



## Annual Monitoring for Embedded Colleges

### 1 Purpose of the monitoring process

1.1 The annual return and the monitoring visit are integral parts of the overall Embedded Colleges process. They serve as a short check on the provider's continuing management of academic standards, the management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities, and the information it publishes about its academic provision. The annual return will be an opportunity to reflect upon developments made in the management of academic standards and quality by the provider and its embedded colleges since the previous review or monitoring visit, and for QAA to note any matters which will be of particular interest to the team that conducts the provider's next visit.

1.2 The monitoring process has a developmental aspect in that it will also serve to support providers in working with the UK Quality Code for Higher Education (the Quality Code).<sup>1</sup> The Quality Code gives all higher education providers a shared starting point for setting, describing and assuring the academic standards of their higher education awards and programmes and the quality of the learning opportunities it provides. The existing Quality Code will continue to be used for the annual monitoring process for the 2018-19 academic year.

1.3 Material changes in circumstances, or complaints or concerns raised about the provider or one of its embedded colleges, may trigger an extended monitoring visit, partial or full review instead of a monitoring visit either for the provider itself or one or more of the embedded colleges. Please see Section 4.

### 2 Overview of the monitoring process

2.1 All providers should submit an annual return to QAA nine to 10 months after their previous review or monitoring visit. QAA will notify providers of the date when the annual return should be submitted.

2.2 Based on the annual return, QAA will determine for the provider and each embedded college whether a short monitoring visit, an extended monitoring visit, partial or a full review visit is necessary (see paragraph 2.15 and Section 4). Embedded colleges that make commendable progress in one monitoring visit may not be required to undergo a monitoring visit the following year.

2.3 The monitoring visit will result in a published annual monitoring report<sup>2</sup> and each embedded college annex. If a full review takes place, a new review report will be published. If a full review of an embedded college takes place, a new annex to the main report will be published.

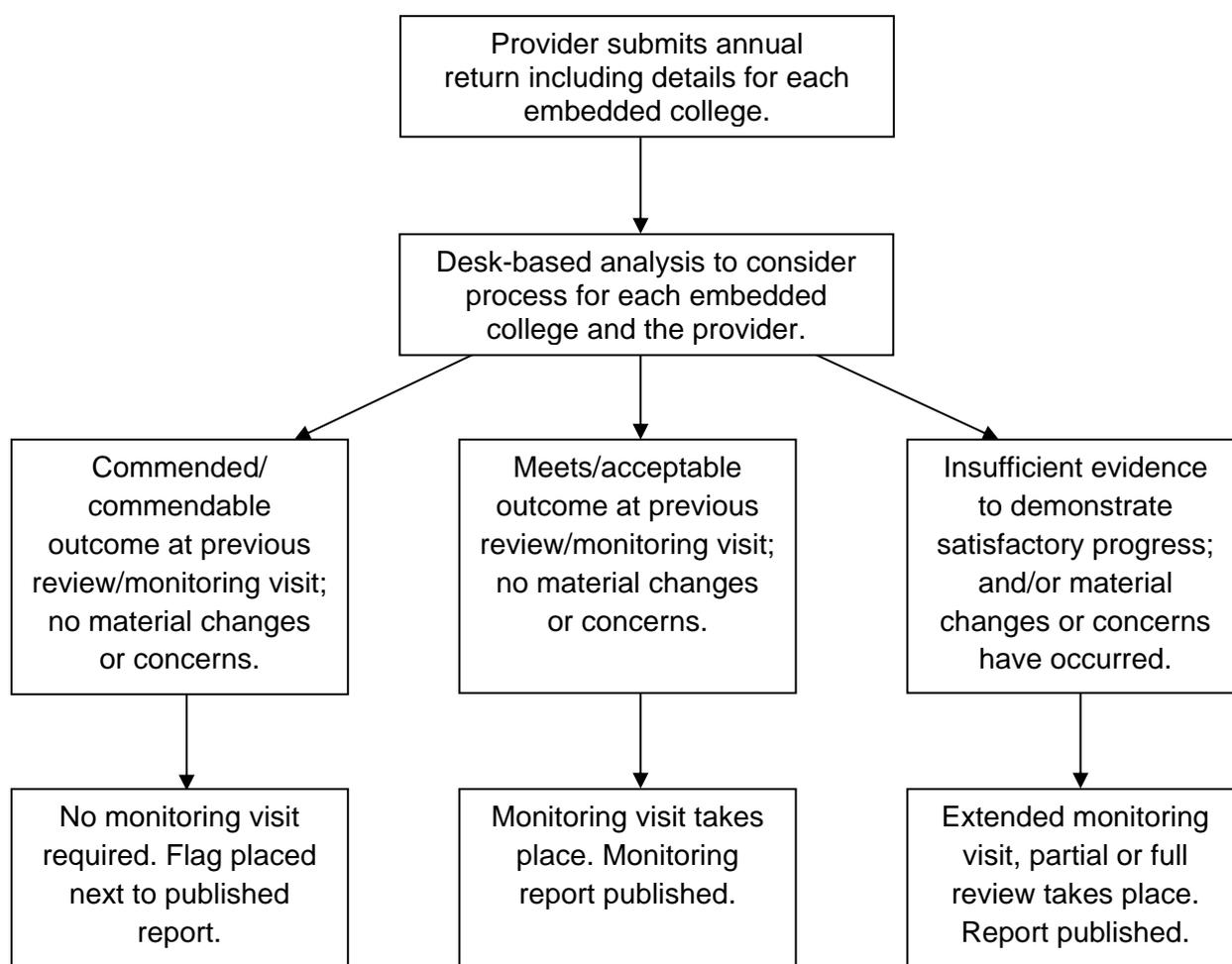
2.4 The flow chart below outlines the monitoring visit process, which takes place each year between full review visits.

---

<sup>1</sup> The UK Quality Code for Higher Education, available at: [www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/quality-code).

<sup>2</sup> Where providers do not have a monitoring visit as they exceeded expectations the previous year, this will be flagged on the QAA website.

## Flow chart: the monitoring process



2.5 The annual return will normally be submitted nine to 10 months after the previous QAA visit. However, QAA should be notified of any material changes of circumstances taking place (see Section 4 for details of material changes). If there is no monitoring visit in one year, the annual return will be due one year after the previous return.

2.6 The annual return should be submitted electronically to QAA. Details on how and when to do this will be given to providers when they are advised of the date for submission.

2.7 The provider is required to update QAA on:

- current programmes offered, awarding bodies/organisations and student numbers for each embedded college
- student retention and achievement data for the last three years
- any material changes since the last QAA visit (see Section 4)
- progress on implementing the action plan arising from the previous QAA review or monitoring reports and any subsequent developments
- the provider's internal quality monitoring processes, and how these are used to identify good practice and areas for improvement within the provider and embedded colleges
- actions taken to address any recommendations in other external reports since the last visit (such as awarding body or professional, statutory and regulatory body reports)

- progress in working with external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education.

2.8 The annual return will take the form of a short briefing paper, which should be referenced to the supporting evidence (see Annex 2).

2.9 In the first year following a full review, the annual return should report in detail on how the provider and each embedded college has effectively implemented the action plan in response to the review report. Providers and colleges should give evidence that the actions have been implemented effectively, and identify any enhancements to the student experience as a result of these actions.

2.10 Providers and colleges should maintain and publish the action plan on an ongoing basis, to ensure continual review and enhancement of its higher education provision. In subsequent years, the monitoring visit will continue to monitor any ongoing actions from the action plan but will also assess the effectiveness of the provider's and embedded colleges' actions to support continuous improvement through their own internal quality assurance processes. The annual return is the main mechanism by which the provider can communicate to QAA that it is continuing to evaluate and enhance its management of academic standards and quality.

2.11 Providers should also include a commentary on recruitment, retention and pass rates over the period covered by the data return form, and within the annual return form.

2.12 QAA may also ask providers to comment on their management of other areas of interest or concern through the monitoring process. Additional topics of interest will be the management of admissions and assessment.

2.13 Providers and embedded colleges should consider how their quality assurance policies and processes allow them to meet UK expectations for higher education. They should reflect on their use of relevant external reference points, including the Quality Code, in the annual return.

2.14 Providers and embedded colleges should engage students in their quality assurance processes. Students may be involved in implementing the action plan and/or in measuring the outcomes of actions taken.

2.15 The provider's annual return and supporting evidence will be considered by a QAA Officer who may decide that an extended monitoring visit, partial or full review is required instead of, or following, a monitoring visit if:

- there is evidence that material changes in circumstances have occurred either at the provider or an embedded college or are shortly to occur (see Section 4)
- there is a lack of demonstrable progress against the published action plan
- QAA has received complaints about academic standards or quality issues that are being investigated through the Concerns Scheme (see Section 5)
- there are other serious concerns about the ability to effectively maintain academic standards and/or manage and enhance the quality of learning opportunities or the information the provider or an embedded college publishes about its academic provision (see Section 5).

## The monitoring visit

2.16 The monitoring visit to each embedded college will normally last for up to one day, and will normally include meetings with the college's staff and students. The monitoring visit may also include a meeting with relevant partner higher education institution(s) (HEI(s)). It may also be necessary to visit the central provider. The monitoring team will normally consist of a QAA officer and one reviewer. The team will produce a short update to the existing review or annual monitoring report and annex for each embedded college that will comment on:

- any changes since the last review or annual monitoring visit
- the progress that has been made in the monitoring, review and enhancement of its higher education provision, including reference to associated reports from awarding bodies/organisations
- any other thematic areas of interest, for example admissions or assessment and student outcomes data
- progress on working with external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education
- any matters that should be followed up in the next monitoring/review visit
- a conclusion on the progress made in responding to the previous review or monitoring visit.

## Indicative timeline for the annual monitoring process

Time +/- visit	Actions required
-8 weeks	The <b>provider</b> submits two electronic copies of the annual return and supporting evidence to <b>QAA</b> .
-7 weeks	The <b>QAA Officer</b> reads the annual return. QAA determines whether a monitoring visit to each embedded college will take place, whether a visit to the provider's centre will take place or whether an extended monitoring visit, partial or full review is required. <sup>3</sup>  If monitoring visits are to take place, the <b>QAA Officer</b> confirms the monitoring team(s) to the provider, and agrees the dates of the visits.
-4 weeks	The <b>monitoring team</b> analyses the annual return and prepares its agenda for each monitoring visit.
-2 weeks	The <b>QAA Officer</b> agrees the arrangements for each visit with the provider and embedded college(s), and copies in the awarding bodies/organisations/partner HEI(s).  The team may ask for additional evidence/raise points for clarification before and/or during the visit as required.

<sup>3</sup> If a full review is required, the process will be followed as outlined in the HER (EC) Handbook. The review cycle will then begin again.

0 weeks (this could be multiple weeks)	The (extended) monitoring visit(s) to the embedded college(s) take(s) place if required. A monitoring visit to the provider's centre may take place for a meeting with senior management. This may occur at any time before, during or after the annual monitoring visits take place at each embedded college, up to two weeks after the final embedded college monitoring visit.
+1 week	The <b>monitoring team</b> confirms the monitoring visit conclusions. This occurs one week after the final annual monitoring visit or after the visit to the provider's centre, whichever is later.
+2 weeks	The <b>monitoring team</b> drafts the monitoring report and annexes. The reports are sent to the <b>Area Coordinator</b> for moderation.
+4 weeks	The <b>QAA Officer</b> sends the report to the provider, the embedded college and its awarding bodies/organisations/partner HEI(s) for comment.
+6 weeks	The <b>provider</b> returns comments on factual accuracy to <b>QAA</b> . Comments from embedded colleges and awarding bodies/organisations should be incorporated into the provider's comments.
+9 weeks	<b>QAA</b> publishes the monitoring report on the QAA website. The report is sent to UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI).

### 3 Outcomes of the process

3.1 Conclusions reflect the provider's continuing management of academic standards, its management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities, and the information it publishes about its learning opportunities.

3.2 An overall conclusion on progress made will be graded as follows:

- the provider/embedded college is **making commendable progress**
- the provider/embedded college is **making acceptable progress**
- the provider/embedded college is **making progress but further improvement is required**
- the provider/embedded college is **not making acceptable progress.**

Guidance on how conclusions are reached can be found in Annex 1.

3.3 Providers and embedded colleges should engage effectively with relevant external reference points, including the Quality Code, to manage their higher education. They should actively engage students in quality assurance processes. Monitoring teams will note instances where providers and embedded colleges are not managing these responsibilities effectively, in addition to identifying areas where the providers and colleges have made commendable progress.

3.4 Academic standards and quality must be maintained in order to pass the monitoring process. Where there is evidence to demonstrate that a provider/embedded college is making commendable progress, the next monitoring process will take place two years later,<sup>4</sup> unless the next annual return provides insufficient evidence that the provider or college is continuing to make good progress, and/or there is a material change in circumstances or other concerns are raised about the provider's or embedded college's management of its academic provision.

3.5 Where there is evidence to demonstrate that a provider/embedded college is making acceptable progress, the next monitoring visit will take place one year later, unless the provider/embedded college in the meantime undergoes a material change in circumstances or other concerns are raised about the provider's or embedded college's management of its academic provision.

3.6 Where there are weaknesses in the provider's/embedded college's maintenance of academic standards and/or quality, and/or action plans have not been implemented fully or have not been effective in all areas, further action will be required to maintain educational oversight. The following outcomes are considered to be unsatisfactory:

- the provider/embedded college is **making progress but further improvement is required**
- the provider/embedded college is **not making acceptable progress.**

3.7 Where a provider/embedded college receives one of these outcomes, it must submit a new action plan within 30 days of the monitoring visit. In order to maintain educational oversight, the provider/embedded college should request a full review to take place within **six months** of publication of the outcome of the monitoring process.

---

<sup>4</sup> If a full review is planned for the following year as part of the four-year cycle, this exemption will not apply.

3.8 A draft of the monitoring team's findings will be sent to the provider for comment on factual accuracy. The final monitoring report will be shared with UKVI and the provider's/embedded colleges' awarding bodies/organisations, and will be published on the QAA website.

## 4 Material changes in circumstances

4.1 A material change in circumstances may trigger an early monitoring visit, an extended monitoring visit, partial or full review of the embedded college and/or provider. Providers must inform QAA within 28 days of meeting one of the triggers outlined below.

4.2 An extended monitoring visit (at additional cost) is likely to be required at an embedded college if any of the following changes in circumstances occurs:

- change of address
- acquisition of a new building
- extension of premises with an increase in capacity by 25 per cent or more
- change of legal or trading name
- change of principal and/or proprietor or equivalent
- change of 20 per cent or more of permanent teaching staff
- change of 30 per cent or more on the type of provision/course offered, including changes of awarding body/organisation (calculated by student headcount on new programmes).

4.3 The following changes are likely to require an extended monitoring visit, partial or full review:

Provider size	Change in circumstances
Fewer than 50 students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an increase in total student numbers of more than 50 students</li> <li>• a new site</li> <li>• a merger with another provider</li> <li>• a change of 50 per cent or more on the type of provision/courses offered, including changes of awarding body/organisation (calculated by student headcount on new programmes).</li> </ul>
50 or more students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• an increase in total student numbers by more than 20 per cent or 100 students, whichever is greater</li> <li>• a new site</li> <li>• a merger with another provider</li> <li>• a change of 50 per cent or more on the type of provision/courses offered, including changes of awarding body/organisation (calculated by student headcount on new programmes).</li> </ul>

4.4 In addition, QAA may decide that an extended monitoring visit, partial or full review is required based on the evidence submitted in a provider's/embedded college's annual return, where this is insufficient to demonstrate that satisfactory progress is being made, or otherwise raises concerns about the management of academic standards or quality at the provider or embedded college.

4.5 For providers wanting to add one or more embedded college(s), a visit to the new college will involve a two-day review to include a meeting with the partner HEI and a meeting with senior managers from the main provider. The two-day review of the new college will incur an additional cost.

## **5 Concerns about the standards and quality of higher education**

5.1 QAA investigates concerns raised by students, staff, and other individuals or organisations about the standards and quality of higher education provision, where we think these concerns indicate serious systemic or procedural problems.

5.2 QAA can investigate concerns about:

- academic standards - the level of achievement a student has to reach in order to achieve a particular award or qualification
- academic quality - everything that a university or college provides to ensure its students have the best possible opportunity to achieve the required standard (this includes teaching, learning resources and academic support)
- the accuracy and completeness of the information providers publish about their higher education provision.

Concerns may be followed up through educational oversight reviews or as a separate process. Further information about the concerns process can be found on the QAA website: [www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/how-to-make-a-complaint](http://www.qaa.ac.uk/reviewing-higher-education/how-to-make-a-complaint).

## Annex 1: Conclusions for the Embedded College monitoring process

Teams will draw a conclusion on the progress that has been made by the provider and its embedded colleges against their action plan, since the last review or annual monitoring visit and on working with relevant external reference points, following the criteria below. Conclusions reflect the provider's/embedded colleges' continuing management of academic standards, management and enhancement of the quality of learning opportunities, and the information it produces about the learning opportunities it offers.

<b>The provider/embedded college is making commendable progress</b>	<b>The provider/embedded college is making acceptable progress</b>	<b>The provider/embedded college is making progress but further improvement is required</b>	<b>The provider/embedded college is not making acceptable progress</b>
The provider/embedded college is making commendable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision.	The provider/embedded college is making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision.	The provider/embedded college is making progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision but further improvement is required.	The provider/embedded college is not making acceptable progress with continuing to monitor, review and enhance its higher education provision.
The provider is maintaining the academic standards and enhancing the quality of learning opportunities of its provision/the embedded college is maintaining the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities of its provision.	The provider/embedded college is maintaining the academic standards and quality of learning opportunities of its provision.	There are weaknesses in the provider's/embedded college's maintenance of the academic standards and/or quality of learning opportunities of its provision which have the potential to put academic standards and/or quality at risk.	There are weaknesses in the provider's/embedded college's maintenance of the academic standards and/or quality of learning opportunities of its provision which currently put academic standards and/or quality at risk.

<p>All actions have been implemented fully and have led to improvements in the provider's/embedded college's management of its higher education provision.</p> <p>Where actions have not been completed fully, they are on target and progress towards achieving them can be demonstrated.</p>	<p>Most actions (identified by the review team or by the provider) have led to improvement. Actions that have not been addressed fully do not have the potential to put academic standards or quality at risk.</p>	<p>Actions that have not been addressed fully or effectively have the potential to put academic standards and/or quality at risk</p>	<p>Actions that have not been addressed fully or effectively currently put academic standards and/or quality at risk.</p>
<p>The provider/embedded college demonstrates highly effective engagement with relevant external reference points, including the Quality Code.</p>	<p>The provider/embedded college demonstrates appropriate engagement with relevant external reference points, including the Quality Code.</p>	<p><b>and/or</b> the provider/embedded college demonstrates insufficient engagement with relevant external reference points, including the Quality Code</p>	
<p>Information produced by the provider/embedded college for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.</p>	<p>Information produced by the provider/embedded college for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.</p>	<p><b>and/or</b> improvement is required to ensure information produced by the provider/embedded college for its intended audiences about the learning opportunities it offers is fit for purpose, accessible and trustworthy.</p>	

<b>Outcome of the monitoring visit</b>			
<b>The provider/embedded college is making commendable progress</b>	<b>The provider/embedded college is making acceptable progress</b>	<b>The provider/embedded college is making progress but further improvement is required</b>	<b>The provider/embedded college is not making acceptable progress</b>
The provider/embedded college may not receive a monitoring visit in the following year, if no material changes have taken place which may require an extended monitoring visit, partial or full review. (If a full review is due the following year, there is no exemption.)	The provider/embedded college will receive a monitoring visit, if no material changes have taken place which may require an extended monitoring visit, partial or full review in the following year. Alternatively, a scheduled full review may be due.	To maintain educational oversight, the provider/ embedded college must apply for and undergo a full review within six months of the publication of the outcome of the monitoring visit.	To maintain educational oversight, the provider/ embedded college must apply for and undergo a full review within six months of the publication of the outcome of the monitoring visit.

## Annex 2: Annual monitoring for Embedded Colleges: monitoring process annual return form

Provider name	
Embedded college name	
Date of submission	

Please complete one form for each embedded college and one form for the provider and send to QAA by the date requested (normally nine to 10 months after your last QAA visit or annual return).

For each embedded college annual return, all sections should be completed and Sections 2 to 6 should be supported by evidence appended to this document.

For the provider annual return, only Sections 2 to 6 should be completed. These should cover information relevant to the provider and should be supported by evidence appended to this document. Please note that Sections 3.1 to 3.4 should cover actions relating to the provider and not to specific embedded colleges.

**Important note:** the provider should notify QAA **within 28 days** if any of the material changes outlined in section 2 take place. Failure to do so will result in the provider's CAS allocation being set to zero pending the outcome of the monitoring visit or review.

### Section 1: Student data

Please complete and return the AP data return, which will have been sent to you in advance.

Please list all higher education programmes (that is, those equivalent to level 3 and above on one of the UK qualifications frameworks)<sup>5</sup> currently offered, with the number of students currently studying on each programme. Where a new intake of students is expected between submission of the annual return and the monitoring visit, please include projected intake numbers in a separate row.

Programme title	Awarding body/organisation	Qualification level	Date programme was approved	Current number of students (headcount)
			Total	

<sup>5</sup> The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ), Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF), Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF), The Credit and Qualifications Framework for Wales (CQFW).

## Section 1.2 - Data commentary

Please provide a commentary on the information provided on the data return form and in the table above. The commentary should explain trends in recruitment, retention, completion and pass rates over the period covered by the form. This is in addition to any remarks in the 'Comments' column on the data return form, which are intended to clarify how the form has been completed.

[Type text here; expand as necessary. Please reference and append all supporting evidence.]

## Section 2: Recent changes

Please tick if any of the following material changes have taken place since the last review or monitoring visit. Changes are based on the data reported in your previous Embedded College report or monitoring visit report:

<b>Material change (notify QAA within 28 days of one of these changes taking place)</b>	<b>Check box</b>
For providers with fewer than 50 students at the last QAA visit, an increase in total student numbers of more than 50 students	
For providers with 50 or more students at the last QAA visit, an increase in total student numbers by more than 20 per cent or 100 students, whichever is greater	
Change of address	
Acquisition of a new building	
A new site	
Extension of premises with an increase in capacity by 25 per cent or more	
Change of legal or trading name	
Change of principal and/or proprietor or equivalent	
Change of 20 per cent or more of permanent teaching staff	
Change of 30 per cent or more on the type of provision/courses offered, including changes of awarding body/organisation (calculated by student headcount on new programmes)	
Change of 50 per cent or more on the type of provision/courses offered, including changes of awarding body/organisation (calculated by student headcount on new programmes)	
Merger with another provider	
Change in the accredited status of the provider in the UK, or in the accredited status of the overseas higher education provider that awards the degrees	

For study abroad providers, any move towards offering complete degrees to students who would be enrolled with the provider in the UK for the full duration of their programme	
---	--

If you have ticked any of the above, or have undergone any other changes relevant to QAA, please provide further details below:

[Type text here; expand as necessary. Please reference and append all supporting evidence.]

### Section 3.1: Update on the action plan and internal quality monitoring processes

Only report on those points that are relevant for this embedded college. For the provider's centre, comment on those points that are relevant to the centre.

<p><b>One year after a full review:</b> please provide an evaluation of the impact of the actions taken in response to the good practice, recommendations and affirmations from the last review. Each good practice point, recommendation or affirmation should be accounted for separately</p>
---

or

<p><b>One or two years after a monitoring visit:</b> provide an update on any actions that had not been fully completed at the previous monitoring visit and any actions generated through their own internal quality assurance processes, including an evaluation of the impact of these actions.</p>
--

**Provide documentary evidence** to demonstrate the achievement, success and internal evaluation of all actions taken.

[Type text here; expand as necessary. Please reference and append all supporting evidence.]

### Section 3.2: Admission of students

<p>The Quality Code sets out the following Expectation about recruitment, selection and admission to higher education, which higher education providers are required to meet.</p>
---

- Recruitment, selection and admission policies and procedures adhere to the principles of fair admission. They are transparent, reliable, valid, inclusive and underpinned by appropriate organisational structures and processes. They support higher education providers in the selection of students who are able to complete their programme (Quality Code, *Chapter B2*).

Please comment on how you meet this expectation in general, and specifically in regard to the following questions.

- How do you manage the recruitment process, including the use of agents (if applicable)?
- How do you ensure students have sufficient English language competence to complete their programme of study?
- How do you assess applicants' prior qualifications and their suitability to study the

- subject and academic level for which they are applying?
- How do you assess that applicants have a genuine intention to study?
- What processes are used to test the integrity of the admissions process?

### **Section 3.3: Assessment of students**

The Quality Code sets out the following Expectation about the assessment of students and the recognition of prior learning, which higher education providers are required to meet.

- Higher education providers operate equitable, valid and reliable processes of assessment, including for the recognition of prior learning, which enable every student to demonstrate the extent to which they have achieved the intended learning outcomes for the credit or qualification being sought (Quality Code, *Chapter B6*).

Please comment on how you meet this Expectation in general, and specifically in regard to the following questions.

- How do you assure that assessment is carried out with rigour and integrity, that students' work is genuine, and that students have not engaged in academic malpractice?
- How do internal and external verification processes ensure that student work is genuine, achieves the learning outcomes required and is marked fairly and securely?

[Type text here; expand as necessary. Please reference and append all supporting evidence.]

### **Section 4: Other external reviews**

Please provide details of any other external reviews/accreditations that have taken place since the last QAA visit, along with the outcomes (conditions, recommendations, and so on).

[Type text here; expand as necessary. Please reference and append all supporting evidence.]

### **Section 5: The provider's use of external reference points to meet UK expectations for higher education**

Please provide details of how the provider has taken account of relevant external reference points, including the UK Quality Code for Higher Education, in managing its higher education provision, since the last QAA review or monitoring visit. The existing Quality Code will continue to be used for the annual monitoring process for the 2018-19 academic year.

[Type text here; expand as necessary. Please reference and append all supporting evidence.]

### **Section 6: Any other information**

Please note any other information which may be relevant to the monitoring process. [Type text here; expand as necessary. Please reference and append all supporting evidence.]

## **Appendices**

Please list all evidence appended to this document.