A Revised Approach to Quality Assessment in Higher Education

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Revised operating model for quality assessment
The regulatory landscape

Register of Higher Education Providers

Gateways into the HE sector

Exit from HE provision
Quality assessment from 2017-18

- Review for established providers:
  - Annual Provider Review
  - Five-yearly HEFCE Assurance Review

- Developmental period of enhanced scrutiny:
  - Annual Provider Review
  - Repeat visit after four year

- Entry Gateway:
  - Peer review visit
  - Test against baseline requirements
Annual Provider Review

- Student voice
- Analysis of data and other intelligence
- Verification of a provider’s own review processes
- Governing body assurances
- Annual Accountability Return
- New assurances on ‘quality’
- Risk letter to provider
- Publication on Register
Annual Assurances

• Relying on the effective oversight by governors of the student academic experience and student outcomes.

• Building on existing assurances.

• Provide support and guidance.
Assurance: Current process

- Annual returns submitted
- Assurance Gained
  - compliance with Code of Governance
  - compliance with Memorandum of Assurance and Accountability
  - quality and student experience
  - regularity
  - risk Management, Internal control, Governance, Value for Money, data
Quality Assessment: familiar ground

• MAA- ‘Has an effective framework – overseen by its senate, academic board or equivalent – to manage the quality of learning and teaching and to maintain academic standards’.

• Higher Education Code of Governance- ‘The governing body receives assurance that academic governance is effective by working with the Senate/Academic Board or equivalent as specified in its governance instruments in order to maintain quality’.
Quality Assessment: suggested wording

- ‘The governing body has received and discussed a report and accompanying action plan relating to the student academic experience and student outcomes, including the evidence from the institution’s own periodic review processes which fully involve students and external expert advice.’

- ‘The governing body has received the outcomes of continuous improvement activity relating to learning and teaching and challenged the executive where necessary.’

- ‘The methodologies used as a basis to improve the student academic experience and student outcomes are, to the best of our knowledge, robust and appropriate.’

- The governing body has received a report that confirms that the provider continues to meet the Standards of Part 1 of the ESG (2015).’

And for providers with degree awarding powers:

- ‘The standards of awards for which we are responsible have been appropriately set and maintained.’
Annual Provider Review

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Data: current approach

- HEIs submit a range of data: used by HEFCE and other stakeholders for a range of purposes

Higher Education Students Early Statistic (HESES) survey
HESA Student Record
Destination of Leavers from Higher Education survey
National Student Survey
Key Information Sets and Unistats website

- Institution-level outputs: benchmarks
Data: UK Performance Indicators

“...reliable information on the nature and performance of the higher education sector in the UK... a consistent set of measures... contribute to greater public accountability... policy decisions can be made on the basis of consistent and reliable information”

• Established 1998
• Widening participation, Non-continuation, Employment, Research
• Owned by the powers of the four UK HE funding bodies
• Official Statistics
• UK Performance Indicators Steering and Technical Groups
• Until now, HEIs only
Data: quality assessment and ongoing work

• Quality after the removal of student number controls

• Pre-existing measures, set in appropriate context, to provide intelligent understanding
  • Past performance
  • Scale and significance
  • Institutional profile
  • Institutional intelligence

• Broader potential within underlying data sources
  • Understanding of performance and context
  • Policy interests
  • Scope and coverage
Intelligence gathering and sharing: current engagement

- Institutional teams at HEFCE
- Meetings with a range of institutions
- Engagement with sector groups
- Participation in regional meetings
- Data returns – analysis and interpretation
- Dialogue with other agencies
Intelligence gathering and sharing: Our engagement with institutions

- Informed by analysis of data and information
  - e.g., Student recruitment, Retention, Widening Access, DLHE, NSS, QA outcomes

- HE strategy in context
- Recruitment opportunities and challenges
- Intelligence Sharing
- Supporting Government policy priorities

- Partnership and validation arrangements

- Informing the interpretation of data, e.g.,
  - Discuss impact of student number changes;
  - Engagement with other agencies

“Intelligent Regulation”
Themes emerging from comments included in responses to the National Student Survey
Theme: Aspect of prominent concern (if identifiable)

Dissatisfaction with:
+ Course organisation and management: information provision, timetabling
+ Facilities and support structures: lecturer availability
+ Feedback and assessment: timeliness, detail, transparency

Satisfaction with:
+ Union and societies: sporting fixtures, entertainment facilities
+ Location and locality: accommodation costs, local amenities, nightlife

Institutional intelligence and insights
Most recent HEFCE institutional team visit date: 21 November 2016
HEFCE regional consultant: Joe Smith

+ Senior team were not able to engage in discussion about implications of data trends or the assessments necessary to support further growth in student numbers.
+ No evidence has been provided that the institution has a credible action plan to address the general pattern of performance

What actions would you expect the institution to take?
Annual Provider Review

- Analysis of data and other intelligence
- Verification of a provider’s own review processes
- Annual Accountability Return
- Risk letter to provider
- Publication on Register
- New assurances on ‘quality’
- Governing body assurances
- Student voice
What does this mean for institutions?

A robust approach to internal periodic review

Continuous improvement through the Annual Provider Review

Ensuring effective governance to improve the quality of the student academic experience
Pilot activities during 2016-17

Annual Provider Review

- support for governing bodies
- new ‘quality’ assurances
- student voice
- verification of approach to internal review
- risk letter process
- revised approach to the HEFCE Assurance Review

Degree standards

- training for external examiners
- calibration of marking practices
- degree classification algorithms
The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Year 2
Aims of the TEF

- Clear information to students about where the best provision can be found.
- Encourage providers to improve teaching quality… stretching the best and placing pressure on those with variable quality to improve.
- Help to drive UK productivity by ensuring a better match of graduate skills with the needs of employers and the economy.
- Better outcomes for all students, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
Year 1 (Outcomes in 2016)
• ‘Meets expectations’ rating for all providers with successful QA reviews
• Full inflationary fee/loan cap uplift for 2017-18

Year 2 (Outcomes in 2017)
• Voluntary: provider-level assessment of metrics and submissions
• Differentiated ratings: ‘Meets expectations’, ‘Excellent’ or ‘Outstanding’
• Full inflationary fee/loan uplift for all participants (meeting the QA threshold)

Year 3 (Outcomes in 2018)
• Same approach to assessment with updated metrics
• Differentiated ratings and fee/loan cap uplifts
• Piloting of discipline-level assessment and new metrics

Year 4 (Outcomes in 2019)
• Discipline-level assessment
• Possibly including PGT
Year 2 proposals

Criteria
- Teaching quality
- Learning environment
- Student outcomes

Evidence
- Contextual data; core metrics; 15 page submission

Assessment
- Reviewed by a pool of assessors; decisions made by panel of experts

Outcomes
- Meets expectations
- Excellent
- Outstanding
Year 2 metrics

**Teaching quality**
- NSS - The teaching on my course
- NSS - Assessment and feedback

**Learning environment**
- NSS - Academic support
- Non-continuation

**Student outcomes**
- Employment/further study
- Possibly: highly skilled employment

- Three year averages; split by various characteristics
- All metrics to be benchmarked as per PIs, with lower thresholds for flagging differences
- Providers will have the opportunity to view their metrics in advance
- Minimum set of metrics is required to be assessed; providers without metrics to be awarded ‘Meets expectations (procedural)’
- Development of additional metrics for the future
## Anticipated timescales

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<th>May To Sep 2016</th>
<th>Policy formation and project set-up</th>
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<td>• BIS technical consultation</td>
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<td>• Establish TEF team</td>
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<td>• Appoint panel members and assessors</td>
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<td>• Establish key provider contacts</td>
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<td>• Provide indicative metrics to institutions</td>
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<td>• Resolve UK participation</td>
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<td>• Guidance and briefings</td>
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<td>• Preview metrics and amendments</td>
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<td>• Panel and assessor training</td>
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<th>Assessment</th>
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<td>• Calibration exercise</td>
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<td>• Individual assessment of submissions</td>
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<td>• Assessors agree recommendations</td>
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<td>• Panel agrees outcomes</td>
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<td>• Publish outcomes</td>
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Thank you for listening

Questions?