Dear Applicant

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

QAA is the independent expert body entrusted with safeguarding academic standards and improving the quality of UK higher education wherever it is delivered around the world.

The 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.

Yours faithfully

Professor Simon Gaskell
Chair of the QAA Board
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 the Annual Report and Financial Statements 2018-19.

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 funding councils (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 councils 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.

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.

Our Board, through the Honorary Treasurer, is responsible for the conduct of our finances, and for monitoring our performance against agreed targets at a corporate level. 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 our Board Members and the QAA Board can be found on our website.
About the Student Strategic Advisory Committee

The Student Strategic Advisory Committee (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. Further guidance on the Committee’s responsibilities can be found in the Terms of Reference included within this pack.

QAA is currently looking to appoint up to seven new members of the Student Strategic Advisory Committee to replace our retiring members, including up to three student union/representative body staff members. The effectiveness of the Committee’s work is underpinned by an explicit need to ensure the Committee’s membership remains representative and inclusive of the diverse range of higher education provision within the UK.

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 a higher-education level within a college, alternative provider or small and specialist institution
- individuals currently studying a degree or higher-level apprenticeship
- individuals with experience of studying internationally.

Main responsibilities from 2020-21

The main responsibility of the Committee will be:

- to provide the Board with key information and forward-looking intelligence regarding the legislative, regulatory, funding and policy environment likely to affect the experience of students in UK higher education
- recommend strategic 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.

The Committee is also 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, the revising of our organisational strategy, and has played a vital role in making QAA’s work more accessible to students across the UK.
**Membership**

The Co-Chairs of the Committee will be 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 Advisory Committee Terms of Reference and Role Specification, which are available as part of the recruitment pack.

**Meetings**

There will be three meetings per academic year and members are expected to attend all meetings. Locations of the meetings are to be confirmed, however, they are likely to be held in Gloucester, London or online. Travel and subsistence expenses for members will be covered.

In 2020-21, meetings will take place on the following dates*:

- Tuesday 3 November (half-day induction for new members)
- Wednesday 4 November 2020
- Wednesday 17 February 2021
- Wednesday 12 May 2021.

* Please note that these may change - as much notice as possible will be given if that is the case.
Terms of Reference

Background

QAA is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity in England and Wales, and Scotland. Its Board members are the Charity's trustees and the Company's Directors. The Board appoints committees to help it, and QAA, achieve its aims. They are advisory in their nature and, as such, do not have any formal delegated decision-making authority. Strategic Advisory Committees play a key role in advising the Board on the formulation and delivery of the QAA strategy to ensure that it takes into account the views of key stakeholder groups.

Duties

1. The Committee offers objective advice and guidance founded in its members' specific expertise, experience and perspective, as students and student representatives in UK higher education.

2. The Committee will inform the Board's strategic planning and decision making by
   - providing the Board with key information and forward-looking intelligence regarding the legislative, regulatory, funding and policy environment likely to affect the experience of students in UK higher education
   - recommending to the Board strategic responses to developments/changes in the legislative, regulatory, funding and policy environment likely to affect the experience of students in UK higher education, having due regard of QAA's UK-wide remit and operations regarding academic quality and standards
   - advising the Board regarding the continued validity/appropriateness/relevance of QAA's work for students in UK higher education
   - providing independent and objective counsel to, and acting as a sounding board for, the Board.

3. The Committee will support QAA in the delivery of its charitable objects by:
   - giving strategic direction to QAA's work concerning its engagement with students and their representatives in consultation with the Board
   - advising/recommending to the Board programmes/initiatives of specific relevance to students in UK higher education.

4. The Committee agrees by consensus the advice, recommendations and guidance it wishes to offer.

Membership of the Committee

5. The Committee, aiming for representation of the diverse student body across UK higher education, shall comprise at least 13 members, including:
   - the independent QAA Board member (student) and the NUS-nominated QAA Board member
• one of the student representatives/members from each of the QAA Board committees with student membership
• five student members
• two student union/student representative organisation staff members
• QAA’s lead for student engagement (ex-officio).

6. The QAA Board members as per point 5 shall be the joint Chairs of the Committee.

7. Appointments to the Committee shall be for a period of one year, extendable by no more than one additional one-year period, as long as members continue to meet the membership criteria.

Reporting

8. The joint Chairs of the Committee will bring the Committee’s advice and recommendations to the Board twice a year and as appropriate, and the Committee will produce formal reports on any aspects of its business at the Board’s request.

Frequency of meetings

9. The Committee shall meet at least twice a year at appropriate intervals in the QAA strategic planning cycle and otherwise as required.

Quorum

10. Six members, including at least one of the joint Chairs.

Secretariat

11. The strategic lead for student engagement shall provide the secretariat for the committee.

Annex

12. All QAA Committees are expected to familiarise themselves with and adhere to the standard provisions applicable to all QAA committees, contained within the document entitled Annex to QAA Committee Terms of Reference.

Effective Date: 14 March 2018
Review Date: 14 March 2020
Contact: QAA’s lead for student engagement

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