Early Years Professional Status Audit

Handbook for auditors

Contents

Section 1: Introduction

The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) is contracted over a period of three years (2012-15) by the Teaching Agency to carry out an annual quality audit of the provision leading to accreditation for Early Years Professional Status. QAA's mission, values and standards are set out in Annex A.

The Teaching Agency is a new executive agency of the Department for Education that is responsible for ensuring the supply of high quality teachers and training, and for teacher regulation. It became operational from April 2012. The Teaching Agency supports:

- teachers and instructors
- all early years workers
- classroom-based school support staff
- special educational needs coordinators
- educational psychologists
- examination officers.

The Teaching Agency will support the recruitment and retention of the early years workforce, aiming to increase the quality of the workforce by:

- working with others to promote graduate leadership in the early years sector, in order to increase the number of Early Years Professionals employed and deployed in full day care and other settings
- managing the 'New Leaders in Early Years' programme and its evaluation
- producing and maintaining accurate information on the early years workforce.

Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) is the only professional graduate-level accreditation for the early years workforce, recognised as the credential for leading practice in early years provision. It offers a range of accreditation pathways for both existing practitioners and new graduate entrants to the profession, and recognises those who have demonstrated the skills to lead high quality early years practice.

EYPS is a professional accreditation, endorsed by the government, for graduate practitioners who can demonstrate competence against a set of **professional standards**, which cover:

- knowledge and understanding
- effective practice
- relationships with children
- communicating and working in partnership with families and carers
- teamwork and collaboration
- professional development.

These standards are outcome statements that describe what Early Years Professionals need to know, understand and be able to do, and apply to practice with children from birth to the end of the Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS).

Early Years Professionals are people who have achieved EYPS. The actual role of Early Years Professionals will vary according to the context within which they work, such as the size of the setting, its internal organisation and professional autonomy.

There are certain attributes that distinguish the role of an Early Years Professional, whatever their working context. The first is that they are **reflective practitioners**. The second is that they **lead and support** colleagues in order to effect change and improve outcomes for children.

The government policy statement 'Supporting Families in the Foundation Years' announced that the Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC)[1] had been asked to conduct a review of the EYPS standards. The aim is to produce a revised set of standards for implementation from September 2012. The revised EYPS standards must be adopted for all EYPS pathways that start on or after September 2012. Prime Organisations will be kept informed of the progress and impact of this review of standards, and the Teaching Agency will notify and involve Prime Organisations in appropriate activity as this review of standards takes place.

Programmes leading to the award of EYPS are managed by organisations referred to as 'Prime Organisations'. Prime Organisations are contracted to the Teaching Agency. They deliver the programmes alone or in collaboration with delivery partners. Delivery partners are contracted to the Prime Organisation and not to the Teaching Agency. The Teaching Agency holds the Prime Organisation accountable for the delivery of programmes leading to EYPS.

Throughout this handbook, 'we' refers to QAA, and 'you' refers to the auditor.

Brief overview of the EYPS Audit process

QAA is contracted to carry out an annual quality audit of all Prime Organisations.

Some EYPS provision will be delivered through consortia or subcontracting arrangements. The quality auditor will audit all provision as part of the quality audit process, including that delivered by Prime Organisations in collaboration with delivery partners. In the first year of the three year cycle, the auditors will not make any visits to delivery partners unless there is a significant reason to do so. In subsequent years the audit visit to the Prime Organisation will be supplemented with selected visits to delivery partners.

The overall aim of auditing the quality of provision is to provide accessible information which indicates whether Prime Organisations have in place:

- effective means of ensuring that the award of EYPS is robust, rigorous and consistent in quality and standards across all pathways
- effective means of enhancing the quality of EYPS provision, particularly by building on information gained through monitoring, internal and external audits, and feedback from stakeholders.

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[1] CWDC was an executive non-departmental public body sponsored by the Department for Education. In April 2012 CWDC's early years work was transferred to the newly established Teaching Agency.

The objectives of the annual EYPS quality audit are listed below.

Objectives of the annual EYPS quality audit	• Ensure that the robust and rigorous standards of EYPS achievement are maintained. • Ensure that the Teaching Agency, the Department for Education, the early years sector and key stakeholders can have ready access to easily understood, reliable and meaningful public information about the extent to which the award of EYPS meets national expectations in respect of accreditation standards and quality of provision. • Ensure that, if the management of accreditation standards or of the quality of provision is found to be weak or seriously deficient, the process forms a basis for ensuring rapid action to improve it. • Provide robust accountability for the use of public funds received by EYPS Prime Organisations.

In order to support these aims and objectives the Teaching Agency has asked QAA to audit how Prime Organisations maintain the standard of provision through an examination of:

• the effectiveness of internal quality assurance structures and mechanisms
• the effectiveness of arrangements for maintaining appropriate accreditation standards and enhancing the quality of the EYPS programme.

QAA will provide each Prime Organisation with an annual evaluative report on the quality of their EYPS systems and processes. QAA will also produce a single overall annual quality report for the Teaching Agency, who may choose to publish it.

The EYPS Audit framework

The EYPS quality audit process will cover a number of areas to provide assurance that training and assessment provision is of a high quality. The quality audit will focus on a Prime Organisation's management of the areas listed below.

EYPS Audit focus areas	• EYPS outcomes. • Approach to quality improvement. • Approach to the safeguarding and welfare of children. • Approach to candidate support. • Approach to data management. • Approach to recruitment, selection and retention of candidates. • Staff management and infrastructure.

In all of these areas, you will be looking for ways in which Prime Organisations critically appraise their quality management systems and mechanisms to ensure that they are fit for purpose but no greater than is necessary. More detail about these focus areas for audit can be found in Annex B.

There are two key reference points that will help you to determine how Prime Organisations and their EYPS accreditation arrangements are performing in the areas set out above. These are:

• the *Handbook for Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) Prime Organisations and their delivery partners* (Teaching Agency, September 2012)
• the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (QAA, 2011).

The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) brings together those reference points previously known collectively as the Academic Infrastructure. Detailed information can be found in Annex C.

Over the course of 2012-13 the Quality Code will expand into new areas, such as learning resources. As new sections of the Quality Code are published, they will be used as reference points in EYPS Audit. You will need to keep abreast of developments within the Quality Code by subscribing to QAA updates via the QAA website.[2]

When we carry out an EYPS Audit visit, you are our representative. There are normally two auditors, one of whom will be nominated as lead auditor for the audit. This person is the main point of contact with us and with the Prime Organisation throughout the audit visit. Role descriptors for auditors can be found in Annex D.

At the visit, you will ask questions of the staff, candidates and senior managers. At the end of the visit, you will make a judgement about whether, and to what extent, the programmes reflect or continue to reflect the expectations established by the key reference documents described above. The judgements will be expressed as one of the following:

Commended	All or nearly all performance management criteria are met (these are published in the Teaching Agency's *Handbook for Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) Prime Organisations and their delivery partners*). Any unmet criteria do not present any immediate or serious risks to the delivery of the training and assessment of EYPS. The Prime Organisation consistently provides examples of good practice and added value. Candidates speak highly of the programme and a clear action plan is in place to support continuous quality improvement.
Meets expectations	All or nearly all performance management criteria are met. Any unmet criteria do not present any immediate or serious risks to the delivery of the training and assessment of EYPS.
Requires improvement to meet expectations	Most performance management criteria have been met but there are shortfalls in certain areas. These shortfalls do not present any immediate risks to the EYPS programme but require action to mitigate against serious problems over time.
Does not meet expectations	Many performance management criteria have not been met, posing a serious risk to the delivery of the training and assessment of EYPS. Action must be taken immediately to mitigate the risk. Failure to take action would be serious and could lead to the termination of the Prime Organisation's contract to deliver EYPS.

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[2] www.qaa.ac.uk/newsroom/news/pages/QAA-news-alert.aspx

Your decision will be sent to the Teaching Agency, which retains discretion over whether it accepts the auditors' findings.

For the purposes of this handbook, we have separated the audit process into three stages. These are:

- **pre-visit**, which gives details of what you need to do before a visit takes place
- **the visit**, which outlines what you are responsible for doing during the visit
- **post-visit**, which describes your role after the visit has finished.

To ensure the process runs smoothly, there are specific tasks that must be carried out.

You are responsible for ensuring that you are available for the whole of the audit period and committed to completing the whole process once it has begun. This involves:

- successfully completing our training programme for EYPS Audit (see Annex E)
- telling us when you are available for an audit visit
- telling us about any conflicts of interest you may have with the Prime Organisation under review or with their delivery partners
- reading and commenting on the Prime Organisation's self-evaluation document
- making requests for further documentation via the QAA audit support officer in advance of the visit or via the lead auditor during the visit
- advising the QAA officer about arrangements for the visit, including the people whom you wish to meet
- playing a full part in the visit
- contributing sections of the draft report
- considering changes to the draft report in response to the Prime Organisation's comments.

The Prime Organisation is responsible for:

- nominating an internal facilitator to be a main point of contact with the QAA officer and the lead auditor throughout the quality audit
- providing you with documentation before and during the visit, including the self-evaluation document
- discussing the arrangements for the visit with us, including the agenda and the meetings
- letting teaching staff and candidates know that they can raise issues directly with you through the protocol for 'unsolicited information'
- ensuring you have an appropriate place to work during the visit
- ensuring the appropriate staff and candidates are available to meet you
- developing an action plan to address any recommendations arising from the audit
- providing feedback on our audit process.

We are responsible for:

- nominating the audit team
- keeping you informed about your role, timelines and deadlines
- arranging your accommodation
- discussing the arrangements for the visit with you
- making sure the quality audit report is consistent with other audit reports
- ensuring that the report is submitted to the Teaching Agency on time.

The Teaching Agency is responsible for:

- informing us of the Prime Organisations to be audited, including alerting us to changes in Prime Organisation contact details
- advising us of any apparent conflicts of interest that may exist with auditors allocated to an audit
- providing appropriate data reports from the EYPS database to inform audits
- monitoring the implementation of action plans once they have been submitted by Prime Organisations.

Section 2: What the auditors are responsible for considering

In fulfilling the objectives of the EYPS annual quality audit set out in Section 1, the audit addresses the following seven areas:

1   management of EYPS candidate outcomes
2   approach to quality improvement
3   approach to the safeguarding and welfare of children
4   approach to candidate support
5   approach to data management
6   approach to recruitment, selection and retention of candidates
7   staff management and infrastructure.

These areas are reflected in the headings in the Prime Organisation's self-evaluation document and in the quality audit report (Annex H).

It is important to remember that the judgments will be reached by auditing the effectiveness of the policies, structures and processes in place and how well the Prime Organisation is meeting the **contract requirements**, as set out in the contracts that the Teaching Agency has with each Prime Organisation and the *Handbook for Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) Prime Organisations and their delivery partners* in operation at the time of the quality audit.

This section provides further guidance to auditors on what you are responsible for considering under each of these seven areas. You should refer to this section throughout the audit process, particularly when you are analysing the Prime Organisation's self-evaluation document, during the visit, and when you are writing your sections of the quality audit report. These quality criteria are set out in table format in Annex B.

Management of EYPS candidate outcomes

The auditor will consider the extent to which:

- systems and processes are in place to source external moderators that are fit for purpose
- systems and processes are in place to audit the external moderation reports and put recommendations into action as part of continuous quality improvement processes
- internal moderation systems and processes are fit for purpose and robust
- the assessment process is well regarded by candidates
- candidates consider that the programme has been effective and useful in their professional development
- the quality of assessment, moderation and outcomes meets performance management criteria
- Early Years Professional destinations are tracked and systems and processes are in place to measure impact
- Early Years Professionals are supported when seeking employment.

Evidence to support the achievement of these criteria may include (but is not limited to):

- policy and/or procedure documents
- course or programme committee minutes
- annual reports
- external moderator reports
- candidate evaluations
- meetings with candidates
- destination survey reports
- data reports from EYPS database
- achievement data.

Approach to quality improvement

The auditor will consider the extent to which:

- action planning is an integral part of the Prime Organisation's approach, and processes are in place to allow for improvements to be made
- training opportunities related to the EYPS programme are available for staff
- EYPS Prime Organisation forums are attended and actively contributed to
- systems and processes are in place to allow candidates to feed back on all elements of the EYPS programme
- (if applicable) systems and processes are in place to allow placement settings to feed back on all elements of the EYPS programme
- (if applicable) systems and processes are in place to allow candidates' employers to feed back on all elements of the EYPS programme.

Evidence to support the achievement of these criteria may include (but is not limited to):

- action plans
- minutes of committees or forums
- details of training opportunities
- list of Prime Organisation forum attendees
- committee terms of reference and memberships
- candidate evaluations
- stakeholder evaluations
- meetings with staff/candidates/employers as appropriate.

Approach to the safeguarding and welfare of children

The auditor will consider the extent to which:

- Prime Organisation safeguarding policies are up to date, fit for purpose and implemented
- candidate training programmes contain specific safeguarding training and signposts to opportunities for continued development in this area
- candidate training materials contain clear and accurate information on the safeguarding and welfare of children and processes that should be followed
- assessor training materials contain clear and accurate information on the safeguarding and welfare of children and processes that should be followed within the context of EYPS assessment

- processes are in place for ensuring that all candidates have undergone a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check prior to undertaking a placement.

Evidence to support the achievement of these criteria may include (but is not limited to):

- policy and procedure documents
- module specifications
- sample course materials
- assessor training materials
- meetings with candidates
- meetings with assessors
- CRB checking procedures and documentation.

Approach to candidate support

The auditor will consider the extent to which:

- candidate support processes are well regarded by candidates
- online information systems are updated regularly with timely, accessible and accurate information
- the mentor systems and management in place are fit for purpose
- mentor availability and support is well regarded by candidates
- appropriate placement selection, management, quality assurance and audit processes are in place
- candidates judge that the programme helps them to clarify their understanding of the EYPS standards and how to meet them
- feedback and follow-up from the candidates' development review are effective and well regarded by candidates.

Evidence to support the achievement of these criteria may include (but is not limited to):

- meetings with candidates
- relevant virtual learning environment content
- meetings with mentors
- placement policies and procedures
- details of placements used
- samples of development review records.

Approach to data management

The auditor will consider the extent to which:

- financial information is timely, accessible and accurate
- information on candidate numbers, at any one point, is timely, accessible and accurate (for example allocations, recruitment, deferrals and withdrawals)
- information on candidate profiles is timely, accessible and accurate (for example diversity data)
- information on candidate outcomes is timely, accessible and accurate
- the Prime Organisation complies with contractual data protection requirements across the whole EYPS programme.

Evidence to support the achievement of these criteria may include (but is not limited to):

- EYPS database reports
- policies and procedures
- meetings with staff.

Approach to recruitment, selection and retention of candidates

The auditor will consider the extent to which:

- clear marketing and recruitment strategy is in place (including information on targeting under-represented groups and areas of disadvantage)
- recruitment and selection information is timely, accessible and accurate
- recruitment and selection processes result in applicants who meet the entry requirements for the programme
- appropriate steps are taken to attract applications from a wide range of prospective Early Years Professionals from across the allocated region
- the induction, needs analysis and action planning processes meet candidates' requirements
- candidates are well prepared and informed about EYPS and working in the early years sector when they start the programme
- candidates are pursuing the appropriate pathway to EYPS
- processes are in place to monitor and audit individual candidate journeys, and links between recruitment, selection and retention are managed.

Evidence to support the achievement of these criteria may include (but is not limited to):

- relevant policies and procedures
- EYPS database information and reports
- comparison against contractual performance indicators
- information provided to candidates
- meetings with staff
- meetings with candidates.

Staff management and infrastructure

The auditor will consider the extent to which:

- internal communication processes are in place to ensure the dissemination of important information to administrators, project managers, course leaders, assessors, moderators, candidates and settings
- training facilities, buildings, materials and resources ensure accessibility and are fit for purpose
- (if applicable) the Prime Organisation has clear processes in place to monitor and quality assure each delivery partner in a consortium
- delivery partners are meeting performance management and quality assurance requirements.

Evidence to support the achievement of these criteria may include (but is not limited to):
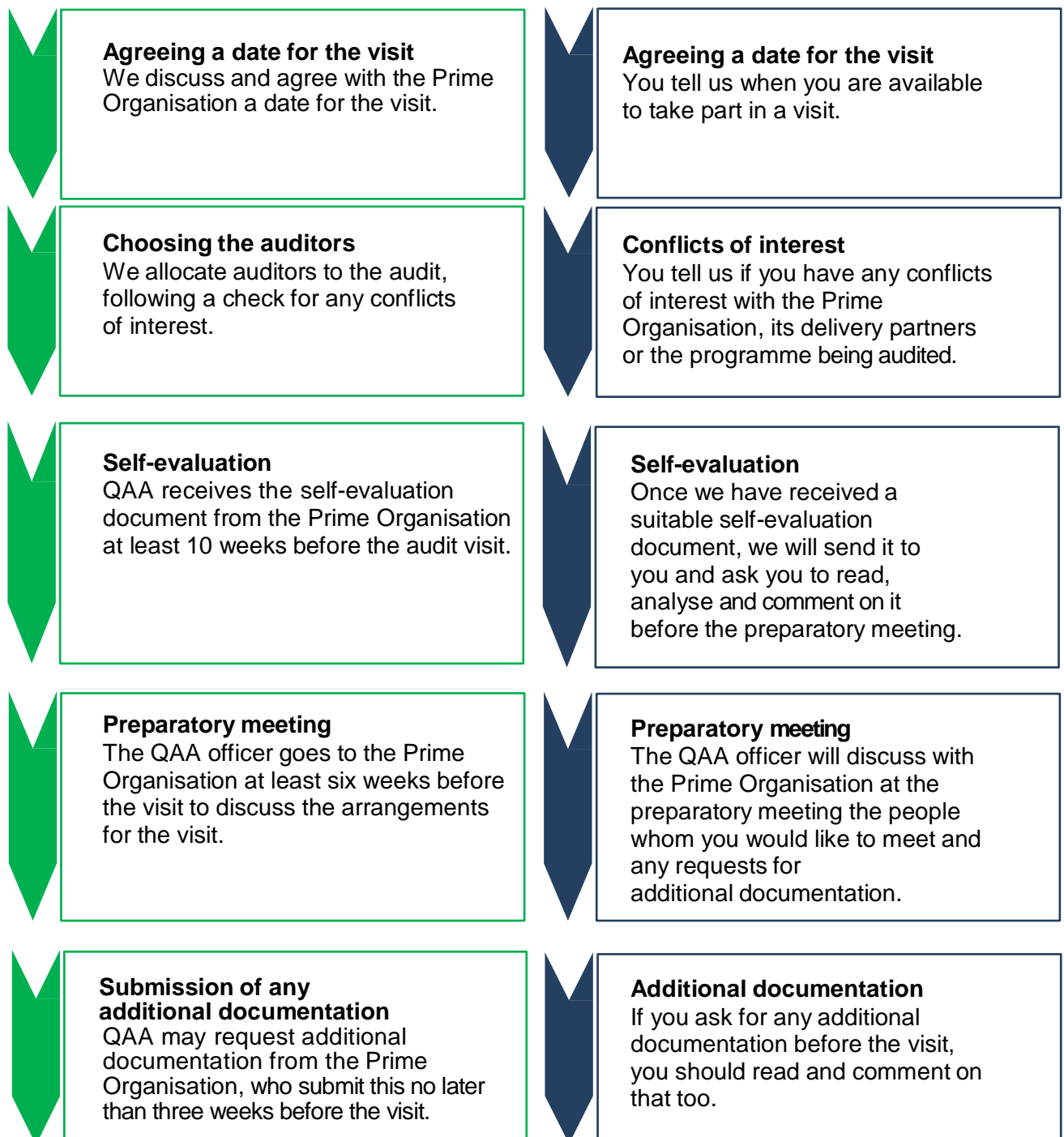
- relevant policies and procedures
- meetings with staff
- meetings with candidates

- observation of resources
- meetings with delivery partner representatives
- visits to delivery partner organisations.

Section 3: Flow charts of the quality audit process

The following flow charts summarise the pre-visit stage and the post-visit stage. The flow charts on the left describe what the Prime Organisation does; the ones on the right explain what you do. You should read the flow charts in conjunction with the more detailed guidance in Section 4.

Pre-visit

Agreeing a date for the visit
We discuss and agree with the Prime Organisation a date for the visit.

Agreeing a date for the visit
You tell us when you are available to take part in a visit.

Choosing the auditors
We allocate auditors to the audit, following a check for any conflicts of interest.

Conflicts of interest
You tell us if you have any conflicts of interest with the Prime Organisation, its delivery partners or the programme being audited.

Self-evaluation
QAA receives the self-evaluation document from the Prime Organisation at least 10 weeks before the audit visit.

Self-evaluation
Once we have received a suitable self-evaluation document, we will send it to you and ask you to read, analyse and comment on it before the preparatory meeting.

Preparatory meeting
The QAA officer goes to the Prime Organisation at least six weeks before the visit to discuss the arrangements for the visit.

Preparatory meeting
The QAA officer will discuss with the Prime Organisation at the preparatory meeting the people whom you would like to meet and any requests for additional documentation.

Submission of any additional documentation
QAA may request additional documentation from the Prime Organisation, who submit this no later than three weeks before the visit.

Additional documentation
If you ask for any additional documentation before the visit, you should read and comment on that too.

Post-visit

Draft report
We complete the draft audit report and send the draft report to the Prime Organisation.

Draft report
You draft your section of the report within **two weeks** of the end of the visit and send it to the lead auditor.

Prime Organisation's comments
The Prime Organisation has four weeks in which to tell us about any factual inaccuracies in the draft report.

Final report
We ask the auditors to consider the Prime Organisation's comments and we produce a final report.

Final report
We ask you to consider the Prime Organisation's comments and agree a final report.

Action plan
The Prime Organisation will produce an action plan showing how it intends to address any recommendations in the final report.

Checking the action plan
We ask the auditors to consider if the action plan is adequate.

Checking the action plan
We ask you to consider if the action plan is adequate to address any conditions.

The Teaching Agency
The final report and action plan are sent to the Teaching Agency. At this stage the outcomes are finalised.

Implementing the action plan
The Prime Organisation keeps the Teaching Agency updated on progress with the action plan. The Teaching Agency may, through QAA, ask the auditors for advice on progress.

Implementing the action plan
The Teaching Agency may ask QAA to ask you for advice on the Prime Organisation's progress with the action plan.

Feedback
The Prime Organisation gives us feedback on EYPS Audit process.

Feedback
You give us feedback on your experience of EYPS Audit process.

Section 4: The auditor's role in detail

This section gives more detail about the steps in the flow charts in Section 3.

Pre-visit

Agreeing a date for the visit
You tell us when you are available to take part in a visit.

EYPS Audit normally involves a two-and-a-half-day visit to the Prime Organisation.
You will spend the first two days of the visit meeting staff, candidates and stakeholders and reading documentation. The final half-day is spent reflecting on the visit and agreeing your conclusions, including the judgements.

We normally hold visits at the Prime Organisation's site, but in addition there will be visits to delivery partners. In year one of the contract, audit visits will focus on the Prime Organisation, but in years two and three samples of delivery partners will be visited.
Visits to delivery partners will focus on the Prime Organisation's management of the delivery partner contribution, and not on the delivery partner itself.

We will negotiate with the Prime Organisation to agree a date for the audit visit. We will then contact you to check your availability.

When considering your availability for a visit, it is necessary to think about all the work related to the visit, including the analysis of the self-evaluation document before the visit and the report drafting afterwards. **It is imperative** that you have the time to conduct each stage of the audit effectively.

Once we have agreed a date for the visit, we will send you an introduction pack (normally by email), which will include:

- a hyperlink to the audit handbook
- links to or copies of the key reference documents mentioned in Section 1
- hyperlinks to other audit support documentation
- details of how to access the electronic system you will use to communicate with the lead auditor
- an audit schedule, showing all the key dates in the audit process, including the deadline for you to submit your comments on the self-evaluation document.

From this point on in the audit, the lead auditor becomes the main point of contact with us and in all communication between the audit team and the Prime Organisation.

Conflicts of interest
You tell us if you have any conflicts of interest with the Prime Organisation, its delivery partners or the programme being audited.

When we allocate auditors to an audit, we check to make sure that they do not have any conflicts of interest.

We will check for conflicts of interest before we canvass your availability for the visit (see above). However, it may be possible that we miss a conflict of interest. If you believe that you may have a conflict of interest that we have missed, it is very important that you tell us about it.

We will also ask the Prime Organisation and the Teaching Agency if they have any objections to your participation.

> **Self-evaluation**
> Once we have received a suitable self-evaluation from the Prime Organisation, we will send it to you and ask you to read, analyse and comment on it before the preparatory meeting.

The self-evaluation is the keystone of EYPS Audit. You will refer to the self-evaluation document throughout the quality audit for information about the delivery of accreditation arrangements and the Prime Organisation, and for evidence that the Prime Organisation evaluates and improves its effectiveness in delivering the EYPS accreditation programme(s).

Annex E to QAA's *Early Years Professional Status Audit: Handbook for Prime Organisations and delivery partners* gives Prime Organisations detailed guidance on the format, content and length of the self-evaluation.[3] It should contain a standard description of the Prime Organisation and programmes to be audited, and an account of how the Prime Organisation and programmes reflect the expectations established by the key reference documents mentioned in Section 1, under the following headings:

- management of EYPS candidate outcomes
- approach to quality improvement
- approach to the safeguarding and welfare of children
- approach to candidate support
- approach to data management
- approach to recruitment, selection and retention of candidates
- staff management and infrastructure.

These headings match the headings in the quality audit report.

The QAA officer will check the self-evaluation to make sure it covers all of the areas outlined above. The QAA officer uses a standard checklist to do this.

If the QAA officer finds that the self-evaluation covers each area adequately, we will send it to you and ask you to read and comment on it. To help you do this, we will include a self-evaluation analysis template, which will be made available to you electronically.

The template is structured according to the headings above.

You should submit your completed analysis template to the QAA officer before the preparatory meeting. This is normally about two weeks after you receive the self-evaluation. The QAA officer will tell you exactly when this is due.

If the QAA officer finds that the self-evaluation is not adequate, we will ask the Prime Organisation to revise it. The Prime Organisation must resubmit a revised self-evaluation

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[3] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/EYPS-handbook-prime-organisations.aspx

within two weeks of our request. If at this stage we consider that the self-evaluation remains unsuitable, we may ask the Teaching Agency to postpone the audit.

Preparatory meeting
The QAA officer will discuss with the Prime Organisation at the preparatory meeting the people whom you would like to meet and any requests for additional documentation.

An example agenda for a preparatory meeting can be found in Annex F.

The self-evaluation analysis template asks you to suggest whom you would like to meet during the visit. You are not required to name those people, but rather suggest a list of criteria (for example, two teaching staff involved in a particular module). The QAA officer will discuss these criteria with the Prime Organisation at the preparatory meeting.

Please note that the preparatory meeting is between the QAA officer and the Prime Organisation; auditors are not required to attend.

Additional documentation
If you ask for any additional documentation before the visit, you should read and comment on that too.

The self-evaluation analysis template also asks you to consider whether you need any additional documentation in order to complete the audit effectively. Again, you are not required to name particular documents (although you may be able to); it is appropriate to ask the QAA officer if the Prime Organisation can give further information about, for example, arrangements for external moderation. You must be able to justify any request for additional documentation.

The QAA officer will discuss your requests for additional documentation with the Prime Organisation at the preparatory meeting, or by email subsequently if necessary. If you ask for the documentation to be available before the audit visit you should read it beforehand.

The audit visit

The audit visit gives you the opportunity to test your understanding and interpretation of the self-evaluation by reference to other sources of evidence, including written documentation and meetings with staff and candidates. Through triangulation, you are able to develop your understanding of the programmes and Prime Organisation and, ultimately, judge whether or not the programmes and Prime Organisation meet the expectations set out in the key reference documents.

The timetable for the visit will be discussed at the preparatory meeting. Normally a visit will last two and a half days. During the first two days, you will meet groups of staff, placement providers, employers, mentors and candidates, and spend time in private reading documentation, including a sample of candidate work, and discussing your findings. You may also wish to meet employers and/or representatives from placements. On the final half-day, the QAA officer joins the audit team to meet in private to discuss and agree your findings. An indicative timetable for an audit visit is set out in Annex G.

Given that candidates and placement providers can be dispersed across a wide geographical area, some meetings may have to be organised through telephone conferencing, videoconferencing or other appropriate electronic methods.

During the visit you will need to see a sample of candidate work to determine whether:

- a formative assessment (to be known as the 'development review') is carried out for each candidate on the EYPS pathways and meets the requirements set out in the Teaching Agency's *Handbook for Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) Prime Organisations and their delivery partners*
- summative assessment of each pathway can enable the candidate to show achievement of all EYPS standards
- moderation of assessment outcomes is provided that incorporates internal and external processes in line with Teaching Agency expectations.

The QAA officer will agree the range and nature of candidate work to be provided at the preparatory meeting.

Your role is not to repeat or second-guess the work of external examiners or moderators. The Prime Organisation will supply the minimum sample of candidate work necessary to demonstrate the achievement of EYPS outcomes. The samples of work or assessment records should also reflect the four compulsory elements of the assessment process.

The role of the internal facilitator at the visit is primarily to provide an effective liaison between you and the Prime Organisation's staff and candidates (see Annex D). More specifically, the internal facilitator may:

- act as the primary contact during the quality audit between the Prime Organisation undergoing audit, the consortium of delivery partners and the QAA auditors
- provide the auditors with advice and guidance, any supporting documentation at the visit and, thereafter, further sources of information
- provide advice and guidance to the auditors on institutional structures, policies, priorities and procedures
- ensure that the Prime Organisation has a good understanding of the matters raised by the auditors, thus contributing to the effectiveness of the quality audit and to the subsequent enhancement of quality and standards
- coordinate and collate the documentary evidence to provide to the audit team.

The lead auditor and the internal facilitator need to maintain regular communication throughout the visit to ensure the internal facilitator is able to fulfil their role effectively. Normally this involves a short meeting with the internal facilitator and the auditors at the beginning and end of each day of the visit.

The timetable for the visit may change during the visit depending on its progress. Auditors are collectively responsible for gathering, verifying and sharing evidence in order that they arrive at a common, unanimous judgement. The auditors will, therefore, operate as a team, and not, for example, hold meetings with staff individually.

Meetings with candidates are strictly confidential between the auditors and the candidates; no comments will be attributed to individuals. Staff of the Prime Organisation, or any of its delivery partners, are not permitted to attend meetings with candidates.

Findings and formal judgments

On the final half day of the visit, the audit team will meet in private to discuss and agree findings. Both auditors are equal members of the team when reaching conclusions. As an experienced auditor, the lead auditor will advise on process, but judgements and recommendations must be arrived at together as equal team members. The agenda for the final meeting is normally informal and may vary from audit to audit. It should allow the auditors to discuss each of the seven areas described in Section 2 (or a subset of these, where applicable), leading to the identification of any strengths, examples of good practice and areas for development.

We define 'strengths' as things which you regard as making a particularly positive contribution to the provision of EYPS training and education. 'Good practice' is practice which is innovative, successful in achieving positive results, and sustainable in that it may be repeated or made routine.

The discussion will culminate with a formal judgement on each of the following areas.

- The soundness of the Prime Organisation's present and likely future management of the accreditation standards of awards and links to the EYPS standards (quality criteria 1, 2, 3 and 6 – see Annex B).
- The soundness of the Prime Organisation's present and likely future management of the quality of the learning opportunities and support available to EYPS candidates (quality criteria 1, 2, 3, 4 and 7).
- The soundness of the Prime Organisation's present and likely future management of the quality of the assessment and moderation systems and processes for EYPS (quality criteria 1, 2 and 3).
- The soundness of the Prime Organisation's present and likely future management of candidate data, financial data, internal staff and infrastructure (quality criteria 2, 5, 6 and 7).

The judgement against each will be expressed as:

Commended	All or nearly all performance management criteria are met. Any unmet criteria do not present any immediate or serious risks to the delivery of the training and assessment of EYPS. The Prime Organisation consistently provides examples of good practice and added value. Candidates speak highly of the programme and a clear action plan is in place to support continuous quality improvement.
Meets expectations	All or nearly all performance management criteria are met. Any unmet criteria do not present any immediate or serious risks to the delivery of the training and assessment of EYPS.
Requires improvement to meet expectations	Most performance management criteria have been met but there are shortfalls in certain areas. These shortfalls do not present any immediate risks to the EYPS programme but require action to mitigate against serious problems over time.
Does not meet expectations	Many performance management criteria have not been met, posing a serious risk to the delivery of the training and assessment of EYPS. Action must be taken immediately to mitigate the risk. Failure to take action would be serious and could lead to the termination of the Prime Organisation's contract to deliver EYPS.

You will be expected to make recommendations against each of the judgements as appropriate. These must be clear, relevant and achievable. Recommendations will refer to:

- important matters that the auditors believe are currently putting quality and/or standards at risk and which require urgent corrective action (**essential** recommendations)
- matters that the auditors believe have the potential to put quality and/or standards at risk and require preventive or corrective action (**advisable** recommendations)
- matters that the auditors believe have the potential to improve the quality of learning opportunities and/or further secure the accreditation standards of awards (**desirable** recommendations).

In making your recommendations, you will need to make clear the approximate timescale within which a recommendation should be addressed so that the Prime Organisation can consider and act on the quality audit findings appropriately. For example, you may indicate that a recommendation should be addressed within three months, or before the start of the next financial year, or before any further candidates are recruited to a programme, and so on. Prime Organisations must take notice of these deadlines when putting together an action plan after the quality audit.

Progress against recommendations will form part of the Prime Organisations' monthly reporting and performance management framework.

At the end of the visit the lead auditor will give the Prime Organisation informal feedback. The informal feedback is considered non-binding, as you may amend your conclusions after further deliberation. However, you should not normally make recommendations about issues that have not been discussed during the visit.

Post-visit

> **Draft report**
> You draft your section of the report within **two weeks** of the end of the visit and send it to the lead auditor. The outline structure for the report is available in Annex H.

The report will include your judgements, with recommendations where appropriate, and highlight any strengths and examples of good practice. The structure of the report is set out in Annex H and follows closely the quality criteria in Annex B.

You must send your section of the draft report to the lead auditor within two weeks of the end of the visit. The lead auditor will then compile a full draft report within one week, and may send it back to you for further clarification on particular points. The lead auditor will then forward the draft to the QAA officer for editing. Following this, the QAA officer sends the draft report to the Prime Organisation for comment.

The Prime Organisation has four weeks, following receipt of the draft report from QAA, in which to tell QAA about any factual inaccuracies in the draft report and any resulting misinterpretation. Even if the Prime Organisation decides not to make any formal comments, it is entitled to the full four weeks and we will not take any further action until this time has passed.

Final report
We ask you to consider the Prime Organisation's comments and agree a final report.

If the Prime Organisation makes any comments on the draft report, we will refer these to you and ask whether the draft report should be amended. The lead auditor is responsible for preparing a formal response to the Prime Organisation's comments, to explain whether and how the auditors have responded.

The Prime Organisation's comments on the draft report should be confined to the facts as they existed at the time of the quality audit. The report will not be altered to take account of changes which have taken place since the visit.

Simultaneously the Prime Organisation is asked to complete an action plan showing how it intends to address any recommendations.

Checking the action plan
We ask you to consider if the action plan is adequate to address any conditions. The template for the action plan is given in [Annex I](#).

The Prime Organisation must produce an action plan showing how it intends to address your recommendations. The action plan is in a standard format, stating how and by when the Prime Organisation proposes to fulfil each recommendation. The action plan will be sent to the Teaching Agency for comment, and will form part of the final report.

The Prime Organisation must send the completed action plan to us by week nine following the audit visit. In some circumstances, for example where a Prime Organisation's action plan suggests that it will not fulfil a particular recommendation within an appropriate timescale, we may ask you to consider if the action plan needs revising. In such cases we will send the action plan back to the Prime Organisation for further work.

The final report and action plan are sent to the Teaching Agency. It is at this point that the outcomes are finalised. The Teaching Agency has complete discretion over whether or not it accepts the auditors' findings.

Implementing the action plan
The Teaching Agency may ask QAA to ask you for advice on the Prime Organisation's progress with the action plan.

The Prime Organisation is responsible for keeping the Teaching Agency informed of progress with its action plan. We may ask you for advice on progress, for example if the Teaching Agency needs expert assurance that a new policy or procedure demonstrates fulfilment of a particular recommendation.

Normally, Prime Organisations will be able to demonstrate that they are addressing or have addressed recommendations through the normal monthly monitoring of their contracts with the Teaching Agency. Occasionally, however, the Teaching Agency may ask us to undertake an additional monitoring audit to check on the fulfilment of recommendations. The need for

such a monitoring audit should be established when the report and action plan is sent to the Teaching Agency, although in some cases, for example where a Prime Organisation fails to meet the deadlines in their action plan, the need may arise later.

If the Teaching Agency asks us to undertake a full monitoring audit to check on the fulfilment of recommendations, we will normally ask one or both of the original auditors to take part. Additional fees will apply for this activity.

The Teaching Agency's *Handbook for Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) Prime Organisations and their delivery partners, Section 9* provides further information on how follow-up will occur if judgements of **requires improvement to meet expectations** or **does not meet expectations** are given.

> **Feedback**
> You give us feedback on your experience of EYPS Audit process

Feedback helps us to evaluate and improve EYPS Audit. After the Teaching Agency has made its decision on the quality audit, we will invite you to give us feedback on your experience. There is standard format for you to provide feedback. We also invite the Prime Organisation to give us feedback on the audit.

Annex A: QAA's mission, values and standards

QAA stands for the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

QAA's **vision** is:

- to be the authority on UK higher education standards and quality.

QAA's **mission** is:

- to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education.

QAA is **committed** to:

- the intrinsic worth of higher education
- the entitlements of students
- the public interest in higher education
- the importance of equality and diversity.

The intrinsic worth of higher education
We admire and support the research and teaching that takes place in universities and colleges across the UK. We respect the autonomy of UK universities and colleges, and believe that it fosters the diversity that is central to their success and international reputation. We also recognise that their primary role in maintaining academic standards and quality is vital to that autonomy. We rely upon their cooperation in our work, and in return provide valuable advice and support.

The entitlements of students
All students deserve a high quality learning experience. They have a right to a range of learning opportunities leading to a qualification that has recognised value and meets published national expectations. Students are our partners in quality assurance, and are experts not only on their own learning but also on issues of governance, policy and practice. We seek to harness that expertise in every aspect of our work.

The public interest in higher education
Students, their families and the wider public make a big investment in higher education. As well as helping students meet material aspirations and offering personal fulfilment, higher education enriches our society. We believe the public have a legitimate interest in ensuring that standards are safeguarded and quality maintained, and that we have a duty to clearly communicate our work to a wide audience.

The importance of equality and diversity
We believe that equality and diversity should be promoted through the services we provide, and that in our work we should be supportive, fair, just and free from discrimination. The higher education sector should lead the way in valuing the diverse contributions of all its staff, students and partners, and in developing and sharing good practice in this area.

QAA's **values** are:

- integrity
- professionalism
- accountability
- openness
- independence.

Integrity
We always aim to be fair, objective and honest in our work, basing our judgements on sound evidence.

Professionalism
We set high professional standards in everything we do, providing relevant and effective services that are trusted by all with an interest in UK higher education.

Accountability
Through safeguarding standards and driving improvements, we fulfil our responsibilities. We consult on the development of our work and assess its impact, seeking to provide a high level of service and to be responsive to external demands.

Openness
We are open and approachable about the work we do and how we do it, believing that this encourages trust and confidence. We publish full details of our review methods, as well as our reports on institutions. We are committed to communicating clearly and accessibly about all aspects of our work.

Independence
To fulfil our responsibilities we must be an independent voice in UK higher education, basing our work on expert, objective scrutiny and analysis.

QAA's **aims** are:

1   to meet students' needs and be valued by them
2   to safeguard standards in an increasingly diverse UK and international context
3   to drive improvements in UK higher education
4   to improve public understanding of higher education standards and quality.

More information about QAA is available on our website: www.qaa.ac.uk.

Annex B: Extract from the *Handbook for Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) Prime Organisations and their delivery partners* (Teaching Agency 2012)

Quality criteria

When the auditor makes their judgments they will take into account whether the expectations in each of the areas below have been met. The criteria act as guidance for the sorts of processes, structures, policies, procedures and outputs that each Prime Organisation should have in place to safeguard standards and quality. The auditor will decide whether the criteria have been addressed satisfactorily by the Prime Organisation, but they will also accept that a criterion could be met in different ways by different Prime Organisations.

The criteria are set out below.

1 Prime Organisation management of EYPS outcomes
• Systems and processes in place to source external moderators that are fit for purpose.
• Systems and processes are in place to review the external moderation reports and put recommendations into action as part of continuous quality improvement processes.
• Internal moderation systems and processes are fit for purpose and robust.
• The assessment process is well regarded by candidates.
• Candidates consider that the programme has been effective and useful in their professional development.
• The quality of assessment, moderation and outcomes meet performance management criteria.
• Early Years Professional destinations are tracked and systems and processes are in place to measure impact
• Early Years Professionals are supported when seeking employment.
2 Prime Organisation approach to quality improvement
• Action planning is an integral part of the Prime Organisation's approach, and processes are in place to allow for improvements to be made.
• Training opportunities related to the EYPS programme are available for staff.
• EYPS Prime Organisation forums are attended and actively contributed to.
• Systems and processes are in place to allow candidates to feed back on all elements of the EYPS programme.
• (If applicable) systems and processes are in place to allow placement settings to feed back on all elements of the EYPS programme.
• (If applicable) systems and processes are in place to allow candidates' employers to feed back on all elements of the EYPS programme.

3 Prime Organisation approach to the safeguarding and welfare of children

- Prime Organisation safeguarding policies are up to date, fit for purpose and implemented.
- Candidate training programmes contain specific safeguarding training and signposts to opportunities for continued development in this area.
- Candidate training materials contain clear and accurate information on the safeguarding and welfare of children and processes that should be followed.
- Assessor training materials contain clear and accurate information on the safeguarding and welfare of children and processes that should be followed within the context of EYPS assessment.
- Processes are in place for ensuring that all candidates have undergone a Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) check prior to undertaking a placement.

4 Prime Organisation approach to candidate support

- Candidate support processes are well regarded by candidates.
- Online information systems are updated regularly with timely, accessible and accurate information.
- The mentor systems and management in place are fit for purpose.
- Mentor availability and support is well regarded by candidates.
- Appropriate placement selection, management, quality assurance and review processes are in place.
- Candidates judge that the programme helps them to clarify their understanding of the EYPS standards and how to meet them.
- Feedback and follow-up from the development review are effective and well regarded by candidates.

5 Prime Organisation approach to data management

- Financial information is timely, accessible and accurate.
- Information on candidate numbers, at any one point, is timely, accessible and accurate (for example allocations, recruitment, deferrals and withdrawals).
- Information on candidate profiles is timely, accessible and accurate (for example diversity data).
- Information on candidate outcomes is timely, accessible and accurate.
- The Prime Organisation complies with contractual data protection requirements across the whole EYPS programme.

6 Prime Organisation approach to recruitment, selection and retention of candidates

- Clear marketing and recruitment strategy is in place (including information on targeting under-represented groups and areas of disadvantage).
- Recruitment and selection information is timely, accessible and accurate.
- Recruitment and selection processes result in applicants who meet the entry requirements for the programme.
- Appropriate steps are taken to attract applications from a wide range of prospective Early Years Professionals from across the allocated region.
- The induction, needs analysis and action planning processes meet candidates' requirements.
- Candidates are well prepared and informed about EYPS and working in the early years sector when they start the programme.
- Candidates are pursuing the appropriate pathway to EYPS.
- Processes are in place to monitor and review individual candidate journeys, and links between recruitment, selection and retention are managed.

7 Prime Organisation staff management and infrastructure

- Internal communication processes are in place to ensure the dissemination of important information to administrators, project managers, course leaders, assessors, moderators, candidates and settings.
- Training facilities, buildings, materials and resources ensure accessibility and are fit for purpose.
- (If applicable) the Prime Organisation has clear processes in place to monitor and quality assure each delivery partner in a consortium.
- Delivery partners are meeting performance management and quality assurance requirements.

Annex C: Key reference points for EYPS Audit

EYPS reference point

In addition to the Quality Code described below, the key reference point for EYPS Audit will be the current version of the *Handbook for Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) Prime Organisations and their delivery partners* published by the Teaching Agency. This handbook is regularly updated, and as such it is important that you confirm you are making reference to the most recent edition when reaching judgements and making recommendations. The handbook contains information on all aspects of the delivery of EYPS programmes, including performance indicators and criteria for judgements in quality audit.

Quality Code and other external reference points

In considering the Prime Organisation's management of its higher education provision as it relates to EYPS programmes, EYPS Audit teams will be guided by the expectations of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) [4] and other external reference points.

Quality Code

The Quality Code is a set of nationally agreed reference points that inform and support the effective management of academic standards and quality in all higher education programmes. It is developed in collaboration with the higher education sector and published by QAA. Its constituent parts are listed below.

- The two frameworks for higher education qualifications,[5] which include descriptions of the levels of higher education qualifications. These are *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland.*
- The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code), which consists of 18 sections and sets out precepts for different aspects of academic standards, quality and information provision for institutions delivering higher education.
- Subject benchmark statements,[6] which relate mainly to bachelor's and master's degrees and describe: the principles, nature and scope of a particular subject; the subject knowledge, subject-specific skills and generic skills to be developed; and the forms of teaching, learning and assessment to be expected - as well as setting the minimum (threshold) standard that is acceptable within that subject.
- Award benchmark statements, such as the *Foundation Degree qualification benchmark* which provides a description of the characteristics of a Foundation Degree.
- The guidelines for preparing programme specifications,[7] which guide institutions delivering higher education in planning the intended learning outcomes of an academic programme.

QAA also publishes a range of guidance documents that Prime Organisations are encouraged to consult. These include guidelines on the accreditation of prior learning,[8] and

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[4] For more information about the elements of the Quality Code and other guidance documents, see www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/pages/default.aspx.
[5] www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/qualifications/pages/default.aspx
[6] www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/subject-guidance/pages/subject-benchmark-statements.aspx
[7] www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/subject-guidance/pages/programme-specifications.aspx
[8] www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/guidelines-on-the-accreditation-of-prior-learning-September-2004.aspx

on personal development planning, progress files and the *Higher education credit framework for England*.

A more detailed description of the current version of the Quality Code is provided in the glossary in [Annex J](#).

The new Quality Code will serve the same purpose as the Academic Infrastructure and continue to make clear what is expected of all institutions delivering higher education, as well as providing guidance on good practice in setting and maintaining academic standards, assuring and enhancing academic quality, and providing information about higher education.

The Quality Code is structured in three parts:

- standards
- quality
- public information.

In 2011-12, where appropriate, EYPS Audit will be based on the Academic Infrastructure as currently defined, but Prime Organisations should be aware of the intention to move to adopting the Quality Code and an agreed period of phasing-in new sections. Hence audits conducted from 2012-13 onwards will be based on elements of any published section of the Quality Code if the published date for implementation by higher education providers has been reached. The implementation date will be stated as some time later than the initial publication, to provide transition time to ensure the effective adoption of each element of the Quality Code as it is published.

Other external reference points

In this handbook the terms Quality Code/Academic Infrastructure also refer to other external reference points for [Qualifications and Credit Framework/National Qualifications Framework](#)[9] (QCF/NQF) qualifications. The audit process and the possible judgements are the same regardless of whether the Quality Code, Academic Infrastructure and/or other external reference points are used.

The *Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area* (Bologna Framework) has generic qualification descriptors for each level, known as the 'Dublin descriptors'. These have been developed as a set and are intended to be read with reference to each other. They are primarily intended for use in the alignment of qualifications and hence national frameworks. National frameworks may themselves have additional elements or outcomes, and may have more detailed and specific functions. The two frameworks for higher education qualifications align with the Dublin descriptors.

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[9] www.ofqual.gov.uk/qualifications-assessments/89-articles/250-explaining-the-national-qualifications-framework

Table 1: Examples of the typical higher education qualifications at each level of the FHEQ and the corresponding cycle of the Bologna Framework.

Typical higher education qualifications within each level	FHEQ level	Corresponding FQ-EHEA cycle
Doctoral degrees (eg, PhD/DPhil (including new-route PhD), EdD, DBA, DClinPsy)	8	Third cycle (**end of cycle**) qualifications
Master's degrees (eg, MPhil, MLitt, MRes, MA, MSc)	7	Second cycle (**end of cycle**) qualifications
Integrated master's degrees (eg, MEng, MChem, MPhys, MPharm)		
Postgraduate diplomas		
Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)		
Postgraduate certificates		
Bachelor's degrees with honours (eg, BA/BSc Hons)	6	First cycle (**end of cycle**) qualifications
Bachelor's degrees		
Professional Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE)		
Graduate diplomas		
Graduate certificates		
Foundation Degrees (eg, FdA, FdSc)	5	Short cycle (**within or linked to the first cycle**) qualifications
Diplomas of Higher Education (DipHE)		
Higher National Diplomas (HND)		
Higher National Certificates (HNC)	4	
Certificates of Higher Education (CertHE)		

Annex D: The auditors and internal facilitator

Role descriptions and person specifications

Role title: Lead auditor

Role purpose
The lead auditor manages the EYPS Audit in each of the Prime Organisations to which he/she is assigned. Key responsibilities, in addition to those of auditor, include:

- in consultation with the QAA officer, discussing and agreeing with the Prime Organisation the agenda that forms the basis of the audit
- discussing and agreeing focused audit activities with the Prime Organisation and the auditors to ensure effective use of time
- organising and coordinating audit activities to ensure that the conclusion, recommendations and judgements are sound and evidence-based
- liaising effectively with all stakeholders through face-to-face, telephone, email and other written communications to ensure the smooth running of each audit
- providing additional training for auditors, if necessary
- making effective use of QAA's secure electronic folder system throughout the audit to ensure that a full evidence base is available to auditors and QAA staff in a timely manner and is archived promptly
- respecting protocols on confidentiality
- producing high quality reports that inform all stakeholders of conclusions, recommendations and judgements, where appropriate.

Person specification
Knowledge and understanding to include:

- current or recent knowledge and understanding of current issues affecting Prime Organisations
- awareness of current higher education teaching methods and curricula
- knowledge and understanding of the assurance of standards and quality
- awareness of the role of professional, statutory and regulatory bodies in programme accreditation
- experience of liaison with senior management and a range of staff at other levels.

Skills include ability to:

- manage small teams (with experience in either higher or further education or in other employment)
- work within tight timescales and to strict deadlines
- chair meetings
- communicate effectively in face-to-face interaction
- train others in methods of work
- produce clear and succinct reports on time
- use word-processing software
- communicate electronically, including emails, attachments and the use of web mail
- be flexible and devise sound plans when situations change with little notice.

Role title: auditor

Role purpose
Auditors contribute to evaluating the standards and quality of EYPS provision through a peer audit process. They engage in a variety of activities designed to gather and analyse evidence so that they can arrive at considered conclusions, recommendations and judgements. These outcomes help the Prime Organisation being audited to prepare an action plan to further enhance its EYPS provision within a higher education context. Key responsibilities include:

- reading, analysing and preparing written commentaries of the self-evaluation document submitted by the Prime Organisation and any other documents sent in advance of the audit
- adhering to the audit schedule agreed between the Prime Organisation, QAA officer and lead auditor
- participating in visits to the Prime Organisation and, where appropriate, visits to delivery partners in order to gather, share, test and verify evidence
- drawing conclusions and making recommendations and judgements on the academic standards achieved and the quality of the learning opportunities provided
- recording evidence gathered from a variety of audit activities and submitting this to the QAA secure folder in a timely fashion
- drafting sections of the report that reference evidence gathered during the audit
- respecting protocols on confidentiality
- contributing to and commenting on the audit report, to agreed schedules and deadlines
- being available for the whole period of the audit for which they have been selected, and committing to complete all processes of the audit once they have embarked upon it.

Person specification
Knowledge and understanding to include:

- current or recent experience, knowledge and understanding of higher education provision
- knowledge of, and familiarity with, the Quality Code and other external reference points, such as the current edition of the *Handbook for Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) Prime Organisations and their delivery partners*, and those of other relevant professional, statutory and regulatory bodies
- understanding of programme entry requirements and the ability to interpret progression statistics, including withdrawal, transfer and failure rates and destinations data
- familiarity with academic support strategies and the functions of academic tutorials
- experience of examining and/or verification procedures/processes (preferably including external examining or external verification).

Skills include the ability to:

- conduct meetings and interviews with staff
- conduct meetings with a range of current and former groups of candidates
- write succinctly and coherently
- meet tight timescales and deadlines
- work effectively as a member of a team
- work courteously and professionally

- maintain confidentiality
- communicate electronically, including emails, attachments and the use of web mail.

Role title: internal facilitator

Role purpose
The internal facilitator ensures the smooth running of the audit by acting as the single point of contact between the Prime Organisation staff and the QAA officer. Key responsibilities include:

- providing effective liaison between the auditors and the Prime Organisation staff
- ensuring that the auditors obtain accurate, timely and comprehensive information about the educational provision and the Prime Organisation context
- helping the auditors to come to a clear and accurate understanding of the structures, policies, priorities and procedures of the Prime Organisation, and the nature of the provision under scrutiny
- ensuring that auditors are provided with appropriate evidence to allow them to reach conclusions, recommendations and judgements
- bringing additional information to the attention of the auditors and correcting factual inaccuracy
- observing objectively
- communicating clearly with the auditors and the Prime Organisation
- respecting protocols on confidentiality
- establishing effective relationships with the QAA officer and the auditors, as well as with the Prime Organisation staff
- participating in the Prime Organisation's preparations for the audit
- attending all meetings other than those with candidates, employers and/or placement providers, or where judgements are discussed
- monitoring the pattern of audit activities
- maintaining regular telephone and/or email contact with the lead auditor to ensure that auditors are receiving the information or documents that they need, particularly for off-site analysis.

Person specification
Knowledge and understanding to include:

- thorough knowledge of the structure, policies, priorities, procedures and practices of the Prime Organisation
- experience of quality assurance
- knowledge and understanding of EYPS.

Skills include the ability to:

- locate cogent information
- maintain confidentiality
- deal conscientiously with detail
- make accurate records of discussions
- meet exacting timescales and deadlines
- work effectively with auditors
- continue to work effectively as part of the Prime Organisation team after EYPS Audit has been completed

- communicate electronically, using emails, attachments and web mail
- influence colleagues within their Prime Organisation and take forward the action plan.

Annex E: QAA training and development policy for audit team members

Introduction

This policy applies to audits in any part of the UK.

QAA recognises that those selected to be audit team members are drawn from a pool of highly qualified, experienced and well-respected personnel who already have skills in the core activities of audit. In particular, they are selected for their highly developed and practised skills of written and oral communication, conduct of meetings, analysis and synthesis of a wide variety of information, and evaluation leading to sound judgement. Auditor training seeks to build on these skills to assist audit team members in applying them to a specific audit process.

Policy on training and development

The training and development policy will be published. Its aim will be to ensure that audit team members receive suitable training. This means training that:

- is appropriate
- is accessible and relevant
- is economical in the use of their time
- takes account of individual learning styles
- takes due account of prevailing legislation
- is relevant to all participants, irrespective of gender, age, ethnicity or disability
- enables them to hone and apply core skills that are essential for a QAA audit.

What can auditors expect of QAA?

Audit team members can expect QAA to:

- provide an induction to the work of QAA, its mission, standards and values
- train them in the specialist skills needed to carry out audit work (this includes effective use of the electronic communications system set up to support audits)
- assist them in developing sufficient confidence to undertake their first audit
- provide training reference materials to use after completion of training
- provide QAA documents needed to conduct the audit to which they are assigned
- add them to QAA's mailing list for receipt of relevant new QAA publications and information about QAA's work
- provide them with opportunities to contribute to the evaluation of the audit methods in which they have participated.

Assuming successful completion of initial training, QAA will:

- provide audit team members with feedback on their performance of their first audit and, where appropriate, guidance on their further development
- encourage each team member to engage in the further development of his/her role as a auditor
- take into account prior QAA auditor training and experience when training audit team members to carry out QAA audit methods that are new to them.

Benefits for institutions and other organisations subject to audit

Adherence to this policy should provide the following benefits:

- confidence that audit team members are properly trained to undertake audit work professionally and confidently
- the consistent application of each audit method
- consistency in the messages about the audit method that the audit team members take back to their institutions.

Annex F: Indicative programme for a preparatory meeting

The agenda below is indicative and QAA considers it the minimum necessary to enable the Prime Organisation and the QAA officer to establish the requirements of the audit. The QAA officer and the Prime Organisation may feel it appropriate to include additional items. In practice, the programme for each Prime Organisation may vary.

The QAA officer should have the opportunity to meet a group of staff who will be involved directly in the audit, such as the internal facilitator. The QAA officer will give further guidance about who might attend the preparatory meeting.

It is important that Prime Organisations prepare to discuss each item on the agenda by, for example, ensuring that they have up to date information available at the meeting. The preparatory meeting provides staff with a valuable opportunity to clarify their understanding of the audit method.

Table 2: Indicative programme for a preparatory meeting

Activity	Suggested participants
Overview of EYPS: • a standard presentation about the method • questions from staff.	• head of the Prime Organisation (or a representative) and relevant members of the senior management team • staff responsible for managing and delivering the programme(s) • Prime Organisation's internal facilitator • representatives of delivery partners
How the audit will operate: • clarification of the scope of the audit process • questions from Prime Organisation staff • next steps	• staff responsible for managing the programme(s) • Prime Organisation's internal facilitator • representatives of delivery partners • candidate representatives
Detailed planning, including confirmation of the audit team's requirements for the visit: • questions arising from the initial analysis of the self-evaluation • confirmation that the statistical data is correct and accurate • auditors' requests for information to date • establishing the programme of audit activities • clarification of the availability of evidence, including candidate work • 'housekeeping' arrangements • remaining questions from Prime Organisation staff • next steps	• Prime Organisation staff responsible for managing the programme(s) • Prime Organisation's facilitator • representatives of delivery partners
End of meeting.	

Annex G: Indicative programme for an audit visit

An indicative programme for an EYPS Audit visit is set out below. It is provided here primarily to illustrate the balance between meetings with staff, candidates and other stakeholders, and the time that teams will spend scrutinising evidence in private. In practice, each visit will have a bespoke programme informed by several factors, including the availability of staff and candidates, and the topics/themes the audit team wishes to explore. The programme will be discussed at the preparatory meeting and confirmed by the QAA officer and lead auditor before the visit.

Day one

Time	Activity
0845	The audit team arrives at the Prime Organisations premises.
0900	A brief presentation by the Prime Organisation about its EYPS provision.
0915	The team develops a detailed work plan for the visit, including questions for staff and candidates (team and facilitator).
1100	The team meets relevant staff to discuss the approach to quality improvement, staff management and infrastructure, and data management.
1200	Scrutiny of evidence (team only).
1300	Lunch.
1400	The second meeting with relevant staff, to discuss the recruitment, selection and retention of candidates and safeguarding and well-being of children.
1530	The team meets or holds a telephone conference with a group of placement providers and mentors.
1630	Further scrutiny of evidence (team only).
1700	Team meeting (team and facilitator).
1800	Team departs.

Day two

Time	Activity
0845	The team arrives at the Prime Organisation's premises. Further scrutiny of evidence (team only).
1000	The team meets with a group of candidates, or holds telephone conference or other alternative meeting format.
1100	Further scrutiny of evidence (team only).
1200	The team meets with representative staff from delivery partners or holds telephone conference or other alternative meeting format (where appropriate).
1300	Lunch.
1400	The team summarises evidence and confirms that all areas have been addressed (team and facilitator). There may be an additional meeting with staff to follow up any outstanding issues.
1600	The team begins to draft key findings and prepare for the judgement meeting on day three.
1700	Team departs.

Day three

Time	Activity
0845	The team arrives at the Prime Organisation's premises. Further scrutiny of evidence (team only).
0930	Judgement meeting.
1200	Working lunch.
1300	Brief feedback meeting with Prime Organisation representatives.
1315	Team departs.

Annex H: Outline report structure

This annex sets out the key sections of the EYPS Audit report structure. A more detailed template will be provided electronically for the audit visit.

Foreword

Background and context to EYPS. [Text supplied]

Description of audit method

Including explanation of judgments that can be made. [Text supplied]

Introduction

Details of what has been audited and when.

A   Judgments and recommendations

[Bulleted free text]

B   Findings

Summary of main conclusions.

Strengths

Good practice

Areas for development

C   Commentary on the provision

EYPS outcomes
[Free text]

Approach to quality improvement
[Free text]

Approach to the safeguarding and welfare of children
[Free text]

Approach to candidate support
[Free text]

Approach to data management
[Free text]

Approach to recruitment, selection and retention of candidates
[Free text]

Staff management and infrastructure
[Free text]

D   Judgments and recommendations

[Referenced to paragraph numbers]

Meetings held

[List meetings held]

Key documentary evidence

[List key documents]

Annex I: Guidance notes on completing the action plan

After an audit the Prime Organisation will be asked to develop an action plan, set out in a format provided by QAA, describing how the Prime Organisation plans to take action on the findings of the audit. A template for the action plan can be found at the end of this annex.

Each row contains a separate point of good practice or area for development, each of which relates directly to the text of the report and echoes the wording of the good practice or recommendation identified in the report.

Each point of good practice and each recommendation must be 'SMART' (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound), so that it is able to be acted upon.
It must also be the responsibility of an individual or group, identified by title/role, and subject to an evaluation by a different individual or group to consider whether it has been effective in addressing the matter identified in the report.

The action plan forms part of the final published version of the report. It is important, therefore, that the action plan is completed by the Prime Organisation and signed by the head of the Prime Organisation in a timely fashion, and returned to QAA by the given deadline.

The action plan, its implementation and its impact will form part of the evidence base for any future audit activity. In the case of the audit action plan, it will also constitute a record of the Prime Organisation's commitment to take forward the findings of EYPS Audit.

Table 3: Deadlines for completion of action plans

Number of weeks after the visit	Action
+4 weeks	The Prime Organisation receives the draft report and action plan template.
+6 weeks	The Prime Organisation liaises with relevant staff to develop the action plan.
+9 weeks	The Prime Organisation **returns the completed action plan to QAA**, signed by the head of the Prime Organisation.
+10 weeks	QAA appends the completed action plan to the final report and proofreads the document.
+12 weeks	QAA produces the final report with the completed action plan.

The section headings in the action plan template are:

- good practice
- essential
- advisable
- desirable.

The first column is completed by the lead auditor and repeats precisely the wording of the good practice or recommendations identified in the conclusions of the report.

The following columns are completed by the Prime Organisation:

Action to be taken
Identify what the Prime Organisation proposes to do in response to the good practice or recommendation. Actions should be specific. Actions such as 'maintain', 'enhance' or 'continue' are difficult to identify a target date for, and consequently may not be completed or evaluated effectively and are therefore best avoided.

Target date
Set dates for when the actions proposed in the previous column will be completed. The more specific the action, the easier it will be to set a realistic target date.

Action by
Identify the role of the specific person/committee that is responsible for ensuring that the action is taken by the target date and can be held accountable for this.

Success indicators
Identify how the Prime Organisation and its delivery partners will know when an action has been successfully undertaken. If there is a specific action and a clear target date it will be easier to identify the success indicators.

Reported to
Identify the role of the person/committee that will monitor the success of the action. A clear designation helps to maintain accountability and ensure successful completion of the action plan.

Evaluation
This column **must** be completed **before** returning the action plan to QAA. Identify the processes or evidence that will be used by the Prime Organisation to evaluate the action taken, and how the Prime Organisation will consider whether it has been an appropriate means of addressing the matter identified in the report.

Due to the timescale for completing the action plan, it is not expected that any actions will have actually been completed by this stage. Therefore, identify the anticipated sources of evidence that will show how successful the action has been and what the outcomes of the action are.

Action plan template

[Prime Organisation] action plan relating to the Early Years Professional Status Audit [month/year]						
Good practice	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
In the course of EYPS Audit, the team identified the following areas of **good practice** that are worthy of wider dissemination within the Prime Organisation.						
• [List areas of good practice individually with paragraph references]						
Essential	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success Indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team agreed the following areas where it is **essential** for the Prime Organisation to take action:						
• [List areas of essential actions individually with paragraph references]						
Advisable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team agreed upon a number of areas where the Prime Organisation is **advised** to take action:						
• [List areas of advisable actions individually with paragraph references]						
Desirable	**Action to be taken**	**Target date**	**Action by**	**Success indicators**	**Reported to**	**Evaluation**
The team agreed the following areas where it would be **desirable** for the Prime Organisation to take action:						
• [List areas of desirable actions individually with paragraph references]						

Annex J: Glossary

Academic Infrastructure	The Academic Infrastructure is currently being revised, and from autumn 2011 is being replaced by the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code). The Academic Infrastructure is a set of national reference points, agreed with higher education providers, relating to effective practice in the setting and management of academic standards and quality in higher education. It comprises:
	• the *Code of practice* • the frameworks for higher education qualifications • subject benchmark statements • programme specifications.
	Further information about the Academic Infrastructure and its four elements is available at: www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/academicinfrastructure/pages/default.aspx.
	(See also **Quality Code** and **Other external reference points**.)
Academic standards	Academic standards are defined as the level of achievement a candidate has to reach in order to achieve a particular award or qualification. There are nationally agreed reference points for the academic standards of the various levels of higher education qualifications, set out in the frameworks for higher education qualifications published by QAA.
	The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ) is available to download at www.qaa.ac.uk/publications/informationandguidance/pages/the-framework-for-higher-education-qualifications-in-England-Wales-and-Northern-Ireland.aspx.
	An awarding body is responsible for the academic standards of all awards granted in its name. EYPS Audit is concerned with how Prime Organisations exercise any responsibilities they have for the academic standards of the awards that they deliver on behalf of their awarding bodies.
Action plan	After EYPS Audit, the Prime Organisation will be asked to develop an action plan, set out in a format provided by QAA, describing how the Prime Organisation plans to take action on the findings of the audit. The action plan forms part of the final version of the report that is sent to the Teaching Agency. The Teaching Agency will monitor progress with action plans through its standard contract monitoring processes.
	QAA will consider the implementation of the action plan through the next audit, unless it follows a **does not meet expectations** judgement, in which case the Teaching Agency may request that QAA undertake interim monitoring on its behalf.

Advisable recommendation	EYPS Audit reports will include recommendations about how a Prime Organisation might improve the management of its EYPS provision. Recommendations are categorised according to priority. Advisable recommendations relate to matters that the audit team believes have the potential to put quality and/or standards at risk and hence require preventative or corrective action.
Audit	In this handbook, 'audit' means Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) Audit. EYPS Audit evaluates all aspects of the Prime Organisation's management of its EYPS provision, and leads to judgements and a conclusion about the management of that provision within the context of the Prime Organisation's agreement with the Teaching Agency.
Audit team	The audit team normally comprises two auditors, one of whom is designated as lead auditor for the audit visit. EYPS Audit team selection will be made with reference to a Prime Organisation's EYPS provision, and QAA will avoid known conflicts of interest. QAA will send brief details of proposed teams to Prime Organisations not less than 11 weeks before the audit visit, allowing the Prime Organisation one week to draw QAA's attention in writing to any conflicts of interest they believe QAA has not identified.
Audit visit	Each EYPS Audit visit normally takes place over two and a half consecutive days. The final half-day is taken up by the audit team judgement meeting. The purpose of audit visits is to allow the audit team to scrutinise evidence on-site, meet Prime Organisation staff, candidates and other stakeholders (such as employers, placement providers and mentors, as appropriate), and consider the extent of the Prime Organisation's engagement with the appropriate external reference points. An indicative programme for an audit visit is provided in Annex G. The QAA officer will discuss and agree the programme for each visit with the Prime Organisation beforehand. During the visit itself, it is helpful if the Prime Organisation can make a room available as a workroom for the audit team and a separate and larger room available for meetings.
Auditor	Auditors are external peers with current or recent experience of managing, developing, delivering and/or assessing higher education in higher education institutions and/or Prime Organisations. Auditors are not employees of QAA, although they are paid for taking part in EYPS Audit. Auditors are trained specifically for the role by QAA (see Annex E).

Conflicts of interest	Auditors will not be eligible to be part of a team when a conflict of interest is identified. Conflicts include situations where: • they have worked for the Prime Organisation, or its delivery partners, during the last five years • they have undertaken external examining or consultancy work at the Prime Organisation or its collaborative partners during the last three years • they have recently made an application for a post at the Prime Organisation • a close relative is working or studying at the Prime Organisation • the Prime Organisation is an institution where the auditor himself/herself has studied for a higher education qualification (usually but not always deemed to present a conflict of interest).
Delivery partner	Prime Organisations may deliver EYPS programmes in collaboration with one or more delivery partners. Delivery partners are contracted to the Prime Organisation to deliver EYPS provision, and not to the Teaching Agency.
Desirable recommendation	EYPS Audit reports will include recommendations about how a Prime Organisation might improve the management of its EYPS provision. Recommendations are categorised according to priority. Desirable recommendations relate to matters that the audit team believes have the potential to enhance quality, build capacity and/or further secure standards.
Essential recommendation	EYPS Audit reports will include recommendations about how a Prime Organisation might improve the management of its EYPS provision. Recommendations are categorised according to priority. Essential recommendations refer to issues which the audit team believes are currently putting quality and/or standards at risk and hence require urgent corrective action. When essential recommendations are made at the end of the audit, they will be reflected in a judgement of **requires improvement to meet expectations** or **does not meet expectations**.

Evidence	EYPS Audit is an evidence-based process. This means that audit teams conduct their enquiries primarily by comparing evidence about the Prime Organisation's management of its EYPS provision with: its own policies and procedures; the contract it has with the Teaching Agency and the expectations of that contract (set out in the Teaching Agency's *Handbook for Early Years Professional Status (EYPS) Prime Organisations and their delivery partners*); and the Quality Code and/or other external reference points. Evidence comes in a wide range of forms and will vary from Prime Organisation to Prime Organisation. It is likely to include formal agreements, policies and procedures for the management of the candidate learning experience; external moderators' reports; validation documents; data about the Prime Organisation supplied by the Teaching Agency; audit and inspection reports by other organisations; and any information arising from meetings with staff and candidates. Some of this evidence, such as audit reports by other organisations, will be available publicly. Other elements should be supplied by the Prime Organisation as part of its self-evaluation or supporting evidence. Guidance on developing the self-evaluation will be provided to Prime Organisations. Once the audit team has read the self-evaluation document, the lead auditor may ask for more evidence to be available at the audit visit itself. The QAA officer will confirm at the preparatory meeting, or at least three weeks before the visit, precisely what further evidence is required.
Good practice	Good practice is practice that the EYPS Audit team regards as making a particularly positive contribution to the Prime Organisation's management of academic standards and/or academic quality, and which is worthy of wider dissemination within and/or beyond that Prime Organisation. EYPS Audit reports are likely to include features of good practice, which the Teaching Agency may choose to disseminate more widely.
Internal facilitator	For the audit visit, the Prime Organisation is invited to nominate an internal facilitator. The internal facilitator acts as a single point of contact between the Prime Organisation and the lead auditor, and through her/him the EYPS Audit team. The facilitator's responsibilities include: in consultation with the lead auditor, ensuring that auditors have the relevant evidence to enable them to conduct the audit (including when the team is off-site), bringing additional information to the attention of the auditors and helping to clarify any matters of fact. In addition, the facilitator attends all audit team meetings other than those with candidates, employers, mentors and delivery partners, or where judgements are discussed. The facilitator does not contribute to the audit report or its judgements. A full description of the internal facilitator role is given in Annex D.

Lead auditor	Lead auditors are contracted by QAA to manage EYPS Audits. They are selected for their experience of the management of higher education or EYPS provision. The lead auditor, in consultation with the QAA officer, manages the audit on behalf of QAA. The lead auditor is the Prime Organisation's first and main point of contact following the preparatory meeting. A full description of the role is given in Annex D.
Other external reference points	Other external reference points are the guidance or requirements provided by awarding bodies or other organisations, such as professional, statutory and regulatory bodies. These reference points and/or guidance can be similar in purpose to the Quality Code for qualifications on the frameworks for higher education qualifications. External reference points will deal with good practice in setting and maintaining academic standards, in assuring and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities for candidates, and in providing public information about those qualifications. Prime Organisations will be expected to show, where appropriate, evidence of the use of the other external reference points in the management of their EYPS provision. The audit process and the possible judgements are the same regardless of the set(s) of external reference points used.
Partnership agreement	Prime Organisations have formal contracts with the Teaching Agency and agreements with their delivery partners. These describe precisely the responsibilities of Prime Organisations and their partners for the delivery of the EYPS programme. These contracts and agreements will be very useful to EYPS Audit teams in identifying the parameters of each particular audit. Such agreements will form a key part of the Prime Organisation's self-evaluation.
Peer review	EYPS Audit is a peer review process. This means that the audits are conducted by people with current or very recent experience of managing, developing, delivering and/or assessing higher education or EYPS provision, or in the management of early years provision more widely. As a result, EYPS Audit reports are based upon a working knowledge of UK early years provision and higher education.
Preparatory meeting	Typically, six weeks before an audit visit there is a preparatory meeting between Prime Organisation staff, candidates (where possible) and the QAA officer. The purpose of the preparatory meeting is to develop the agenda for the visit and identify further evidence for the Prime Organisation to supply to the audit team, based on an analysis of the Prime Organisation's self-evaluation. This meeting also provides the opportunity for the Prime Organisation to ask any questions. An indicative agenda for the preparatory meeting is provided in Annex F.
Prime Organisation	The term 'Prime Organisation' refers to the lead university, college or other training organisation that is contracted by the Teaching Agency to deliver EYPS programmes. The Prime Organisation can do this alone or collaboratively with delivery partners.

Programme specifications	Programme specifications contain definitive information on the aims, intended learning outcomes and expected achievements of candidates, and auditors will explore their accuracy and usefulness to candidates and staff. In particular, auditors will wish to see how the Prime Organisation's programme specifications make use of reference points in the Quality Code to define expectations for teaching, learning, assessment and achievement. QAA publishes guidance for Prime Organisations on the development of programme specifications, available to download at www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/subject-guidance/pages/programme-specifications.aspx.
Public information	Public information is information about the academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities that is in the public domain. This includes information available to candidates and staff. EYPS Audit considers whether or not the information that the Prime Organisation is responsible for publishing about itself is accurate and complete.
QAA	The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) was established in 1997 and is an independent body funded by subscriptions from UK universities, Prime Organisations and other providers of higher education, and through contracts with the main UK higher education funding bodies.

QAA's mission is to safeguard standards and improve the quality of UK higher education. QAA does this by working with universities, Prime Organisations and other higher education providers to define academic standards and quality, and by carrying out and publishing reviews against these benchmarks.

More information about QAA's work is available on our website: www.qaa.ac.uk. |
| **QAA officer** | Each EYPS Audit is supported by a QAA audit support officer, known as the 'QAA officer'. The QAA officer's role is to ensure that the audit process is applied in accordance with this handbook, and that the Prime Organisation meets its obligations to provide information in a timely manner. The QAA officer will attend the preparatory meeting and one or more days of the audit visit for monitoring purposes. The QAA officer does not take part in the audit. |

Quality Code	The UK Quality Code for Higher Education (Quality Code) will be phased in from autumn 2011 to replace the Academic Infrastructure. The Quality Code is a set of national reference points, agreed with higher education providers, which make clear what is expected of all higher education providers (including Prime Organisations). The Quality Code also provides guidance on good practice in setting and maintaining academic standards, assuring and enhancing academic quality, and providing information about higher education. It is structured in three parts: standards, quality and public information. The UK Quality Code for Higher Education is available to download at www.qaa.ac.uk/assuringstandardsandquality/quality-code/pages/default.aspx. In 2011-12 EYPS Audit will be based on the Academic Infrastructure as currently defined, but Prime Organisations should be aware of the intention to move to adopting the Quality Code after its introduction and an agreed period of phasing-in new sections. Hence, audits conducted from 2012-13 onwards will be based on elements of any published sections of the Quality Code, if the published date for implementation by higher education providers has been reached. The implementation date will be later than the publication date in order to allow time for the transition to, and effective adoption of, each element of the Quality Code as it is published. The Quality Code is at the heart of the EYPS Audit process. EYPS Audit teams will draw upon it as a source of reference when considering Prime Organisations' approaches to the management of their higher education provision. EYPS Audit teams will ask Prime Organisations about their use of the sections of the Quality Code, and self-evaluations should include an account of this. Auditors will also explore Prime Organisations' use of relevant qualification and award descriptors and subject benchmark statements. However, as the large majority of subject benchmark statements apply to single subject honours degrees, their direct application by Prime Organisations will not always be appropriate.
Quality of learning opportunities	Quality of learning opportunities means the effectiveness of everything that is done or provided (the 'learning opportunities') by the Prime Organisation to ensure that its candidates have the best possible opportunity to meet the intended learning outcomes of their programmes and the academic standards of the awards they are seeking.
Recommendations	EYPS Audit reports will include recommendations for the Prime Organisation about how it might improve the management of its EYPS provision. Recommendations are for actions categorised as essential, advisable or desirable, according to priority.

Reports	EYPS Audit culminates in a report of the audit team's findings. Audit reports will be forwarded to the Teaching Agency. Prime Organisations will always be invited to provide comments on a draft report and to indicate any areas that they consider incomplete or inaccurate. The lead auditor and/or QAA officer will provide further guidance on the procedures for making comments on reports.
Self-evaluation	EYPS Audit is based on a self-evaluation document prepared by the Prime Organisation. The self-evaluation describes the responsibilities that the Prime Organisation has for the management of its EYPS provision, and evaluates the effectiveness of the policies and procedures it has adopted for discharging these responsibilities. An effective self-evaluation is key to the Prime Organisation gaining substantial benefit from EYPS Audit and to the smooth running of the audit. QAA therefore encourages Prime Organisations to give its preparation due time and attention. The preparation of a self-evaluation is a major focus of the briefing that QAA will arrange for Prime Organisations. In order to limit the burden of the exercise, Prime Organisations should as far as possible describe their responsibilities, processes and procedures with reference to a portfolio of existing documents, with any new material limited to a commentary that signposts and/or contextualises the existing material for the audit team.