



# Transnational Education Review

## Handbook

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# Transnational Education (TNE) Review: Summary

The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Scottish Funding Council, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, and the Department for the Economy Northern Ireland, in response to the increasing internationalisation of UK higher education (HE) and the growing involvement of UK HE providers in transnational education<sup>1</sup> (TNE), have contracted with QAA to assist them in ensuring that the international reputation of UK HE continues to be preserved and enhanced.

QAA will assist the funding bodies in increasing strategic engagement with governments and agencies in countries where UK providers are active, and will design and undertake review of TNE activity of UK providers. This Handbook outlines QAA's proposed approach to the review of UK TNE.

TNE Review is the review process through which QAA, on behalf of the funding bodies and the sector more broadly, promotes and maintains the academic quality and standards of UK HE delivered overseas. TNE Review is aligned with and complements HEFCE's Annual Provider Review in England and Northern Ireland, and QAA's Enhancement-Led Institutional Review in Scotland and Higher Education Review in Wales.<sup>2</sup> These are comprehensive processes looking at the total activity of UK HE providers, including their overseas provision. TNE Review focuses in more detail on the following aspects:

- testing the implementation of policies and processes for safeguarding standards and enhancing the quality of TNE provision
- gaining a detailed understanding of the TNE student experience
- disseminating good practice in TNE provision to the whole UK HE sector
- enhancing cooperation with quality assurance bodies in UK TNE host countries.

TNE Review adopts a proportionate and risk-based approach that recognises the diversity within the UK sector and in overseas regulation and processes. It is informed by the strategic engagement that QAA will undertake on behalf of the funding bodies and its own subscribers with overseas stakeholders, in order to strengthen cooperation and enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the quality assurance of TNE.<sup>3</sup> TNE Review adopts a country-based approach, and allows for flexibility to take into account the different operating environments in which TNE is offered. It has been designed by consideration of the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG).<sup>4</sup>

A three-year programme of TNE review will be developed with the funding bodies and reviewed every year. The three-year programme will identify those countries selected for review on the basis of a set of indicators, including an analysis of the UK TNE landscape, the strategic importance of different countries for UK HE, and the particular features of the local operating environment. Depending on the quantity of TNE provision in the selected country, a representative sample of TNE arrangements will be chosen for review or case study. The selection of delivery sites to be visited will take into account the need to focus on perceived risks to academic standards and the quality of the student experience, but also to facilitate the sharing of good practice.

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1 Transnational education refers to 'all types of higher education study programmes, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based.' UNESCO/Council of Europe definition in Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education (2001), available at: [www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/recognition/Code%20of%20good%20practice\\_EN.asp](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/highereducation/recognition/Code%20of%20good%20practice_EN.asp).

2 Or equivalent external quality assessment review carried out by a body on the European Quality Assurance Register under the Quality Assurance Framework for Wales.

3 Under the revised approach to quality assessment operated in England and Northern Ireland 'quality assurance' refers to the internal quality assurance undertaken by providers, while external quality assurance is referred to as 'quality assessment.' Although TNE Review is integrated and aligned with HEFCE and the Department for the Economy Northern Ireland [revised operating model for quality assessment](#), for the purpose of this Handbook 'quality assurance' will be taken to refer to the external oversight undertaken by quality assurance bodies. This is to remain in line with current practice in Wales and Scotland, current international terminology, including the ESG, and with the recurrent use in this document of the expression 'quality assurance bodies'.

4 Available at: [www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG\\_2015.pdf](http://www.enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf) (PDF, 622kb).

TNE review will be carried out by a team of peer reviewers including, where possible, a student reviewer. The reviewers will be guided by the Expectation of Chapter B10 of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code), *Managing Higher Education Provision with Others*.

TNE Review culminates in the publication of three types of report:

- quality assurance reports on the TNE arrangements of the individual providers selected for review, offering recommendations and highlighting areas of good practice
- case studies aimed at providing a better understanding of specific aspects of TNE provision and facilitating the sharing of good practice
- a country overview report, outlining the scale and scope of UK TNE in the selected country of review, the local operating environment and the key thematic findings from the review and case study visits.

# Chapter 1: Introduction and overview

## Introduction

QAA, on behalf of the Higher Education Funding Council for England, the Scottish Funding Council, the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales, and the Department for the Economy Northern Ireland, will undertake in-country reviews of UK TNE.

The purpose of this Handbook is to:

- state the aims of TNE Review
- set out the underlying approach
- give guidance to providers taking part in, and preparing for, TNE Review.

## Aims of TNE Review

The aims of TNE Review are to:

- provide the funding bodies with an expert insight into the capacity of UK providers to safeguard standards and improve the quality of their TNE provision
- safeguard the interest of TNE students and enhance their experience
- safeguard and enhance the international reputation of UK HE
- strengthen cooperation with local quality assurance authorities to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of quality assuring UK TNE and minimising the burden on UK providers.

The TNE Review process is designed specifically to address these aims by:

- reviewing how providers implement policies and processes for safeguarding standards and enhancing the quality of TNE provision
- gaining an understanding of the TNE student experience
- providing public information via reports and case studies and disseminating good practice in TNE provision
- liaising with host countries' quality assurance bodies to maximise the effectiveness and efficiency of TNE review.

## Outcomes and reference points

To achieve these aims QAA will look at selected provision in the country identified for review. Selected provision will be looked at through review visits and case study visits, which will take place either in the UK or at the overseas delivery site.

Review visits will be undertaken by peer reviewers either in the UK or at the overseas delivery site. This will result in recommendations and highlight good practice.

Recommendations will be made by referring to the Expectation of Chapter B10 of the Quality Code, *Managing Higher Education Provision with Others*. They will represent the reasonable conclusions that a review team is able to come to, based on the evidence and time available. Equally, good practice will represent the judgement made by the review team based on their experience, and the evidence and time available. Recommendations and good practices will be aimed at supporting the continuous development of individual providers and the sector.

TNE Review will use the Expectation of Chapter B10 of the Quality Code as its key reference point. Chapter B10 focuses specifically on what the academic community in the UK has identified as the fundamental expectation and sound practice for TNE provision.<sup>5</sup> Implicit in Chapter B10 is consideration of the baseline regulatory requirements agreed by the UK-wide Standing Committee for Quality Assessment, including ensuring that for all TNE arrangements quality and standards are safeguarded; they fit within an institution's broader strategic approach; appropriate governance arrangements are put in place; careful due diligence is undertaken in all dimensions (for example, academic, legal, financial); and that the interests of TNE students are protected at all times.<sup>6</sup>

Case study visits will be undertaken by QAA officers, and will focus on specific aspects of TNE provision that are of particular interest to the whole sector. They will seek to identify lessons that could benefit the whole sector and may also make recommendations to support the continuous development of the arrangements that are the subject of the case study.

## Scope and coverage

TNE Review encompasses the following:

- all UK HE provision delivered outside the UK leading to UK awards or credits at levels 4–8 of *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* and levels 7–12 of the *Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland*, and Higher National awards awarded by Pearson
- integrated foundation year programmes delivered overseas, which are designed to enable entry to specified degree programme or programmes on successful completion.

All HE providers in receipt of funding from the funding bodies and all Alternative Providers with Degree Awarding Powers will be subject to consideration for TNE review.

TNE review includes provision delivered through partnership arrangements, branch campuses, and distance learning. When looking at partnership arrangements, QAA will consider how the UK degree-awarding body is fulfilling its responsibility for safeguarding standards and enhancing the student experience when working with delivery partners. Partners will not be subject to review or scrutiny. QAA can advise if providers are uncertain about whether specific activities are in scope of a TNE Review.

## CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

**Do you agree with the outcomes of TNE review visits, that is recommendations and good practice aimed at supporting continuous development?**

**If not, what would you suggest should be the outcomes of TNE review visits?**

<sup>5</sup> The Expectation of Chapter B10 of the Quality Code that will guide TNE Review teams is: 'Degree-awarding bodies take ultimate responsibility for academic standards and the quality of learning opportunities, irrespective of where these are delivered or who provides them. Arrangements for delivering learning opportunities with organisations other than the degree-awarding body are implemented securely and managed effectively' (B10, p. 9), available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-b](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/assuring-standards-and-quality/the-quality-code/quality-code-part-b).

<sup>6</sup> The different review processes in the UK will be testing how institutions meet the baseline regulatory requirements in the Quality Assurance Framework in Wales, the Quality Enhancement Framework in Scotland and the Revised Operating Model for Quality Assessment in England and Northern Ireland.

# Chapter 2: A risk-based, efficient and flexible approach

## A country-based approach

TNE review is a country-based review process. A country-based approach is more practical than an institutional-focused approach given the extensive geographical spread of UK TNE around the world and the growing number of UK providers delivering TNE. A country-based approach means that rather than sending review teams to different parts of the world several times a year to look at different providers' TNE arrangements, a single review team is sent on an annual basis to look at selected provision in a country, or region, as part of a single trip.

This approach allows review teams to gain a better understanding of the local operating environment of the country selected for review, with its specific features, challenges, and opportunities. This is important to ensure an informed assessment of TNE arrangements in the context of their particular local regulatory and cultural context.

A country-based approach further enables QAA to establish stronger links with the host country quality assurance bodies. This, in turn, allows us to better coordinate quality assurance activities with the ultimate aim of lessening the quality assurance burden on TNE providers, and on the quality assurance bodies themselves.

## Selection of target countries

QAA, in consultation with the funding bodies, will develop a three-year programme of TNE review activity, which will be reviewed annually. The three-year programme will indicate the countries targeted for review and an indicative timeline. This will allow UK providers operating in the selected countries to prepare in advance should they be chosen for review or case study. The three-year programme will be revised annually to respond to evolving national and international priorities, and emerging risks, including changes that might affect host countries selected for review. This may have an impact on the timeline of the planned TNE review and/or the destination of TNE review.

When selecting countries, particular consideration will be given to those with a significant amount of UK TNE provision and/or of growing strategic importance for UK HE. We will also take into account concerns raised by host countries' agencies, as well as the extent to which QAA can rely on the oversight of local quality assurance bodies. Consideration will also be given to whether and how recently a country has been already selected for review. In particular, the three-year programme of TNE review activity will be informed by:

- the Aggregate Offshore Record (AOR)<sup>7</sup> collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) in the country/ies selected for review
- TNE-related data and information collected through other review processes, including Annual Provider Review in England and Northern Ireland, Enhancement-Led Institutional Review in Scotland and Higher Education Review in Wales
- an assessment of strategic importance for UK HE, including through consultation with the sector and sector bodies
- understanding of local operating environments and local intelligence that allows QAA to identify
  - those countries with less developed or different quality assurance systems, where TNE might require more scrutiny
  - those countries with developed or compatible systems that offer scope for cooperation, including data and information sharing, joint review activity, or recognition of decisions
  - countries in which authorities have concerns about UK TNE provision.

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<sup>7</sup> The Aggregate Offshore Record (AOR) has been collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) since 2007-08 from subscribing higher education providers in the devolved administrations of the United Kingdom. The AOR is collected in respect of students studying wholly outside the UK who are either registered with the reporting provider or who are studying for an award of the reporting provider. Information is currently collected on the location, provision and numbers of students. Available at: [www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c16052/introduction/](http://www.hesa.ac.uk/collection/c16052/introduction/).

## Selection of delivery sites

Once the target country is selected, QAA will identify all UK TNE provision in that country. Until a revised AOR that includes student data at delivery site/partner and programme level is available, QAA will carry out its own survey of all degree-awarding bodies' TNE activity in the country/ies selected for review. If the scale of provision in the country is wider than can be covered by TNE Review, QAA will choose a representative sample of TNE arrangements. The sample will include risk areas, for example provision of significant scale or complexity, a range of provision types, good practice and specific aspects of TNE provision to inform case studies.

The selection will be informed by information, data, and intelligence gathered from:

- a survey of all UK TNE provision in the selected country/ies of review carried out by QAA – once a revised AOR, including student data at delivery site/partner and programme level, is available QAA will stop carrying out its own survey
- TNE-related data and information collected through other review processes, including Annual Provider Review in England and Northern Ireland, Enhancement-Led Institutional Review in Scotland and Higher Education Review in Wales
- an understanding of the diversity and needs of UK providers, and communication with TNE providers themselves
- local quality assurance authorities, including their perceptions of risk and their quality assurance decisions, and other stakeholders such as professional, statutory, and regulatory bodies (PSRBs).

Figure 1 provides a visual summary of the key steps in the selection of TNE provision to be looked at either for review or case studies.

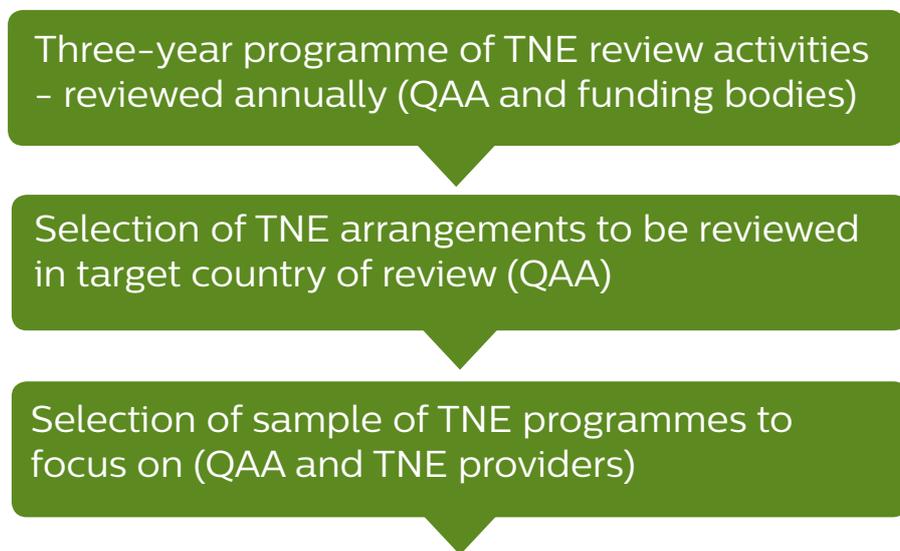


Figure 1 Selection of TNE provision

## Cooperation with host country quality assurance bodies

Cooperation with local quality assurance bodies is a key feature of the approach to TNE Review. Whenever possible, QAA will liaise with local authorities to enhance the efficiency of TNE Review and avoid duplicating efforts. Cooperation will be particularly sought in the areas of:

- information, data, and intelligence sharing
- undertaking forms of joint-review activity
- recognising each other's quality assurance decisions.

Host countries' quality assurance bodies may hold current and comprehensive data and information about in-bound TNE provision. QAA will seek to rely on this data and information whenever possible. This will reduce the information collection burden on providers. QAA will also seek host countries' agencies' knowledge and intelligence to inform the selection of providers and delivery sites to be visited.

QAA will also explore the possibility of undertaking joint-review activity. This will help to reduce the number of review visits that TNE providers will undergo by combining the visit of the home and host country's agency. The possibility for joint-review activity, and the specific form joint-review will take, will depend on the particular operating environment in which the local quality assurance body operates. It will also include factors such as the host country review schedule. Where joint review is not possible, QAA will offer the host country quality assurance body the opportunity to join review and case study visits as observers.

Whenever local quality assurance bodies have frameworks for quality assuring in-bound TNE in place, QAA will consistently seek to make progress towards recognising their quality assurance decisions. This will prevent the need to undertake future TNE review in those countries. Cooperating in data and information sharing and undertaking joint-review activity may constitute a preliminary step toward recognising other agencies' quality assurance decisions.

## **CONSULTATION QUESTIONS**

**Are there other criteria that should be considered in selecting the geographical destination of TNE review?**

**Are there other criteria that should be considered in selecting the TNE arrangements for review and case study purposes?**

## Chapter 3: Conducting the review

### The TNE review team

TNE review will be conducted by a review team comprising two reviewers, including a student wherever possible. The review will be overseen by a QAA International Review Manager.

TNE reviewers will be selected from QAA's pool of trained reviewers, which will include reviewers with specific experience of TNE. QAA peer reviewers have current or recent senior-level expertise and experience in the management and/or delivery of UK HE provision. This expertise and experience includes the management and/or administration of quality assurance arrangements. Student reviewers are recruited from among students or sabbatical officers at UK HE providers who have experience of participating, as a representative of students' interests, in contributing to the management of academic standards and/or quality. The cohort of reviewers appropriately reflects the diversity of the sector, including geographical location, size and type of providers, as well as reflecting those from diverse backgrounds.

The selection of reviewers for a particular round of TNE review will take into account their experience and knowledge of the target country of review and/or their experience of particular aspects of the TNE provision being reviewed during that particular TNE round. Note that TNE student reviewers might or might not have had direct experience of studying on TNE programmes.

QAA's International Review Manager will brief the review team soon after their appointment about the TNE review process and the operating environment of the country of review. Whenever possible, QAA will involve the host country's quality assurance authorities in briefing the review team.

QAA's International Review Manager will manage the whole TNE review process, guiding the team and the providers through all stages and ensuring that approved procedures are followed. The QAA International Review Manager will also liaise with the local quality assurance bodies and authorities, select the TNE provision to be looked at through review or case studies, carry out case study visits, and lead the development of the final country overview report.

### Desk-based analysis

TNE review comprises two stages: desk-based analysis, and review and case study visits.

QAA will ask providers selected for review to submit a set of existing information outlining their policies and processes for safeguarding the standards and enhancing the quality of their TNE provision. Providers will be asked to document how these are implemented in the specific delivery site selected for review. An indicative sample of the information set likely to be requested is outlined in Annex 2.

The two reviewers will then conduct a preliminary desk-based analysis of the provider's submission and other information and data, such as:

- outcomes of other reviews, including Annual Provider Review in England and Northern Ireland, Enhancement-Led Institutional Review in Scotland and Higher Education Review in Wales
- reports and information collected from local quality assurance bodies, and PSRBs.

QAA will ask providers selected for case studies to submit existing information related to the specific focus of the case study. This information will vary depending on the theme of the case studies, but the focus will be on understanding challenges, lessons learned and good practice. The International Review Manager at QAA will analyse this information.

On the basis of this preliminary desk-based analysis, the two reviewers and the International Review Manager will decide whether any additional information might be needed and whether the review or case study visit will take place in the UK or at the overseas delivery site. It might also be possible for the review team to decide that it is possible to complete the review or case study only by video-conference. This is expected to be the case in particular for case studies.

## **Review and case study visits**

The number of visits to be undertaken will vary depending on the country selected and the extent and type of UK provision. However, it is expected that an average TNE review will involve visits to six or seven providers in the UK (including case study visits) and a similar number of visits to overseas delivery sites.

Review visits, either in the UK or overseas, will be conducted by the two reviewers and managed by the International Review Manager. They will normally take place over one day for each provider, and will involve meetings with staff, including senior management, teaching and administrative staff, and students. The review team will use communication technology, such as video-conferencing so that it can meet staff and students based at the overseas delivery site during visits in the UK, or vice versa with staff in the UK undertaking visits overseas. Review visits will focus on issues highlighted by the desk-based analysis and will seek to gain a clear sense of the experiences and view of students.

Case study visits, either in the UK or overseas, will be undertaken by the International Review Manager. Case studies will focus on specific aspects of TNE provision, seeking to identify lessons and good practice that could benefit the whole sector. They may also make recommendations to support the continuous development of the arrangements that are the subject of the case study. Case study visits will normally take place over half a day, and involve a single meeting with selected members of staff involved in the specific aspect being considered.

## **CONSULTATION QUESTIONS**

**Do you agree on the range of information requested from providers selected for review?  
(see Annex 2)**

**Is there additional information the TNE review team should be looking at?**

## Chapter 4: The review process in detail

This part of the Handbook explains the activities that providers might expect to carry out to prepare for and take part in a TNE review.

### First contact and survey of TNE activity

Each year QAA will agree with the funding bodies a three-year programme of review setting out the TNE review activity planned for the three years ahead. QAA will notify all UK degree-awarding bodies of the three-year programme of review as soon as this is agreed with the funding bodies. The three-year programme of TNE review activities will be reviewed and confirmed on an annual basis to allow to respond to changing priorities, unforeseen circumstances and international developments.

For each TNE review round the first contact with providers will be to notify them of the start of the review process. Until a new revised AOR is developed, this will begin with a survey of UK TNE review activity in the country/ies selected for review. The survey is aimed at gathering information about existing TNE arrangements and TNE student numbers at partner and programme level. A sample of the survey can be found in Annex 3.

QAA will send the survey 20 weeks before the in-country visits and 13 weeks before the start of UK visits. Providers have three weeks to return the scoping survey.

Two weeks after receiving the survey returns, QAA will notify those providers whose TNE arrangements have been selected for review or case study.

Please note that, once a revised AOR is available, QAA will not need to survey degree-awarding bodies directly. QAA will analyse the AOR data and then notify those providers selected for review or case study.

### Request for information

Providers selected for review will receive a standard information request (see Annex 2). QAA will request evidence of how the provider implements its internal review process ensuring the quality and standards of that TNE provision within scope of the review. With the exception of a concise overview from the provider to put their provision into context, providers should submit existing documents and not create new evidence. Where TNE arrangements involve a large number of programmes, a sample of these will be selected for scrutiny by QAA in agreement with the provider, and programme level information will need to be provided only for the programmes in the selected sample.

QAA will inform those providers selected for a case study of the specific topic of the study and will request specific information. Again, with the exception of a concise contextual overview, we expect providers to use existing documents.

Providers will have three weeks to submit the requested information in an electronic format. QAA will give instructions on how to upload the requested information onto our system when we first request the information.

When notifying providers that they have been selected for review, QAA will provide the names of the review team and the International Review Manager and ask the provider to advise of any potential conflicts of interest. QAA may make adjustments in light of that.

### Notification of visit

Once providers have submitted their information, reviewers and the International Review Manager will analyse the submission. QAA may ask providers to submit additional information if the review team has identified any gaps. Requests will be strictly limited to what the team needs to complete the desk-based analysis, and providers are entitled to ask why the team has asked to see any additional information.

Three weeks after submission, QAA will notify providers about whether the visit will take place in the UK or at the delivery site overseas, or whether it will be possible to follow-up the desk-based analysis with only a video-conference. At this stage, QAA will discuss suitable visit dates with the provider, and confirm arrangements for the visit including the proposed meeting schedule. UK visits will naturally offer more flexibility with dates than those requiring travel overseas. Visits in the UK can begin two weeks from the notification of location or modality of visit. There will be a window of seven to eight weeks during which these meetings can take place. Overseas visits will take place instead as part of a single overseas trip of the QAA review team. This will not normally last more than two weeks. The UK visits will take place before the overseas visits. The choice of period for the overseas review visits will be influenced by a number of factors, including host country agencies' availability, local holidays and weather conditions, and other considerations that might affect the local context. This means that overseas visits may occur later (though generally no earlier) than 20 weeks after first contact (or 15 weeks when the revised AOR will be available). In this case there will be more time to carry out the visits in the UK.

In preparation for the visit to delivery sites overseas QAA will liaise with the UK provider only. It is for the latter to liaise with its partner(s) overseas. The review or case study visit schedule will normally be confirmed at least one week before the visit in the UK, and at least two weeks before the visit overseas. When confirming the visit schedule, providers will also be informed of the review team's main lines of inquiry. The lines of enquiry will be based on those aspects of the TNE arrangement under review that the desk-based analysis indicates needing clarifying further. Case studies will normally focus on understanding challenges, lessons learned and good practice.

## **The review and case study visit**

Review visits either in the UK or overseas are expected to last a whole day, while case study visits would not be expected to last longer than half a day.

Activity carried out during a visit will not be the same for every review or case study visit. However, review visits will generally include meetings with senior management, teaching staff, administrative staff, and students, including graduates. The review team will make use of video or teleconference facilities to meet people who may find it difficult to attend on-site, such as distance-learning students or alumni; staff and students based at the overseas delivery site, when a review visit takes place in the UK; and vice versa, staff and students in the UK when the review visit takes place at the overseas delivery site.

The review visit will typically include a final meeting between the review team and senior staff of the provider. This will be an opportunity for the team to summarise the major lines of enquiry and issues that they have pursued, and for the provider to offer any final clarification.

Case study visits will be more focused and will generally involve just one meeting with staff who have experience on the particular aspect of the case study. Depending on the study's particular theme, QAA's International Review Manager (who is conducting the visit) may request to meet with students or other stakeholders.

## **Reports**

TNE Review reports will include:

- individual review reports
- case study reports
- country overview report.

Individual institutional review visit reports will normally be no longer than eight pages. They will include recommendations and highlight good practice. Recommendations will be made by reference to the Expectation of *Chapter B10: Managing Higher Education Provision with Others* of the Quality Code and are aimed at supporting providers' and sector-wide continuous improvement.

Case studies focus on a specific topic and will normally be shorter than review reports. They will provide detailed insight into particular aspects of TNE provision with a view to facilitating the sharing of experience and good practice between all UK providers. No institution-specific recommendations will be made, but they will highlight lessons learned that could benefit the whole sector.

The country overview report will summarise the landscape of UK TNE and the local operating environment in the host country of review. It will also provide a summary of the findings from review and case study visits, highlighting and analysing general themes emerging from the TNE review round.

All TNE Review reports will be published eight working weeks after the team has returned from overseas. Fifteen working days after the return from the overseas review visits QAA will send all visited providers (either in the UK or overseas) a draft copy of their review or case study report to comment on factual accuracy. Providers should respond within five working days. Any factual inaccuracies must relate to the period before the on-site visit; the review team will not amend the report to reflect changes or developments made by the provider after the on-site visit ended.

The QAA International Review Manager will finalise the reports. Once finalised they will be provided to the funding bodies and published on QAA's website.

## **Follow-up**

The findings of TNE Review will feed into HEFCE's Annual Provider Review for England and Northern Ireland, and QAA's Enhancement-Led Institutional Review in Scotland and the Quality Assurance Framework in Wales. If serious concerns about academic standards and quality are identified as part of TNE Review these may be subject to investigation either by the respective funding body in England and Northern Ireland or by QAA in Wales and Scotland.<sup>8</sup>

Following the publication of outcomes, QAA will liaise with reviewed providers to organise a workshop where QAA and providers can discuss and share the lessons learned from the review visits. A limited number of providers not involved in the TNE Review visits may be able to attend, depending on places available. A summary of the outcomes of the workshop will be made publicly available and disseminated to the whole sector. The workshop will normally take place 12 weeks after publication of the reports.

## **Complaints and appeals**

QAA has formal processes for receiving and dealing with complaints. Details of this process are available on the QAA website.

As there are no formal judgements reached in TNE Review there is no appeals process.

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<sup>8</sup> Available at:  
[www.qaa.ac.uk/concerns](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/concerns)  
[www.hefce.ac.uk/reg/forstudents/qualityissues/](http://www.hefce.ac.uk/reg/forstudents/qualityissues/).

## Timeline summary

A schematic summary of a standard timeline for a TNE Review is given below. Please note that depending on the specific TNE Review round the activities in the timetable might take place over a shorter or longer time period. Also note that, once a revised AOR is available, the start of the review process will coincide with week 5 and the notification to those providers selected for review or case study visit.

Working weeks	Activity
0	Notification of start of review Scoping survey sent to all degree-awarding bodies
3	Survey returned to QAA
5	Providers selected for review and case study are notified, and are requested to submit information set Review team composition notified to providers
8	Information set returned by providers
11	Those providers selected for review or case study visits, either in the UK or overseas, are notified Eventual additional needed information requested International Review Manager starts to liaise with providers to set date for UK and overseas visits and defining visit programme
13	Start of UK visits
20	Overseas visits
26	Draft report shared with providers to check factual accuracy
27	Draft report returned by providers with comments on factual inaccuracies
30	Reports published
42	Follow-up sector-wide workshop

## CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

**Do you agree with the timeline for the TNE Review process?**

**Do you agree with the suggestion to run a collective workshop to share and discuss lessons learned from the TNE review exercise as a follow-up activity?**

## Annex 1: Glossary of key terms

**Academic quality** Academic quality is concerned with how well the learning opportunities made available to students enable them to achieve their award. It is about making sure that appropriate and effective teaching, support, assessment and learning resources are provided for them. In order to achieve a higher education award, students participate in the learning opportunities made available to them by their provider. A provider should be capable of guaranteeing the quality of the opportunities it provides, but it cannot guarantee how any particular student will experience those opportunities. By ensuring that its policies, structures and processes for the management of learning opportunities are implemented effectively, a provider also ensures the effectiveness of its outcomes.

**Academic standards** are the standards that individual degree-awarding bodies set and maintain for the award of their academic credit or qualifications. These may exceed the **threshold academic standards**, the minimum acceptable level of achievement that a student has to demonstrate to be eligible for an academic award. For equivalent awards, the threshold level of achievement is agreed across the UK and is described by the qualification descriptors set out in *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and *Framework for Qualifications of Higher Education Institutions in Scotland* (FQHEIS). Individual degree-awarding bodies are responsible for defining their own academic standards by setting the pass marks and determining the grading/marking schemes and any criteria for classification of qualifications that differentiate between levels of student achievement above and below the threshold academic standards. Part A of the Quality Code for UK Higher Education explains how academic standards are set and maintained for higher education qualifications of UK providers.

**Aggregate Offshore Record (AOR):** The AOR has been collected by the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) since 2007–08 from subscribing higher education providers in the devolved administrations of the United Kingdom. The AOR is collected in respect of students studying wholly outside the UK who are either registered with the reporting provider or who are studying for an award of the reporting provider. Information is collected on the location, type of provision and numbers of students.

**Professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PSRBs)** are organisations that set the standards for, and regulate the standards of entry into, particular professions. Professional qualifications (as distinct from academic qualifications) are determined by PSRBs and they may stipulate academic requirements that must be met in order for an academic programme to be recognised as leading to, or providing exemption from part of, a professional qualification. Where degree-awarding bodies choose to offer programmes that lead to, or provide exemption from, specific professional qualifications, the requirements of the relevant PSRB will influence the design of academic programmes, but the responsibility for the academic standards remains with the degree-awarding body that is awarding the academic qualification.

Where providers have PSRB accreditation for their TNE programmes, review teams will explore how accreditation requirements are taken into account in the setting and maintaining of standards and the quality assurance of programmes. Review teams will also explore how accurately information about accredited status is conveyed to students, including any caveats that apply to TNE.

**Transnational education** refers to ‘all types of higher education study programmes, or sets of courses of study, or educational services (including those of distance education) in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based.’ UNESCO/Council of Europe definition in *Code of Good Practice in the Provision of Transnational Education* (2001)

## **Annex 2: Indicative information requirement for TNE reviews**

### **Establishing and operating the TNE arrangement**

- Concise overview of selected provision (one–two pages).
- Relevant annual return(s) to local agencies.
- Evidence of permission to operate in the selected countries (accreditation and quality assurance reports, unless QAA will be able to receive them directly from local quality assurance bodies).
- Written agreements clarifying the responsibilities of each party involved in the selected TNE arrangement.
- Operational manual for link or equivalent (if separate from written agreement).
- Reports from approval (and review) visits to link by UK institution (Note: this request relates to institutional–level reports).
- Relevant institutional strategies, might include:
  - strategic plan
  - international/internationalisation strategy
  - TNE/collaborative provision strategy.

### **Assuring the academic standards and quality of programmes delivered overseas**

- Quality assurance manual or equivalent.
- Full approval documentation for all new programmes, including approval reports and minutes of relevant committees – past two academic years.
- Where applicable the latest re-approval report, and minutes of relevant committees.
- A definitive record for all programmes (to a maximum of 10 – sample to be agreed with provider).
- Arrangements for the recognition of prior learning and how entry levels are established for top-up programmes.
- Annual programme monitoring reports (for selected programmes), including minutes of relevant committees for the previous two academic years.
- External examiner reports and response to issues raised – minutes of relevant committees for previous two academic years.
- Where not clearly included in annual programme monitoring or other information above data and analysis of:
  - student admissions, achievement and progression
  - graduate employment (if available)
  - student feedback
  - most recent periodic review report(s).

## **Assessment**

- Assessment strategies and processes for managing assessment
- Programme regulations and assessment policies and procedures (if not included in the quality assurance manual)
- Minutes of assessment boards – past two years
- Other policy and procedural guidance relevant to the topic.

## **The student learning experience**

- Policy and procedures for:
  - student admissions, including the responsibilities of partner institution
  - student support, including arrangements for induction and access to UK-based staff
  - student engagement, including student representation and feedback mechanisms at delivery site
  - staff appointment, induction and development
  - making learning material available to students (including access through the VLE).
- Information on staffing models and key roles.
- Procedures and contingency plans for the termination of an agreement with a partner.

## **Information on higher education provision**

- Publicity material including links to relevant websites.
- Process/policy for the approval of information produced by the partner institution (if applicable).
- Student handbooks at institution and programme level (if separate).
- Information on appeals and complaints.
- Information on student transfer to UK institution.
- Example of degree certificate and record of achievement.

## Annex 3: TNE Template Survey

UK information	
UK institution:	
Contact name:	
Contact email:	

For each TNE arrangement:

Overall partnership/provision information	
Partner organisation (spell out acronyms):	
Partner location, country:	
Partner location, city:	
Main website of partner/own branch campus:	
HESA type of provision:	
Year of first student intake:	
Date of data:	

Programme information				
Programme name	Subject area (JACS)	Programme level (FHEQ/FQHIS)	Single award (yes/no)	Headcount
<i>Where more programmes need to be added, copy the rows above and paste above this line</i>				
			<b>TOTAL</b>	



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