members. At this time, we would particularly welcome applications from those with experience of the following, as they are currently underrepresented within the Committee’s existing membership:

• individuals studying at an institution in Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales
• individuals with experience of progressing into higher education through an Access to HE course
• individuals currently studying at higher education level within a college, independent higher education provider, or small / specialist institution
• individuals currently studying a degree or higher-level apprenticeship
• individuals with experience of studying internationally.

Main responsibilities during 2023-24

The main responsibility of the Committee will be to:

• provide a student perspective to QAA regarding the legislative, regulatory, funding and policy environment likely to affect the experience of students in UK higher education
• contribute to discussions and provide student-focused responses to developments and changes in the legislative, regulatory, funding and policy environment likely to affect the experience of students in UK higher education
• advise QAA staff on the development of any work that has substantive implications for current or prospective students studying higher education
• advise the Board regarding the continued validity, appropriateness and relevance of QAA’s work for students in UK higher education
• provide independent and objective counsel to, and acting as a sounding board, for the Board.

Membership of the Committee also gives an opportunity to influence the work of a national agency, meet like-minded people and become more involved in QAA’s work in the higher education sector. Since its inception, the Committee has played a key role in advising QAA.
on the development of our review methods, revising our organisational strategy, and making QAA’s work more accessible to students across the UK.

**Membership**

The Co-Chairs of the Committee are the independent QAA Student Board Member and the NUS-nominated QAA Board Member. In addition to the joint chairs, there will be a minimum of 13 members including:

- one of the student representatives / members from each of the QAA Board committees with student membership
- a minimum of five student members
- a minimum of two student union staff members
- QAA’s lead for student engagement (ex-officio).

The Chair of the QAA Board and an independent Board Member, as well as the Chief Executive, may also attend the meetings.

For more information, see the Student Strategic Advisory Committee Terms of Reference and Role Specification, which are available as part of this pack.

**Meetings**

There will be three meetings per academic year and members are expected to attend all meetings. The meetings will be held online for the next academic year. In addition, new members will be invited to attend an induction, which is not compulsory but strongly recommended.

In 2023-24, meetings will take place via Zoom on the following dates:*  
- Induction - Tuesday 7 November 2023 (14.00-16.30)  
- Wednesday 8 November 2023 (10.00-13.00)  
- Tuesday 13 February 2024 (10.00-13.00)  
- Wednesday 15 May 2024 (10.00-13.00).

* Please note that dates may change - as much notice as possible will be given if that is the case.

**How to apply**

To apply, please complete the application form at: [https://qaa5.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/ssac-2023](https://qaa5.onlinesurveys.ac.uk/ssac-2023)

The closing date for applications is midnight on **Tuesday 15 August 2023**. Shortlisted candidates will be contacted within two weeks with details of the next stage of appointment.
Role specification

When completing your application form for membership of QAA’s Student Strategic Advisory Committee, please demonstrate how you meet the role specification. This will be used as part of the selection criteria.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Specification</th>
<th>Essential / desirable</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is a current student, graduate (within two years), or elected sabbatical officer at a UK higher education institution.</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<td>OR</td>
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<td>Is a student union or student representative body organisation staff member.</td>
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<td>Candidate must be able to attend all three meetings (and preferably also induction):</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Induction - Tuesday 7 November 2023 (14.00-16.30)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Wednesday 15 May 2024 (10.00-13.00)</td>
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<td>Demonstrates understanding of the complexities of the UK higher education sector and regulatory landscapes.</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<td>Experience in representing students in quality assurance and enhancement.</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<td>Demonstrates the ability to communicate with a wide range of audiences and stakeholders in the higher education sector.</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<td>Demonstrates the ability to work effectively as part of a committee or team, including evidence of impartiality, independence of mind, sound judgement and collegiate approach.</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<td>Demonstrates willingness to accept the duties and responsibilities of membership and to commit to the demands of the role.</td>
<td>Essential</td>
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<td>Currently based in one of the following higher education providers:</td>
<td>Desirable</td>
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<td>• higher education in a further education college</td>
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<td>• small/specialist provider</td>
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<td>• independent higher education provider</td>
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<td>• higher education institution in Scotland, Northern Ireland or Wales.</td>
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<td>Candidate is an international or Access to HE student, or an apprentice.</td>
<td>Desirable</td>
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Further information

For further information regarding this role, please contact Amy Spencer at: studentengagement@qaa.ac.uk

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education 2023
Registered charity numbers 1062746 and SC037786
www.qaa.ac.uk